

living men, as are also the only unlikenesses of power. But there soon arise conceived contrasts in goodness between the ghosts of relatives and the ghosts of other persons, as well as stronger contrasts between friendly ghosts belonging to the tribe and malicious ghosts belonging to other tribes. When social ranks are established, there follow contrasts of rank and accompanying potency among supernatural beings which, as legends expand, grow more and more marked. Eventually there is formed in this way a hierarchy of partiality—deified ancestors, demi-gods, great gods, and among the great gods One Who is supreme.”*

But I fail to find any such traceable connection between these different professed continuous stages of the evolution of the idea of God. On the contrary, all the great modern and ancient religions are monotheistic. The religion of the Hebrews, cherished by a goodly portion of the race, and reaching back unquestionably over three thousand years, has for the opening sentence of its sacred writings, “In the beginning God” [not the gods] “created the heaven and the earth.” Again, their sacred writings say: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God” (Deut. vi. 4; Ps. lxxxvi. 10). Mohammedanism, with its two hundred millions of followers, and going back in history over a thousand years, ceases not day nor night from crying, “There is but one God, and Mohammed is His Prophet!”

Christianity, an older religion than Mohammedanism, going back nearly 2,000 years, and being the religion of over 400,000,000 of the most intelligent, prosperous, and civilized of our race, teaches and believes in one God, not many.†

Moreover, Buddhism, Brahmanism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and the ancient religion of the East—the oldest and the greatest religions of the world were originally atheistic, or pantheistic, or monotheistic. They were certainly not polytheistic. Therefore, the ghost theory, that men worshiped first many gods and finally one God, while favored by some of the facts of the religion of some existing savage tribes, is discredited and exploded by the present ideas and past histories of all the great historic religions.

Most unsatisfactory is this theory for another reason, namely, it makes no provision for and takes little or no account of such almost universal facts of religion as man’s consciousnesses of sin, and man’s moral progress under the influence of religion. Even among the most degraded tribes, where the idea of God is so confused and obscure as to be almost, if not entirely, undiscoverable, a sense of imperfection—of being out of harmony with God or the gods, a sense of sin—is found. It is always found where religion exists. But so absorbed is Mr. Spencer in his preconceived scheme and ideas that he walks over it without seeing it. This defect is glaring in connection with his account of the origin of sacrifices. He uses, indeed, freely the words

* Principles of Sociology, Vol. I., Chap. 26, §207.

† John i. 1, et al.