

parts of his field of enquiry. The problem before us divides itself into three main portions : *first*, how did men come to believe in many gods—the origin of polytheism ; *second*, how, by elimination of most of these gods, did certain races of men come to believe in one single supreme and omnipotent God—the origin of monotheism ; *third* how, having arrived at that concept, did the most advanced races and civilisations come to conceive of that God as Triune, and to identify one of his Persons with a particular divine and human incarnation—the origin of Christianity. In considering each of these three main problems I have been greatly guided and assisted by three previous enquirers or sets of enquirers.

As to the *origin of polytheism*, I have adopted in the main Mr. Herbert Spencer's remarkable ghost theory, though with certain important modifications and additions. In this part of my work I have also been largely aided by materials derived from Mr. Duff Macdonald, the able author of *Africana*, from Mr. Turner, the well-known Samoan missionary, and from several other writers, supplemented as they are by my own researches among the works of explorers and ethnologists in general. On the whole, I have here accepted the theory which traces the origin of the belief in gods to primeval ancestor-worship, or rather corpse-worship, as against the rival theory which traces its origin to a supposed primitive animism.

As to the *rise of monotheism*, I have been influenced in no small degree by Kuenen and the Teutonic school of Old Testament criticism, whose ideas have been supplemented by later concepts derived from Professor Robertson Smith's admirable work, *The Religion of the Semites*. But here, on the whole, the central explanation I have to offer is, I venture to think, new and original : the theory, good or bad, of the circumstances which led to the elevation of the ethnical Hebrew God, Jahweh, above all his rivals, and his final recognition as the only true and living god, is my own and no one else's.