

brew tracts were adopted by the Church, with a few additions of later date, such as the Book of Daniel, under the style and title of the Old Testament. The more generally accepted lives of Christ, again, known as *Evangelists* or *Gospels*; the *Acts of the Apostles*; the *epistles to the churches*; and that curious mystical allegory of the Neronian persecution known as the *Apocalypse*, were chosen out of the mass of early Christian literature to form the authoritative collection of inspired writing which we call the *New Testament*. The importance of this heterogeneous anthology of works belonging to all ages and systems, but confounded together in popular fancy under the name of the *Books*, or more recently still as a singular noun, the *Bible*, grew apace with the growth of the Church: though the extreme and superstitious adoration of their mere verbal contents has only been reached in the debased and reactionary forms of Christianity followed at the present day by our half-educated English and American Protestant dissenters.

From this very brief review of the most essential factors in the development of the Christian religion as a system, strung loosely together with a single eye to the requirements of our present investigation, it will be obvious at once to every intelligent reader that Christianity cannot possibly throw for us any direct or immediate light on the problem of the evolution of the idea of God. Not only did the concept of a god and gods exist full-fledged long before Christianity took its rise at all, but also the purely monotheistic conception of a single supreme God, the creator and upholder of all things, had been reached in all its sublime simplicity by the Jewish teachers centuries before the birth of the man Jesus. Christianity borrowed from Judaism this magnificent concept, and, humanly speaking, proceeded to spoil it by its addition of the Son and the Holy Ghost, who mar the complete unity of the grand Hebrew ideal. Even outside Judaism, the self-same notion had already been arrived at in a certain mys-