The Origin of Belief in a God
The Athenaeum (Londres, 3 août 1912)

Andrew Lang
S. Baciocchi and F. Théron (ed.)

Electronic version
URL: http://assr.revues.org/24468
ISSN: 1777-5825

Electronic reference
Andrew Lang, « The Origin of Belief in a God », Archives de sciences sociales des religions [Online]. The Early reception of The Elementary Forms (1912-1917), I, Online since 27 February 2013, connection on 08 February 2017. URL : http://assr.revues.org/24468

This text was automatically generated on 8 February 2017.

© Archives de sciences sociales des religions
Dr. Durkheim’s new book, ‘Les Formes Élémentaires de la Vie Religieuse’ (Paris, Alcan), has come into my hands. I am anxious to protest briefly against Dr. Durkheim’s statement (pp. 414-5) that, in my opinion, some savage peoples have arrived at their idea of an All Father “par une sorte d’intuition sur la nature de laquelle on refuse de s’expliquer.” For this “sort of intuition” Dr. Durkheim quotes my ‘Making of Religion’ p. 331. That page, in the second edition (1900), is concerned with the Poltergeist! The first edition (1898) I have not at hand, but in the second and third (pp.ix-xii) I protested that I had never advocated any idea of a primitive revelation such as critics had attributed to me. I also gave what to me seems the most probable theory of the origin of the All Father belief. It is not “une interpretation théologique,” as Dr. Durkheim declares it to be (p. 415). Moreover, I “hastened to add that another theory might be entertained” – no more theological than the first – and Dr. Durkheim has a third. I do not take much interest in any of these theories: it is enough for me that Dr. Durkheim accepts the evidence for the All Father belief in Australia. But when Dr. Durkheim (p. 267, note 1) says that, in my opinion, “elle serait due… à une sorte de révélation primitive,” he credits me with a view which I never expressed, and which I have repeatedly disclaimed.
A. Lang

[The above was received shortly before the writer’s death.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY


NOTES

1. [« La notion d’esprit et de dieux », Durkheim 1912, livre 2, chap. 9, p. 414-415]
2. [« La notion d’esprit et de dieux », Durkheim 1912, livre 2, chap. 9, p. 414]
6. [« La notion d’esprit et de dieux », Durkheim 1912, livre 2, chap. 9, p. 415]
8. [« Origine de ces croyances [totémiques] - Examen critique des théories », Durkheim 1912, livre 2, chap. 5, p. 267 n. 1. Durkheim ajoute cependant, dans la même note, que « Lang ne fait pas intervenir cette idée dans son explication du totémisme »]