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## 789TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN THE CONFERENCE HALL, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, APRIL 8TH, 1935,  
AT 5.30 P.M.

W. N. DELEIVINGNE, Esq., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the election of J. Rowland Crook, Esq., O.B.E., as a Member, and James B. Nicholson and the Rev. Leslie F. E. Wilkinson, M.A., as Associates.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Mr. R. Duncan to read the Rev. Dr. S. M. Zwemer's paper, which he had kindly offered to do in the absence of the author, the title of the paper being "The Origin of Religion—by Evolution or by Revelation."

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### *THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION—BY EVOLUTION OR BY REVELATION.*

By PROFESSOR SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, D.D.

**I**N the sixteenth edition of a popular account of the great religions of mankind, Lewis Browne relates in the prologue how it all began :

"In the beginning there was fear ; and fear was in the heart of man ; and fear controlled man. At every turn it whelmed over him, leaving him no moment of ease. With the wild sougling of the wind it swept through him ; with the crashing of the thunder and the growling of lurking beasts. All the days of man were gray with fear, because all his universe seemed charged with danger . . . And he, poor gibbering half-ape, nursing his wound in some draughty cave, could only tremble with fear." \*

The evolutionary hypothesis seems to have the right-of-way not only in such popular works by non-Christians but with

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\* *This Believing World*, 16th Edition, p. 26.

Christian writers as well. We quote from two recent works on the study of the history of religion: "There was a belief once that religion began with a full knowledge of one true God and that thereafter through human fault and disobedience the light of the first splendid vision was clouded or lost. But this is not the story told by the assembled records. The story of religion is not a recessional. The worship of sticks and stones is not religion fallen into the dark; it is religion rising out of the dark. The procession of the gods has been an advance and not a retreat. The faiths of the dark and the dawn are not 'a sleep and a forgetting;' they are man's religious awakening and his first suppliant gesture toward the unseen. Why did he make the gesture?"\* While Professor E. D. Soper in his *Religions of Mankind* puts it even more frankly:

"Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans alike assumed a primitive divine revelation, and that settled the whole question. They conceived that in the beginning—that means when the first man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden—God revealed to him in some manner the essential truths of religion, such as the existence of one God, the obligation to obey him, and the hope of immortality. Thus furnished, he began his career, but when sin emerged the revelation became hazy and indistinct and finally was well-nigh if not completely lost. The difficulty with this exceedingly fascinating picture is that it rests on no solid foundation of fact. The Bible makes no clear statement which would lead to this conclusion. When man began to play his part he performed religious acts and engaged at times in a religious ritual; so much is evident, but nothing is said as to origins. That man received his religious nature from God is very plausible, but that differs widely from the statement that he came into life furnished with a full set of religious ideas. The theory of evolution presents us with a very different account of early man, an account which makes belief in a more or less complete revelation incongruous."†

According to writers of this school, the Hebrew religion itself is entirely due to a process of evolution. Yahweh was from time immemorial the tribal god of the Midianites and his abode was Mount Sinai. From the Kenite priest, Jethro, Moses gained the knowledge of Yahweh. So the later covenant at Sinai is

\* Professor G. S. Atkins, *Procession of the Gods*, p. 5.

† Professor E. D. Soper, *Religions of Mankind*, pp. 29-30.

presented in the form that Israel chose Yahweh not that Yahweh chose Israel. Volcanic phenomena account for the terrors at the giving of the Law. There was an ancient pastoral feast called Passover, and it is not impossible that a form of the seventh day Sabbath was imposed. "Beyond these points it is hardly possible even to hazard a conjecture." Later on, much later on, the prophets proclaimed a higher conception of deity as Lord of all and a universal morality.\* Here again we have the hypothesis of evolution applied to the documents and teaching of the Old Testament, and the argument has become familiar.

But the verdict is not unanimous. In a recent important work by Dr. Israel Rabin, entitled *Studien zur Vormosaischen Gottesvortellung*, this orthodox Jew protests against the view that monotheism was a later development in Israel and that it was preceded by polytheism and animism. Not only Moses, he says, but the Patriarchs were already monotheists. "The Covenant idea is as old as Abraham, and the Covenant at Sinai is history, not fiction. The God of Sinai is no mere mountain-god or local Kenite god. Monotheism is not the result of an evolutionary process, it rests upon revelation and existed from the beginning of Israel's history as portrayed in Genesis; there is no bridge from polytheism to monotheism." There is no bridge from polytheism to monotheism unless it be for one-way traffic across the chasm in the other direction. For those who accept the Old Testament and the New Testament as the word of God the idea of primitive monotheism seems self-evident. On the first page of Genesis we have the self-revelation of God, and the New Testament takes for granted the genuineness of this revelation. Those who reject the story of man's Creation and the Fall with the promise of Redemption can no longer take seriously the argument of the Apostle Paul in his epistles to the Romans and to the Corinthians. This paper, however, is not intended as a Biblical study on the origin of religion.

In the history of religion and in the study of the origin of the idea of God, the neglected factors are coming to their own. Entirely apart from the teaching of the early chapters in Genesis and Paul's statement in the first chapter of Romans, the evidence for primitive high gods and for early monotheism in the ethnic religions cannot be longer ignored. Recent scholarship on both

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\* W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development*, pp. 4-16, 22, 23, 175, etc.

sides of the Atlantic agrees that not evolution but innate knowledge, or a revelation, is the key to the origin of the idea of God, of immortality and of the rites of prayer and sacrifice.

The first modern writer to emphasize the fact that monotheistic ideas were found among primitive races and must be taken into account was Andrew Lang in his book, *The Making of Religion*. In 1924 Redan delivered an address before the Jewish Historical Society on monotheism among primitive peoples, in which he also rejected the evolutionary hypothesis. "Most of us," said he, "have been brought up in or influenced by the tenets of orthodox ethnology and this was largely an enthusiastic and quite uncritical attempt to apply the Darwinian theory of evolution to the facts of social experience. Many ethnologists, sociologists, and psychologists still persist in this endeavour. No progress will ever be achieved, however, until scholars rid themselves, once and for all, of the curious notion that everything possesses an evolutionary history; until they realize that certain ideas and certain concepts are as ultimate for man as a social being, as specific physiological reactions are for him as a biological entity."\*

It is encouraging to note that the tide has turned and that we have, especially on the European continent, outstanding scholars in this field who hold fast to supernaturalism and are opposed to the evolutionary hypothesis as the sole key to the history of religion. Among them we may mention the late Archbishop Söderblom, of Sweden, Alfred Bertholet and Edward Lehman, Alfred Blum-Ernst, Le Roy, Albert C. Kruijt, but especially P. Wilhelm Schmidt, founder of the anthropological review, *Anthropos*, and Professor of Ethnology and Philology in the University of Vienna. The exhaustive work of this Roman Catholic savant on the Origin of the Idea of God, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, is to be completed in eight massive volumes. In the five which have already appeared, he weighs in the balance the various theories of Lubbock, Spencer, Tylor, Andrew Lang, Frazer, and others, and finds them all wanting. The idea of God, he concludes, did not come by evolution but by revelation, and the evidence massed together, analysed and sifted with scholarly acumen, is altogether convincing.

Anthropology and ethnology are also swinging away from the old evolutionary concept as regards primitive races. Dr.

\* Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion*.

Robert H. Lowie of the American Museum of Natural History, in his recent important study on *Primitive Society*, says, "The time has come for eschewing the all-embracing and baseless theories of yore and to settle down to sober historical research. The Africans did not pass from a Stone Age to an Age of Copper and Bronze and then to an Iron age . . . they passed directly from stone tools to the manufacture of iron tools."\*

He concludes "that neither morphologically nor dynamically can social life be said to have progressed from a state of savagery to a stage of enlightenment." The American public is to be congratulated that the exhaustive work of Wilhelm Schmidt has now appeared in a greatly abbreviated form, and, translated from the original German, is available as a study text-book on the *History of Religion*.† Whatever may be the reaction of students of anthropology to a doctrine alien to the tradition still prevailing among many scholars, it will do no harm to face the arguments here presented with such force and apparently so well documented. The *London Times Literary Supplement*, in reviewing the book at considerable length, did so under the title, "Evolution or Eden." It is inevitable that Dr. Schmidt divides investigators of the history of religion into two classes—the believing and the unbelieving. By the latter he means those scholars who have themselves repudiated all faith in the supernatural, and "will talk of religion as a blind man might of colours, or one totally devoid of hearing of a beautiful musical composition."

The work before us is divided into five parts: The introduction deals with the nature, aim, and methods of comparative study of religion and the history of the subject. Part Two sketches the theories that were in vogue during the nineteenth century; namely, those that found the origin of religion in Nature-Myths, Fetishism, Manism or Ghost-Worship and Animism. Part Three deals with the twentieth century, and sketches the Pan-Babylonian theory, Totemism, Magianism, and Dynamism. In every case Dr. Schmidt gives an exposition of these various theories and a refutation of them based upon more accurate data from later investigations.

In Part Four we have an account of the supreme Sky-God whose existence was posited by Andrew Lang and others. It appears

\* Dr. Robert H. Lowie, *Primitive Society* (13th Edition, N. Y., pp. 436, 437).

† *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, by W. Schmidt. Translated by H. J. Rose. The Dial Press, N. Y., 1931, pp. 297.

that during the twentieth century there has been a progressive recognition of the primitive high God by European and American students of ethnology and religion. This protest against the evolutionary theory applies not only to the religion of primitives but to those who find the same development in the religion of the Old Testament.

Dr. Schmidt follows the historical method, and traces the belief in a supreme God across wide areas where primitive culture prevails ; for example, among the Pygmies of Africa, the Indians of North America, and certain tribes in Australia. The last chapter of this epoch-making book is entitled, "The Origin and History of the Primitive High God," in which we have the summary of the argument. "That the Supreme Being of the primitive culture is really the god of monotheism, and that the religion which includes him is genuinely monotheistic—this is the position which is most attacked by a number of authors. To this attack we may reply that there is a sufficient number of tribes among whom the really monotheistic character of their Supreme Being is clear even to a cursory examination. This is true of the Supreme Being of most Pygmy tribes, so far as we know them ; also of the Tierra del Fuegians, the primitive Bushmen, the Kurnai, Kulin and Yuin of South-East Australia, the peoples of the Arctic culture, except the Koryaks, and well-nigh all the primitives of North America."

Again, in massing the evidence for the character of this Supreme Being, he says, "The name 'father' is applied to the Supreme Being in every single area of the primitive culture when He is addressed or appealed to. It seems, therefore, that we may consider it primeval and proper to the oldest primitive culture. We find it in the form 'father' simply, also in the individual form ('my father') and the collective ('our father'). So far, this name has not been discovered among the Central African Pygmies, but it exists among the Bushmen and the Mountain Dama. It is lacking also among the Andamanese and the Philippine Negritos, but is found, although not commonly, among the Semang. Among the Samoyeds we find the formula 'my Num-father,' *i.e.*, sky-father. In North Central California, the name occurs among the Pomo and the Patwin ; all three forms of it are widely distributed among the Algonkins. It is also widely current among the two oldest Tierra del Fuegian tribes, the Yamanan and the Halakwulup, who use the form

'my father.' Among all the tribes of South-East Australia it is in common use, in the form 'our father.' There it is the oldest name of all, and even the women and children know it; the oldest of the tribes, the Kurnai, have no other name for Him. There is no doubt possible that the name 'father' is intended in this connection to denote, not physiological paternity (save in cases where the figures of the Supreme Being and of the First Father have coalesced) but an attitude of the greatest reverence, of tender affection and steadfast trust on the part of man towards his god."

The evidence for these astonishing statements is abundantly given in the larger eight-volume work, to which we have already referred. In his lectures on High Gods in North America, given at Oxford last year, Dr. Schmidt gives evidence for his view that the gods of these tribes were true gods with moral attributes, and that their beliefs possess a high religious value. Incidentally he proves that this pure religious faith comes *before* fetishism, animism, ghost-worship, totemism, or magism, from one or other of which evolution theories had derived the origin of religion. The Professor claims to have made it clear by his discoveries that "progressive evolution is not the key which opens the door to a true history of humanity, and consequently of man's religion." The peoples ethnologically oldest know nothing of totemism or any similar phenomena, but emphasise in their religion the creative power of the Supreme Being. Not evolution, but deterioration, is found in the history of religion among primitive tribes and the higher cultures that followed after their migration. As Dr. Schmidt expresses it in the concluding paragraphs of his earlier volume: "Thereafter, as external civilization increased in splendour and wealth, so religion came to be expressed in forms of ever-increasing magnificence and opulence. Images of gods and daimones multiplied to an extent which defies all classification. Wealthy temples, shrines and groves arose; more priests and servants, more sacrifices and ceremonies were instituted. But all this cannot blind us to the fact that despite the glory and wealth of the outward form, the inner kernel of religion often disappeared and its essential strength was weakened. The results of this, both moral and social, were anything but desirable, leading to extreme degradation and even to the deification of the immoral and anti-social. The principal cause of this corruption was that the figure of the Supreme Being was sinking



further and further into the background, hidden beneath the impenetrable phalanx of the thousand new gods and daimones.

“ But all the while, the ancient primitive religion still continued among the few remainders of the primitive culture, preserved by fragmentary peoples driven into the most distant regions. Yet in their condition of stagnation, poverty and insignificance, even there it must necessarily have lost much of its power and greatness, so that even among such peoples it is much too late to find a true image of the faith of really primitive men.”

It is of deep interest to note, also, that the question of primitive monotheism raised by Dr. Schmidt is now being carefully investigated by a number of German missionaries under the direction of Dr. Heinrich Frick, of Marburg. In *Africa*, a journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (July, 1931), London, Professor Dr. K. T. Preuss, of the University of Berlin, has a striking article on the conceptions of a Supreme Deity among primitive peoples, and his conclusions corroborate those of Dr. Schmidt. The reader may, however, ask whether Dr. Schmidt speaks with authority in this realm of knowledge or whether he is merely voicing the old orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church and, in this case, of evangelical Christianity. The answer is that in all of the volumes so far issued Dr. Schmidt makes no appeal to the Scriptures and (writing from the standpoint of anthropological science) gives no Scriptural references. He bases his whole argument on the data gathered by scores of observers and scholars who lived among Primitives. Father Wilhelm Schmidt is the most renowned of the group of scholars resident at St. Gabriel Scientific Institute in the suburbs of Vienna. A Westphalian, sixty-six years of age, he began to publish important studies on the South Sea languages as early as 1889. He founded *Anthropos*, the outstanding international review of ethnology and linguistics in 1906, and was for twenty years its editor. He has written 150 books and pamphlets on scientific subjects and is an acknowledged authority in Europe and America.\* The only attempt I have seen to reply to his arguments in *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee* is by a Dutch scholar, Dr. J. J. Fahrenfort, of Groningen University, in his book *Het Hoogste Wezen der Primitieven*.† He contends

\* *The Catholic World*, April, 1933, gives a sketch of his work, and a *Festschrift* published in his honour (Vienna, 1928) gives a list of all his publications.

† J. B. Wolters, The Hague, 1927, pp. 307. †

that the evidence for primitive monotheism given by Dr. Schmidt is inadequate and that his argument is based on pre-suppositions. But his thesis received a crushing reply by Dr. Schmidt in a paper published under the title, *Ein Versuch zur Rettung des Evolutionismus* (An Attempt to save Evolution), in the *International Archiv für Ethnographie* (Band XXIX, Heft IV-VI Leiden, 1928).\*

But Dr. Schmidt is not the first or only authority on primitive monotheism over against other theories for the origin of religion. Fifty years ago Dr. Francis L. Patton summed up the argument for his day ("The Origin of Theism," *Presbyterian Review*, October, 1882): "It is more important to note the fact that, aside from the declarations of Scripture upon the subject, there is good reason to believe that Monotheism was the primitive religion. And it is certainly true that polytheism, fetishism, and idolatry are corruptions of an earlier and purer faith. 'Five thousand years ago the Chinese were monotheists—not henotheists, but monotheists; and this monotheism was in danger of being corrupted, as we have seen, by a nature-worship on the one hand, and by a system of superstitious divination on the other.' So says Dr. Legge. And says M. Emmanuel Rouge: 'The first characteristic of the religion of ancient Egypt is the unity of God, most energetically expressed.' Says Le Page Renouf: 'The gods of the Egyptian, as well as those of the Indian, Greek, or Teutonic mythologies, were the "powers" of nature, the "strong ones," whose might was seen and felt to be irresistible, yet so constant, unchanging, and orderly in its operations as to leave no doubt as to the presence of an ever-living and active intelligence.' Says Professor Grimm: 'The monotheistic form appears to be the more ancient, and that out of which antiquity in its infancy formed polytheism . . . All mythologies lead us to this conclusion.' This, too, was once the belief of Max Muller, though, as has been shown, his opinions seem to have undergone a change under the pressure of a demand that religion shall be accounted for as a product of man's five senses. 'The more we go back, the more we examine the earliest germs of any religion, the purer, I believe, we shall find the conceptions of the Deity, the nobler the purposes of each founder of a new worship.'†

\* Dr. Fahrenfort replied in a pamphlet "Wie der Urmonotheismus am Leben erhalten wird" (Haag, 1930).

† *The Presbyterian Review*, October, 1882.

Stephen H. Langdon, of Oxford, comes to the same conclusion in a recent book dealing with the whole question of the origin of Semitic mythology.\* His conclusions are the more worthy of note because they represent the result of thorough investigation and are a complete denial of the earlier theories of W. Robertson Smith.

“After long study of the Semitic and Sumerian sources, I have become convinced that totemism and demonology have nothing to do with the origins of Sumerian or Semitic religions. The former cannot be proved at all; the latter is a secondary aspect of them. I may fail to carry conviction in concluding that, both in Sumerian and Semitic religions, monotheism preceded polytheism and belief in good and evil spirits. The evidence and reasons for the conclusion, so contrary to accepted and current views, have been set down with care and with the perception of adverse criticism. It is, I trust, the conclusion of knowledge and not of audacious preconception.

“The Semitic word for ‘god’ meant originally, ‘he who is high,’ a sky-god; and here also I believe that their religion began with monotheism; they probably worshipped El, Ilâh, as their first deity, a sky-god, corresponding to the Babylonian Anu, and the Greek Zeus. . . . In the minds of the earliest Sumerians *dinger* Enlil, *dingir* Enki, etc., really mean An-Enlil, An-Enki, etc., that is, Enil, Enki, etc., are only aspects of the father Anu. On seals of the pictographic tablets and on painted pots of that prehistoric period, the picture of a star constantly occurs. This star sign is almost the only religious symbol in this primitive age. *These facts cannot be explained without assuming monotheism in the beginning.*”

The fact is that the evolutionary theory as an explanation of the history is more and more being abandoned. It has raised more difficulties than it has explained. Professor Dr. J. Huizenga, of Utrecht University, gave an address on the history of human culture in which he actually defended this thesis: “The evolutionary theory has been a liability and not an asset in the scientific treatment of the history of civilization.”†

\* Cf. *The Mythology of all Races*, Vol. V, Semitic, Stephen Herbert Langdon, M.A. (pp. xviii, 93). (London, 1931.)

† Quoted in Alkema and Bezemer's *Volkenkunde van Nederlandsh Indie* (Haarlem, 1927), p. 134. Cf. the entire chapter on “Degeneration” in this important work on primitive tribes.

The degeneration theory (that is, in Scriptural language, the fall of man) is gaining adherents among ethnologists who are not theologians. Among them is R. R. Marett, who speaks of ups and downs in the history of religion and whose recent lectures on Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion are the very opposite of proof for the evolution of the religious idea. Not only was incest a crime but monogamy was the earliest form of marriage among the most primitive tribes. Primitive man believed in immortality and, after a fashion, in a world beyond. "Neanderthal man, to whom we grudge the name of *Homo sapiens*," says Marett, "achieved a future life. There can be no question, I think, that the experts are right in attributing to him deliberate burials with due provision for a hereafter. It is even noticeable that funeral custom is already beyond its earliest stage. At La Chapelle-aux-Saints, for instance, not only is the grave neatly dug and food laid by conveniently, but a cave too small for habitation has evidently been selected for a purely sepulchral purpose. If there was a time when the dead man was simply left lying by himself within his own cave-home, or when, perhaps, the dying man was prematurely abandoned, we are well past it."

Dr. Carl Clemen also finds evidence for religion during the palæolithic period, such as belief in a future life, sacrifice, etc.,\* while in his latest book on the Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion, Sir James G. Frazer uses these remarkable words :

"Men commonly believe that their conscious being will not end at death, but that it will be continued for an indefinite time or for ever, long after the frail corporeal envelope which lodged it for a time has mouldered in the dust. This belief in the immortality of the soul, as we call it, is by no means confined to the adherents of those great historical religions which are now professed by the most civilized nations of the world ; it is held with at least equal confidence by most, if not all, of those peoples of lower culture whom we call savages or barbarians, and there is every reason to think that among them the belief is native ; in other words, that it originated among them in a stage of savagery at least as low as that which they now occupy, and that it has been handed down among them from generation to generation without being materially modified by contact with

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\* *Urgeschichtliche Religion*. Boon, 1932.

racés at higher levels of culture. It is therefore a mistake to suppose that the hope of immortality after death was first revealed to mankind by the founders of the great historical religions, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam ; to all appearance, it was cherished by men all over the world thousands of years before Buddha, Jesus Christ and Mohammed were born."

*If we have belief in immortality, faith, hope and love, knowledge of a High-god or Sky-god and conscience with its taboos and dread of judgement (and all this anthropology now admits in primitive religion), how does that primitive man of ethnology psychologically differ from Adam in the Garden of Eden as portrayed in the Book of Genesis ?*

Professor Le Roy, after twenty years among the tribes of Africa, states that "when you have lived with primitives a long time, when you have come to be accepted as one of them, entering into their life and mentality, and are acquainted with their language, practices and beliefs, you reach the conclusion that behind what is called their naturism, animism or fetishism, everywhere there rises up real and living, though often more or less veiled, the notion of a higher God, above men, names, spirits and all the forces of nature. Other beliefs are variable, like the ceremonies attached to them, but this one is universal and fundamental."\*

Schmidt and Le Roy have found disciples. In the valuable *Bibliothèque Catholique des Sciences Religieuses* a volume has just appeared on Polytheism and Fetishism written by a Roman Catholic missionary in West Africa ; it closes with a chapter on primitive revelation. The religion of primitive tribes in West Africa, the author says, always includes five elements, all of which are impossible to explain without accepting the fact that *God has spoken* (Heb. i, 1). These five elements are : An organised family life ; a name for a supreme, unseen Power, sovereign and benevolent ; a moral sense, namely, of truth, justice, shame and a knowledge that there is good and evil ; the idea of "soul" in every African language and the universal belief that this soul does not die with the death of the body ; and, finally, communion with the unseen Supreme Power by prayer and sacrificial rites. "Devant ces considerations l'hypothèse de la Revelation primitive

\* Religion of the Primitives. Cf. Paul Radin, *Monotheism Among Primitive Peoples*. London, 1924, pp. 65-67, and R. E. Dennett, *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*. London, 1906, p. 168.

prend bien de les vraisemblance.”\* Before such considerations the hypothesis of a primitive revelation takes on every appearance of truth.

The evolution hypothesis in religion has been overworked, and has seriously embarrassed students of religion who have grappled with the problem of sin, its universality, and the universality of its correlate, namely, *conscience*, that is a sense of sin as a subjective reality. In the history of religion, and in the study of the origin of the idea of God, scientists may no longer neglect the early chapters of Genesis and the statement of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Revelation, and not evolution, is the key to the origin of the idea of God, of prayer, of sacrifice, and of conscience.

In this connection I quote words from the late Dr. Alexander Whyte. In his interesting series of studies on Bible characters in the first volume, speaking of Adam, he takes up the question of evolution and makes a clear distinction between biological evolution in the realm of science and evolution as an attempt to explain origins in religion. I believe that this distinction should be carefully observed. *The two problems in anthropology to which evolution has no solution are those of the origin of sin and the conscience on the one hand, and the other the origin of the Sinless One and redemption.* Here follow the weighty words of Dr. Whyte :

“As we are carried away by the spell of the great writers on evolution, we feel all the time that, after all has been told, there is still something unrecognized and undescribed from which we suffer the most disturbing and injurious influences. All the time we feel in ourselves a backward, sideward, downward, perverse pull under which we reel and stagger continually; it is an experience that makes us wiser than all our teachers in some of the most obscure, but at the same time some of the most certain matters of mankind and their spiritual history. Speaking for myself, as I read the great books of our modern scientific men with a delight and an advantage I cannot put enough words upon, I always miss in them—in them all and in the best of them all—a matter of more importance to me than all else they tell me. For, all the time I am reading their fascinating discoveries and speculations, I still feel in

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\* R. P. M. Briault—*Polytheisme et Fetichisme*, Paris, 1929, pp. 191-5.

myself a disturbance, a disorder, a dis-harmony, and a positive dislocation from the moral, and even from the material, order of the universe around me and above me: a disorder and a dislocation that my scientific teachers neither acknowledge nor leave room for its acknowledgment or redress. That is magnificent! That is noble! That is divine! I exclaim as I read. But when I come to the end of my reading—Is that all? I ask. I am compelled by all my experience and all my observation to ask, Is that all? Is that your very last word to me? Then, if that is all, I must go still in search of a philosophy of nature and of man that understands me, and accounts for me, and has, if so be, a more comprehensive, a more scientific, a more profound, and a more consoling message to me. In one word, and to speak out of the whole of my disappointment and complaint in one word, What about SIN? What is SIN? When and where did SIN enter in the evolution of the human race and seize in this deadly way on the human heart? Why do you all so avoid and shut your eyes to SIN? And, still more, what about JESUS CHRIST? Why do I find nothing in your best text-books about HIM who was WITHOUT SIN? About Him who is more to me, and to so many more of your best readers, than all Nature, and all her suns, and systems, and laws, and processes put together? Far more. For He has carried both our understanding and our imagination and our heart so absolutely captive that we cannot read with our whole heart the best book you have written because His name is not in it. WHO and WHAT is HE, we insist, who has leapt at a bound above all law and all order of matter and of mind, and of cosmic and ethic evolution, and has taken His stand of holiness at the head of the human race? ”

#### DISCUSSION.

Mr. W. N. DELEVINGNE said: I am sure you will think with me that our hearty thanks are due to Professor Zwemer for his extremely interesting paper. The title of the paper, if we amplify it somewhat, may be expressed thus—“Did God reveal Himself to man in the beginning, so that the earliest religion of man was monotheism, or has religion as we see it to-day been evolved from a crude and debased belief in the Supernatural?” When

it is expressed thus, it suggests at once that the view that the earliest form of religion among men was a debased belief in the supernatural has been adopted by evolutionists in order to make the facts relating to the spiritual experience of mankind fit in with their theory of evolution. As may be gathered from the paper before us, the evidence bearing on the question so lucidly discussed by the author is not extensive ; but such evidence as is to be found in the religions or mythologies of primitive races points unmistakably to monotheism as having been the earliest form of religion. Take, for example, the system of religious beliefs embodied in Hinduism and regarding which we have more information than in the case of any of the earliest forms of religion excepting that of the Hebrews. From the history of the development of religious belief among the Hindus it is clear that, according to the earliest belief, there was one god, Brahmā, who was the All and the All-in-All, the creator of all things, the gods Vishnu and Siva being merely different aspects of his creative energy. The polytheistic beliefs that are characteristic of modern Hinduism are a much later development and mark rather the debasement of Hindu religion.

Again, look at Islam, the religion of the Muhammadans. It is beyond dispute that, if it had any connection with or was influenced by any earlier form of religious belief, it was from the religion of the Jews that it drew its inspiration, and the religion of the Jews was undoubtedly monotheistic. Muhammad himself claimed that his revelation was confirmed by the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and so far from Islam being a product of evolution it is most probable that it resulted from the spread of Christianity and was an adaptation of Jewish belief that had as its object partly the personal ascendancy of Muhammad among his fellow Arabs and partly the accommodation of religious belief to the natural desires and pride of man.

The records of the history of Man that have survived favour the view that the primitive religion of man was monotheism. Dr. Schmidt, of Vienna, whose writings Professor Zwemer has referred to and discussed, has made extensive researches among the different races of the world, and the results of his investigations have been such as to afford convincing evidence that "The Supreme Being of the primitive culture was the god of monotheism."



When we turn to the Bible, we find in it, if we accept it as a true record, incontrovertible evidence that religion came by revelation, not by evolution. It shows clearly how man, through sin, fell away from pure monotheism and invented for himself many and various gods. God called Abram out of Ur that He might make of him a people for Himself. Idolatry was practised in Ur, but there can be no doubt that God had been known as Yah, or Jehovah, before that, and that He had not left Himself without witness among men. It has been the fashion of the so-called "higher critics" and modernists to impugn the authorship and even the authenticity of parts of the Bible, but their attempts have ended in failure. What is thought of their methods by those most competent to judge has been shown in a remarkable way in an action which a Canadian lady, Miss Florence Deeks, brought for damages against the well-known writer, Mr. H. G. Wells, on the ground that he had appropriated many parts of a book she was writing and had incorporated them in his own book—*The Outline of History*. In support of her claim two Bible "higher critics" of repute were called to give evidence and to show, by the application of the methods of the "higher criticism," that many parts of *The Outline of History* had been reproduced direct from the manuscript of the plaintiff's book. But it all ended in smoke. The trial Judge and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Ontario characterised the arguments and conclusions of these witnesses as puerile, and "just solemn nonsense," and "fantastic hypotheses," and their evidence was rejected as utterly worthless; while the Privy Council in England, before whom the case was finally brought, summarily dismissed the appeal with the remark that the evidence with which they were concerned was no evidence at all and ought not to have been allowed to be presented to the Trial Court.

The Bible stands unassailable, but there are two most cogent facts which, in conclusion, I would like to urge in support of Professor Zwemer's argument that the origin of religion is to be found in revelation and not in evolution. The first is that those who uphold the view that religion as we know it to-day came by evolution have failed to prove that any race of men in the whole course of human history have, in regard to their religious beliefs,

progressed from animism, polytheism, or some such debased form of religion to the monotheism that is to-day admitted to be the highest form of religion. And the second is that the existence of Jesus Christ, the One Perfect Man, standing wholly apart from all who went before and all who have come after, is utterly inexplicable on the assumption that the theory of evolution is true. That God created man and made him in His own image—this is the only hypothesis on which the record we have of Jesus Christ in the Bible can be explained.

MR. PERCY O. RUOFF said: It has been acutely observed that the first chapters of Genesis were either conceived by man or revealed by God. If they were conceived the orderly conceptions are sublime, and it may be as difficult to think of them as arising out of the mind as a product of thinking as it is to think of them as having been revealed by God and communicated to the writer. It is not easy to reconcile Genesis i with the theory of the evolution of man, and it may be said with some confidence that it is impossible to square it with the idea of the evolution of religion.

Recent archæological discoveries have proved the genuineness of the Genesis and other early Biblical records, and these records, if correctly interpreted, make out an irrefragable case for monotheism.

Professor Zwemer has certainly made out a strong case against the evolutionary theory of religion, and, weighing up the probabilities of the matter, the conclusion seems inevitable (to quote his own words) that "it has raised more difficulties than it has explained."

MR. SIDNEY COLLETT said: I am sure we must all feel that our Council have done well in bringing forward this subject of Evolution so frequently lately. The two papers recently read have been of a very high order.

Whichever way this matter is looked at, it is condemned:—

Firstly.—Some of our leading scientists have shown that it is an unproven theory. Sir George Stokes is an honoured name in the scientific world. In his memoir, his biographer uses these words: "Sir George Stokes said that he could not understand the way in which scientific men had accepted the theory of evolution before the

chain of evidence was completed. This surprised him exceedingly, for he knew of no similar instance in the history of scientific thought."

Professor Henslow asserts, in 60 pages of scientific reasons, that "there are no facts known to occur in nature in support of Darwinism," while Professor Bateson said "the more our knowledge is extended, the more incompatible does the theory of evolution become with the facts."

Secondly.—The theory, on their own showing, constitutes a direct attack on Holy Scripture.

Professor Schäfer, President of the British Association at Dundee, used these words:—"If the terms of life given in the purely mythological part of the Old Testament were credible" (certain things, he said, would happen); but he then goes on to say "Such records are no longer accepted . . . they have been relegated, with the account of the Creation and the Deluge, to their proper position in literature."!

Thirdly.—One verse alone in Scripture forever condemns that foolish theory, for if there were any truth in the view that man really came from the lower animal, then the flesh of man, and the flesh of beasts must be the same; but in I Cor. xv, 39, we read these clear and unmistakable words:—"All flesh is *not* the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of man, another flesh of beasts."!

Moreover, the erect attitude, intelligent speech, and the knowledge of God, which man alone possesses, forever separates between man and the lower animals. So that, from a scientific point of view, from a scriptural point of view, and on the ground of common sense, the theory of evolution stands utterly condemned.

Mr. GEORGE BREWER said: The suggestion of some modern theologians that all religion is the result of an evolutionary process rising through the more degrading forms of animism, totemism and polytheism to monotheism is not confirmed by sacred or profane history, nor is it by modern experience.

The history of man as recorded in the Bible reveals that after the Fall degeneracy quickly followed; the first generation producing the first murderer; that the descendents of Seth, who for a time retained the knowledge of God, mingled with the seed of Cain; and before the judgment of the Flood we read that all flesh had corrupted

his way upon the earth, which was filled with violence, and that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually.

After the Flood and the awe-inspiring effect which that terrible judgment must have had upon the survivors, we find that within the next 100 years men were defying God by attempting to build a tower which should reach to heaven, with the result that they were scattered over the face of all the earth.

The history of the nation of Israel reveals again and again the same degenerating tendency to depart from the worship of Jehovah to the false gods of the surrounding nations, and the history of the professing Christian Church manifests a similar retrograde movement from the purity and simplicity of New Testament teaching.

As Dr. Zwemer has shown in his excellent paper, students of comparative religion tell us, as the result of their researches, that the earliest forms of religion among the Africans, the Battaks of Sumatra, the ancient Indians, Persians, Egyptians, and Greeks, instead of being crude and degraded as evolutionists would naturally expect, were more or less pure, and that in every case there was degeneracy from monotheism to grosser and lower forms of worship. In Greece, for example, a pure monotheism was in existence long before polytheism appeared.

Thus in profane as well as in sacred history the truth is confirmed of the Apostle's statement in his Epistle to the Romans (i, 21, 23): "That when men knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts being darkened, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and quadrupeds, and creeping things."

In modern life the same degenerating tendency is also deplorably evident. Children of one family are trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, some by God's grace respond; others, drawn away by the allurements of the world, neglect the reading of God's word and the means of grace which He has provided, and although the teaching of their early years is not wholly lost upon them, their children, being frequently brought up without any religious training, become practically modern pagans.

The universe itself has been likened by scientists to a clock that

is running down and, like everything else in nature, reveals not an upward, but a downward tendency, confirming the Apostle's word in the eighth chapter of Romans : " The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God."

Evolution, the doctrine of Satan, whether applied to the inorganic, vegetable, or animal kingdoms, or to the various religions of mankind, remains an unproved and discredited theory and, as one has recently remarked, is only waiting to be consigned to the scientific dustbin.

Dr. J. BARCROFT ANDERSON wrote :—Dr. Zwemer's interesting paper, detailing the various accounts of human efforts to describe the many human organisations that have been in existence in different ages to control the outward relations of their fellow men, with the originator of all things, is of necessity a description of human ignorance and error, evolving, like all other wickedness, from an original partial knowledge of God's revelation to man.

To represent the four letters of the descriptive divine title—a simple Hebrew word, the third person singular, masculine, continuing tense, of the verb " exist"—" He continually exists"—to represent these four letters as being originally pronounced as two syllables would appear to be grotesque folly. The evidence of the earliest transliterations of Hebrew into Greek necessitates the conviction that at that time each Hebrew letter stood for a separate syllable. The present Latin form of that same word—JOVE—may, for aught we know, have been by the Latins once pronounced as four syllables. These pseudo-scientific theologians, in transliterating the four Hebrew letters of the divine title for English readers, instead of using our English letters whose pedigree can be traced back to the Hebrew letters, have used two letters later introduced into human language, " Y " and " W." Why have they done so ? What is wrong with the original Hebrew letters as they appear in English to-day—I, E, F, E ?

The description by the apostate theologians of the God of Israel as a " simple tribal deity," the invention of the Jewish race, seems to be more ridiculous still. When that people were not entirely apostate, it was God's divine power that alone prevented their apostacy. They never even conquered in war, apart from obvious divine intervention. It was not they who made him their God.

Dr. Zwemer's omission of all reference to Druidism is regretted. Why was it exterminated by the armed might of Imperial Rome? Was it because, as Morgan the historian maintained, Druidism was a purely ethical system, and therefore in Roman eyes not a religion?

Scripture is explicit that THE light, the true, does lighten every man coming into the world. That this light of man, was THE life, life which was in the Creator (Jno. i, 4-5). All history of religion seems to agree with the words in John, this light "in the cosmos (surroundings) was . . . and the cosmos it did not know." I have never yet heard any minister of religion refer in public to God's judgment of men for their attitudes to his eternal power and authority as revealed to them by nature; a judgment which will render eternal life to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality. (Rom. i, 20 and ii, 7-9.)

#### LECTURER'S REPLY.

I am exceedingly grateful to those who sent in discussion of my paper and pleased to find that there is no serious criticism of the premises or conclusions. Once more I wish to express my deep obligation to Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt whose massive work, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, has just been completed by a sixth volume. Those who desire a thorough study of the subject are referred to this work.

The remarks of Dr. J. B. Anderson enter a field not entirely germane to the subject of my paper. The discussion of the name of Jehovah in its original Hebrew form is a question for Hebraists, and as for the Druid religion it is not sufficiently known to offer evidence for or against primitive monotheism. Perhaps I may add that this published paper is part of a chapter in my new book *The Origin of Religion* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London).