sibility, therefore, can the analysis of existing languages disclose to us the oldest name for deity or the historical origin of the idea of deity. Geology shows the vast antiquity of man, and nothing proves that he may not have been awed or comforted by thoughts of the Divine ages before the invention of the oldest Aryan or Semitic words. It is merest conjecture to assign the formation of the conception of deity to the dawn of historic time. Between primitive speech, primitive religion, the primitive condition of man, and the little streak of light called human history there stretches an immeasurable expanse of darkness.

The belief in primitive monotheism is generally rested on the authority of the opening chapters of Genesis. It is, however, doubtful if the appeal to them be legitimate, because doubtful if their strict historicity can be proved to those who insist on judging them merely by critical and historical criteria, or even if it can be fairly inferred from the view that they form part of a revelation. Then, although these chapters plainly teach monotheism, and represent the God whose words and acts are recorded in the Bible as no mere national God but the only true God, they do not teach, what is alone in question, that there was a primitive monotheism,—a monotheism revealed and known from the beginning. They give no warrant to the common assumption that God revealed monotheism to Adam, Noah, and others before the flood, and that the traces of monotheistic beliefs and tendencies in heathen­dom are derivable from the tradition of this primitive and antediluvian monotheism. The one true God is repre­sented in Genesis as making himself known by particular words and in particular ways to Adam, but is nowhere said to have taught him that He only was God. Adam knew, of course, only one God, as there was only one God to know ; but that he knew there was only one God we are not told, nor are any grounds given us even for con­jecturing that he knew it. We are told that God created the heavens and earth, but not that Adam was told it, and we know too little about Adam to be able to conceive how he could have understood the statement. We are informed that he knew God—the God who manifested himself to him in particular acts, but not what general idea he formed of God—whether henotheistic, pantheistic, or monotheistic, whether definitely exclusive of poly­theism or not, or in what measure anthropomorphic. It is not otherwise as regards what is reported of Noah. In fact, primitive monotheism is read into the records in Genesis only because they are read in an inaccurate and uncritical manner. If read aright, it would be seen that, while they speak much of how God acted towards man, they speak so extremely little as to what early man knew of God that the appeal to them on behalf of the hypo­thesis of primitive monotheism must be futile, even on the traditional view of their authorship and historicity.@@1

It is impossible to prove historically that monotheism was the primitive religion. Were, then, the oldest known historical forms of religion monotheistic ? Many maintain they were, but adequate evidence has never been adduced for the opinion. The oldest known religion is probably the Egyptian, and for at least three thousand years its

history can be traced by the aid of authentic records con­temporary with the facts to which they relate. Its origin, however, is not disclosed by Egyptian history, and was unknown to the Egyptians themselves. When it first appears in the light of history it has already a definite form, a character not rude and simple, but of considerable elevation and subtility, and is complex in contents, having certain great gods, but not so many as in later times, ancestor-worship, but not so developed as in later times, and animal worship, but very little of it as compared with later times. For the opinion that its lower elements were older than the higher there is not a particle of properly historical evidence,—not a trace in the inscriptions of mere propitiation of ancestors, or of belief in the absolute divinity of kings or animals ; on the contrary, ancestors are always found propitiated through prayer to some of the great gods, kings worshipped as emanations and images of the sun-god, and the divine animals adored as divine symbols and incarnations. The greater gods mentioned on the oldest tombs and in the oldest writings are comparatively few, and their mere names—Osiris, Horus, Thoth, Seb, Nut, Anubis, Apheru, Ra, Isis, Neith, Apis—conclusively prove that they were not ancient kings or deceased ancestors, but chiefly powers of nature, and especially, although not exclusively, of the heavens *; yet* from the earliest historical time they were regarded as not merely elemental, but as also ethical powers, working indeed visibly and physically in the aspects and agents of nature, yet in conformity to law and with intelligence and moral purpose. Wherever the powers of nature are thus worshipped as gods, the feeling that the separate powers are not all power, that the particular deities are not the whole of divinity, must be entertained and will find expression. The Egyptians had undoubtedly such a sense of the unity of the Divine from the dawn of their history, and they expressed it so strongly in various ways from a very early period that they have been pronounced mono­theists not merely by theologians attached to a traditional dogma but by most eminent Egyptologists—De Rougé, Mariette, Brugsch, and Renouf. As these scholars, how­ever, truthfully present the facts, they satisfactorily refute themselves. A religion with about a dozen great gods— distinct as regards their names, characteristics, histories, relationships, symbols, and worship—is not monotheism in the ordinary or proper sense of the term. A religion in which the Divine is viewed as merely immanent in nature, and the deities deemed physical as well as moral, elemental as well as ethical powers, is rather pantheistic than mono­theistic. Further, all assertions to the effect that the unity of the Divine is most emphatically expressed in the earliest historical stages of the religion are contrary to the evidence adduced even by those who make them. To quote Patah-Hotep as a proof of the monotheism of the Egyptian religion in its oldest historical phase is as uncritical as it would be to draw Homeric theology from the dialogues of Plato. The Egyptian religion was a polytheism which implied monism ; it was not mono­theism, which is exclusive of polytheism. Hence, not­withstanding frequent approximations to monotheism, the general result of the development of its monistic principles was pantheism, not monotheism. As to the ancient Chinese religion, Dr Legge easily shows that Prof. Tiele’s description of it as “ a purified and organized worship of spirits, with a predominant fetichist tendency,” has no historical warrant, but he fails completely to substantiate his own view, namely, that it was a strict and proper monotheism. The names T’ien and Ti afford no evidence that the early Chinese fathers regarded deity as truly and properly spiritual and personal. It is not in the most ancient Chinese writings that spirituality and personality

@@@l Among works in which the hypothesis of primitive monotheism is supported, the following may be mentioned Steuco, *De Perenni Philosophia,* 1540; Herbert, *De Religione Gentilium,* 1645; Gale, *Court of the Gentiles,* 1669-78 ; Cudworth, *True Intellectual System,* 1678 ; Bryant, *Ancient Mythology,* 1774-76 ; Creuzer, *Symbolik u. Mythologie,* 1819-21 ; De Bonald, *Législation Primitive,* 1819; Liiken, *Traditionen des Menschengeschlechts,* 1856 ; Gladstone, *Homer and the Homeric Age,* 1860; Ebrard, *Apologetik,* pt. ii., 1875; Zöckler, *Lehre vom Urstand des Menschen,* 1880 ; Cook, *Origins of Religion and Language,* 1884 ; Rawlinson, *Early Prevalence of Monotheistic Beliefs* (No. 11 of Present Day Tracts).