

# **THE THRESHOLD OF RELIGION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649079391

The threshold of religion by R. R. Marett

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**R. R. MARETT**

# **THE THRESHOLD OF RELIGION**



**THE THRESHOLD OF RELIGION**

# THE THRESHOLD OF RELIGION

BY

R. R. MARETT, M.A., D.Sc.

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD; UNIVERSITY READER  
IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY; PRESIDENT OF THE FOLK-LORE SOCIETY

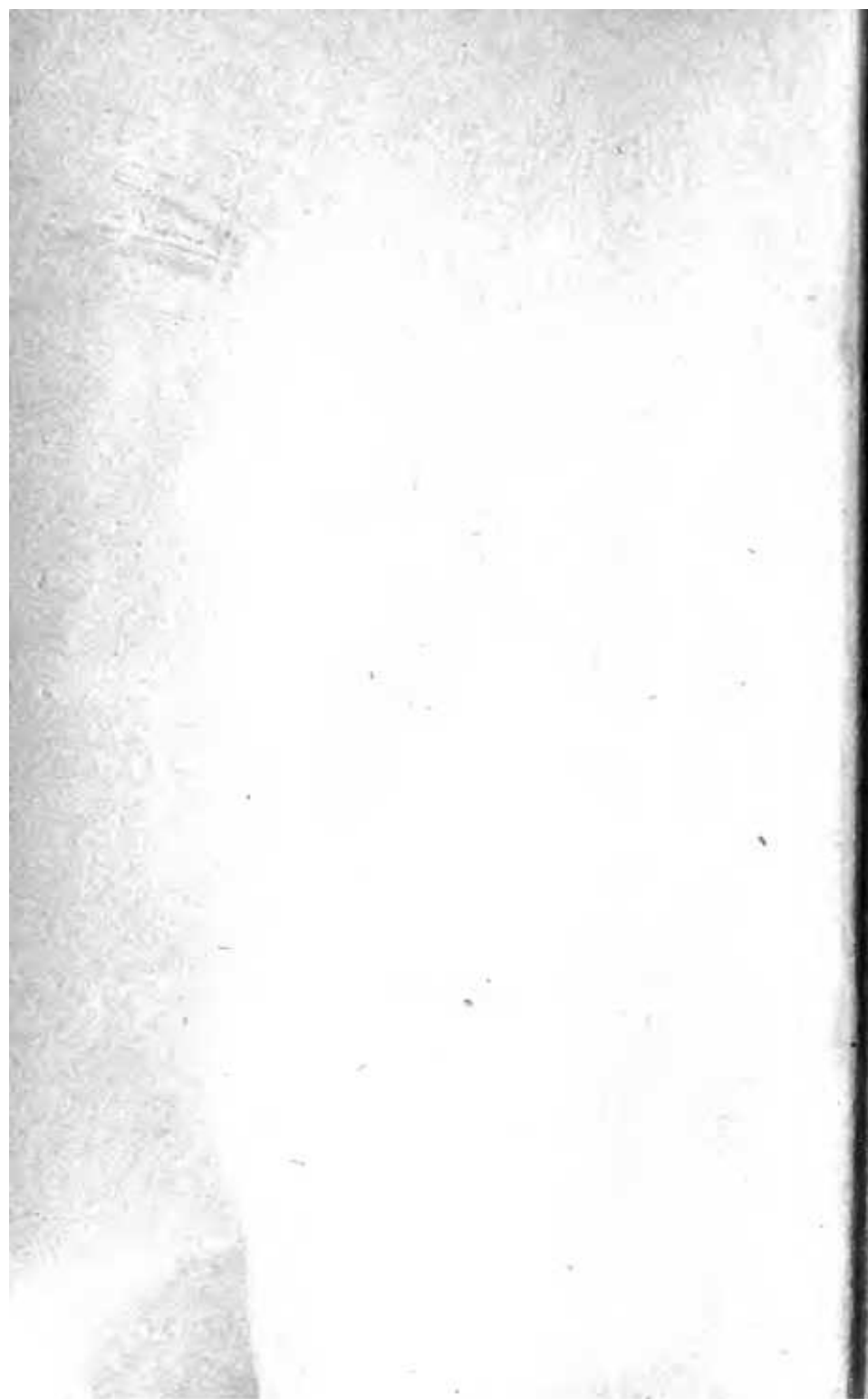
SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

METHUEN & CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON

*First Published . . . . . January 1900*  
*Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged, January 1914*

TO  
MY WIFE





## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

AT the International Congress for the History of Religions held recently in Oxford, several friends who listened to the paper on "The Conception of *Mana*," which appears fourth in the present collection, were kind enough to suggest that it ought to be published under one cover with various scattered essays wherein aspects of the same subject had previously been examined. The essays in question were: "Pre-Animistic Religion," *Folk-Lore*, June 1900, pp. 162-182; "From Spell to Prayer," *Folk-Lore*, June 1904, pp. 132-165; "Is Taboo a Negative Magic?" *Anthropological Essays, presented to Edward Burnett Tylor in honour of his 75th birthday, October 2, 1907*, pp. 219-234; and "A Sociological View of Comparative Religion," *Sociological Review*, January 1908, pp. 48-60. By the kind leave of the Editor of *Folk-Lore*, the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, and the Editor of the *Sociological Review*, it has been possible to proceed to the realization of this idea, conceived as I have shown amid the fervent courtesies of a festive occasion. Now, however, that in cold blood one contemplates the accomplished deed, the doubt not unnaturally arises whether, after all, it was worth while to reprint

## THE THRESHOLD OF RELIGION

articles that in their original form received, from experts at all events, as full and favourable an attention as their author could venture to expect.

It is true that the veteran psychologist, Wilhelm Wundt of Leipzig, has, in his important *Völkerpsychologie* (Vol. II., Pt. II., 171 foll.), done me the honour of associating my name with what, under the designation of *die präanimistische Hypothese*, he treats as a representative theory of the origin of religion, formulated in direct opposition to the Tylorian "animism." Had I any such ambitious doctrine to promulgate, I suppose I ought to embrace every opportunity of sowing my opinions broadcast. But, to be frank, I scarcely recognize myself in the rôle imputed to me. In the paper on "Preanimistic Religion" I had no intention of committing myself to a definite solution of the genetic problem. For me the first chapter of the history of religion remains in large part indecipherable. My chief concern was simply to urge that primitive or rudimentary religion, as we actually find it amongst savage peoples, is at once a wider, and in certain respects a vaguer, thing than "the belief in spiritual beings" of Tylor's famous "minimum definition." It therefore seemed advisable to provide the working anthropologist with a new category under which he could marshal those residual phenomena which a strictly animistic interpretation of rudimentary religion would be likely to ignore, or at all events to misrepresent. Before our science ventures to dogmatize about genesis, it must, I think, push on with