

thought, and which persists throughout as one of its most salient and irrepressible features, must engage our attention for a little time before we pass on to the genesis of polytheism.

But the belief in continued life itself, like all other human ideas, has naturally undergone various stages of evolution. The stages glide imperceptibly into one another, of course ; but I think we can on the whole distinguish with tolerable accuracy between three main layers or strata of opinion with regard to the continued existence of the dead. In the first or lowest stratum, the difference between life and death themselves is but ill or inadequately perceived; the dead are thought of as yet bodily living. In the second stratum, death is recognised as a physical fact, but is regarded as only temporary; at this stage, men look forward to the Resurrection of the Body, and expect the Life of the World to Come. In the third stratum, the soul is regarded as a distinct entity from the body; it survives it in a separate and somewhat shadowy form: so that the opinion as to the future proper to this stage is not a belief in the Resurrection of the Body, but a belief in the Immortality of the Soul. These two concepts have often been confounded together by loose and semi-philosophical Christian thinkers ; but in their essence they are wholly distinct and irreconcilable.

I shall examine each of these three strata separately.

And first as to that early savage level of thought where the ideas of life and death are very ill demarcated. To us at the present day it seems a curious notion that people should not possess the conception of death as a necessary event in every individual human history. But that is because we cannot easily unread all our previous thinking, cannot throw ourselves frankly back into the state of the savage. We are accustomed to living in large and populous communities, where deaths are frequent, and where natural death in particular is an every-day occurrence. We have behind us a vast and long history of previous ages ;