



# The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion

*Sir James George Frazer*

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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. The Golden Bough offered a modernist approach to discussing religion, treating it dispassionately as a cultural phenomenon, rather than from a theological perspective.

The Golden Bough attempts to define the shared elements of religious belief and scientific thought, discussing fertility rites, human sacrifice, the dying god, the scapegoat and many other symbols and practices whose influence has extended into twentieth-century culture. Its thesis is that old religions were fertility cults that revolved around the worship and periodic sacrifice of a sacred king. Frazer proposed that mankind progresses from magic through religious belief to scientific thought.

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