

That in several very important senses there has been religious development from the beginning until now is, of course, admitted on all hands. Judged by almost any of the tests we can imagine, the religious condition of the world is better now than it has been at any previous time in its history. Pure monotheism counts a larger number of adherents than ever before, and it exercises a more potent influence in human affairs. Within our own day we have seen whole nations raised from the grossest idolatries and superstitions to a high degree of Christian civilization, and authentic history easily carries us back to a time when practically the whole of present Christendom was under the influence of a degrading polytheism. Two-thirds of the world's population to-day adhere to various heathen religions, and our aim is to raise them to a higher and purer faith by our missionary endeavors. We are confident these will yet succeed, and when they do we shall feel that immense advance has been made. The process must go on until the whole world is raised to a higher religious plane. Our ardent hope is that the progress which has marked the past should be projected into the future, and proceed even more rapidly than it has yet done.

But even within the limits of monotheism itself there has been development in religious ideas. The New Testament is an advance on the Old ; the Mosaic dispensation is an advance on the patriarchal ; the post-diluvian on the ante-diluvian. The Bible revelation is everywhere supposed to be a progressive one, in which new conceptions on religious matters are constantly being presented by accredited teachers, and old conceptions made more definite as time proceeded and occasion offered. The true religion has gained in extension, being more widely embraced now than ever before, but it has also gained in intension and clearness as the result of that marvellous providence by which God has been leading the church to a fuller apprehension of His character and will.

But while all this is true, the Bible everywhere assumes that from the very outset man had somehow come to acquire a conception of the existence of the one true God, and that in