

We now turn to Persia. The religion of the Persians was, at first, the purest of all forms of idolatry. It was the worship of the sun, as the Supreme Being, with fire as the emblem, and the only visible thing religiously recognised in their temples. But such a simple form did not long continue, and other firmamental bodies were added and deified. Their religious notions were certainly, at first, the most intellectual and refined of all the heathen; but even with the wisdom of Zoroaster, and when, with a great mind, he attempted to bring light out of darkness, and truth out of fable, yet his creed, however ingenious, failed to satisfy. The experience of ages has proven, that mankind, with human reason only to guide them, can never remain stationary in an intellectual idolatry; and so it was in Persia, and in defiance of all the wisdom of the magi. Their recognition of a great power, symbolised by fire, left them still with an unknown God, and therefore there was no salutary influence operating on their moral being and social relations; and their religious notions ended, like all the others, in a multiform and debasing idolatry. They began with a Supreme Being, but, losing revelation, they deified the sun; and fears, fancies, and passions gradually introduced other objects; and at last, ancient Persia became a nation with idols crowded in its temples, and obscenity in their courts; with polygamy in the households, despots on the throne, and oppression and turbulence in the state.

Let us glance at the religion of Greece. There we find idolatry in all its intellectual majesty; with sages to correct its errors, and shew—if they could—a more excellent way; with historians to narrate the births and characters of the gods; and with poets to write and sing paeans to their honor. At first it was the worship of the sun and moon—by the names of Jupiter and Juno—but rapidly, idol was added to idol. The very intellectuality of the Greeks made them encrease their idol catalogue, for they were satisfied with none, and they sought for, and made more. They were lost in idolatry, and knew not how to extricate themselves; and their only hope was in having more gods, that, perchance, they might find the true one at last. From every known country, idols and forms of worship were imported; and religion thus became a search, rather than a conviction to the wise, and a degrading and unintelligible observance to the ignorant. The very magnitude of their idolatry perplexed them, and they became lost in the imaginative and superstitious labyrinths which they created, and were obliged to extend in hope of release, though, in fact, only to be the more completely bewildered. The philosophers reasoned, and asked, what, and where is truth? but they were perpetually baffled. They be-