are ascribed to T’ien, and such ascriptions are exceptional in Chinese writings of any date. The great development of ancestor worship in China has been largely due to the impersonal character of T’ien. The arguments which have been adduced in support of the hypothesis of a primitive Semitic monotheism are also insufficient. Μ. Renan’s belief in a monotheistic instinct peculiar to the Semitic race has been so often and so convincingly shown to be contradicted both by history and psychology that another refutation of it might well be regarded as a mere slaying of the slain. Divine names like El, Baal, Adon, and Melech, being the oldest terms in the Semitic languages expressive of the Divinity, and having been retained through all the changes and perversions of Semitic reli­gion, have often been maintained to imply that primitive Semitic belief was monotheistic. But in reality Baal, Melech, and Adon were not names originally, or indeed at any time, given to the one Supreme God, or exclusively to any particular god ; on the contrary, they were titles applicable to many different gods. The oldest historical form of Aryan religion—the form in which the Vedas present it—is designated by Max Müller henotheism, in opposition to the organized anthropomorphic polytheism to which he restricts the term polytheism, but henotheism thus understood includes polytheism in its wider and more ordinary acceptation, while it excludes monotheism pro­perly so called. The oldest known form of Aryan religion was indubitably polytheistic in the sense of being the worship of various nature-deities ; and everything approxi­mating to monotheism in India, Persia, Greece, and other Aryan-peopled lands was the product of later and more advanced thought. The assertion that history everywhere or even anywhere shows religious belief to have com­menced with monotheism is not only unsupported by evidence, but contrary to evidence.@@1

While the oldest known religions of the world were thus not forms of monotheism, neither were they mere poly­theisms, wholly devoid of monistic and monotheistic germs and tendencies. The Chinese religion, indeed, can hardly be said to have been at any period a polytheism, the Chinese people no more regarding spirits and deceased ancestors as gods than Roman Catholics so regard angels and saints. They have throughout their whole known history explicitly and clearly acknowledged the unity of the Divine—the uniqueness of T'ien (Ti, Shang-Ti). Had they in like manner acknowledged the spirituality, per­sonality, transcendence of the Divine, their monotheism would have been indubitable. Then, even in those ancient religions, where a plurality of deities is apparent, a sense of the unity of the Divine is notwithstanding implied, and in the course of their development comes to expression in various ways. It could not be otherwise, for in these religions the divine powers (deities) are also powers of nature, and hence sprung from and participant in a mysterious common nature, an ultimate and universal agency which is at once the source of physical and divine existences and forces. Neither nature-deities nor powers of nature are ever conceived of, or indeed can be conceived of, as entirely distinct and independent. The lowest forms of polytheism, such as fetichism and animism, have no more marked characteristic than the indefiniteness of their

idea of the Divine and the imperfect individualization of their deities. In the highest forms of nature-worship, *e.g.,* the Vedic, Egyptian, and Babylonian-Assyrian, the same trait is perceptible. This implicit monism of nature- worship may, through the action of various causes, come to explicit utterance in diverse modes, and has in fact done so, with the result that even in the oldest known poly­theisms are to be found remarkable approximations to monotheism. One form of approximation was henotheism. When worship is ardent and earnest the particular god worshipped is apt to have ascribed to him the attributes, as it were, of all the gods—an almost absolute and exclusive godhead. Max Müller has shown how prominent a phenomenon henotheism is in the Vedas. Page Renouf has shown that it is very conspicuous also in the ancient inscriptions and hymns of Egypt. Horus, Ra, Osiris, Amun, Knum, were severally spoken of as if each were absolute God, invested not only with distinctive divine attributes but with all divine attributes. In the religious records of Babylon and Assyria monotheistic approxima­tions of the same kind are likewise common. Now, in themselves such monotheistic modes of expression may truly be held to be the products of passing moods of mind, not reflexions of permanent conviction. But every mood of mind tends to perpetuate itself, and the enthusiasm of piety which utters itself in henotheistic praises and prayers may take abiding possession of the soul of a powerful ruler or even of the hearts of a whole class of society or of a whole people, and may seem to them to find the strongest possible confirmation in experience. We may illustrate from Assyrian religious history. Tiglath-Pileser showed a marked preference for the worship of Asshur, to him “ king of all the gods,” “ he who rules supreme over the gods.” Nebuchadnezzar, again, showed a great partiality for the god Merodach, and applied exclusively to him such magnificent titles as “ the lord of all beings,” “ the lord of the house of the gods,” “ the lord of lords,” “ the lord of the gods,” “ the king of heaven and earth.” Nabonidus, on the other hand, specially revered Sin, the moon-god, and represented him as “the great divinity,” “the king of gods upon gods,” “the chief and king of the gods of heaven and earth.” A preference of this kind might arise from some merely accidental or personal cause, and be confirmed by experiences mainly individual, and yet have a vast historical influence. The devotional choice of a people must tend, however, still more than that of any monarch to the elevation of one god towards absolute godhead. It was accordingly what raised Asshur, the special national god of the Assyrians, to the head of the Babylonian- Assyrian pantheon during the Assyrian period. In a struggle of deities for supremacy the national god has an immense advantage in that he has both the piety and the patriotism of the people on his side. His rule is identified with providence ; he is credited with all the victories and successes of the nation ; and his power and godhead seem certified by fact and experience. The logic of events in every advancing nation combines with the essential tend­encies of piety and with the growth of conscience and reason to promote belief in the unity and perfection of the Divine. The general course of providence is no more polytheistic than it is atheistic. The best exemplification of the operation of the piety of an influential class in tran­scending polytheism is Brahmanism. But for the impulse given by Brahmanical piety Brahmanical speculation would never have reduced the Vedic gods to manifestations of Brahma. Henotheistic forms of approximation to mono­theism are not, however, the only ones. Particular gods —all of them—may be dropped out of view, and the generic thought of God alone retained. The mind and

@@@1 The view opposed in the above paragraph is that maintained in the following works (as well as those mentioned in the previous note), —De Rougé, *Études sur le Rituel Funéraire,* 1860 ; Renouf, *Hibbert Lectures,* 1879 ; Brugsch, *Religion u. Mythologie d. alten Aegypter,* 1884 ; Legge, *Religion of the Chinese,* 1880 ; Renan, *Hist. des Langues Sémitiques,* also *Considéra tions sur le Caractère Gen. des Peuples Semitiques,* and *Nouvelles Considerations* ; Pesch, *Der Gottesbegriff in den heidnischen Religionen des Alterthums,* 1886. Among the many replies to Renan, Max Müller’s (“Semitic Monotheism,” in *Chips,* vol. i.) and Steinthal’s (in *Z. V. S. W.,* i.) specially merit to be mentioned.