

no God, they acknowledge no duty, in the highest sense of the term. They have no motive in the love of God, no motive in the fear of God to dissuade them from sin, and whatever sin best pleases them, there is no manifest reason why they should not commit it, provided they like it better than the inconveniences that attend it.

In a semi-barbarous community, the grossest superstitions may serve as a bond of society, and save it from utter licentiousness and dissolution. An indefinite terror of the powerful, and to them mysterious agents, whose effects are so manifest in various phenomena of nature, must unquestionably fortify, in many cases, the suggestions of conscience; but that intermediate state where superstition is totally disarmed, and even its advantages repudiated, and where, at the same time, no sound knowledge, nor rational persuasion of divine truth have found a place, has been found to exhibit the greatest proportion of low vices and hateful crimes,—the most frequent instances of public turbulence, rapacity and oppression, and the greatest insecurity respecting every thing which best deserves to be regarded as a common or public blessing. This conclusion might be established by an induction, founded upon a multitude of facts—upon the many periods in the history of mankind, in which the civilization of a community has overshadowed its ancient superstitions while it received neither the purity nor stability which the knowledge of the truth in Christ would have imparted.

Without this knowledge society is destitute of the elements of a *permanent* elevation; and though the fear of summary punishment may have the effect of restraining, and the ordinary occupations of life, by the pressure which they exert upon the violent passions of human nature, may have some influence in tranquilizing men, and reducing them into a sort of sentient peacefulness; they are quite consistent with the meanest variety or form of life, and may leave the man little better than his kine, scarcely possessed of any higher attainments than what consists in the powerful application of his whip or in the nice aim of his gun.—Such, or very similar, is the state of those Eastern nations which exhibit the longest genealogies notwithstanding, their skill in many arts of an inferior class. The length of their duration seems to have required this lowness of moral and intellectual stature, while the distinguished elevation of other ancient states,