

judge from their religious literature, there was a time when both of these great peoples were monotheists, though they have long ceased to be so. Renouf, one of the Hibbert Lecturers, himself admits that the sublime portions of the Egyptian religion are demonstrably ancient, and the last stage by far the grossest and most corrupt. If there is any law at all observable in the religious history of mankind, it is the law of degeneration. Advance is the exception and not the rule, save as the result of outside influence. We may not be able to claim that the earliest religion is the highest type of monotheism, but far more certainly it is not the lowest form of fetishism. From some point between the two there has been a double movement, one upward to Christianity and another, thus far the more general of the two, downward to more degraded forms.

There is little doubt that the strongest recommendation of the modern theory to the minds of many of its advocates is the fact that it seems to make the history of religious progress fall into line with the history of all other forms of life as interpreted by evolution. The thought of there being one law running through all nature is an irresistible one to the scientific mind. It seems almost useless to argue against it, whatever the facts may seem to be. And so far the scientific mind may be right. But the trouble in this case seems to arise from a partial apprehension of the real law of evolution and an erroneous application of it to this department. It is now coming to be better understood than was formerly the case that in no sphere does evolution mean a constant and universal advance from the lower to the higher. There has been advance on the whole, but not at every point. Each new type that appears seems to be at first in a condition of unstable equilibrium. Some of the individuals or some of the variant forms hold their own and ultimately make progress to something higher, but alongside of this there is the degeneracy and ultimate extinction of the rest. The relative proportion of the two classes is by no means a fixed one, but varies according to the conditions at the time. The degenerating element is always a large one. If in the history of religion degeneracy seems to