

natural to do so, because the tendency proceeds from a principle of our constitution, implanted, if we contemplate the design of it, most wisely and graciously by our heavenly father. But it has ever been observable that the best blessings of God, when once they are corrupted, become the severest calamities, his greatest bounties the heaviest curses; and accordingly the very faculty which made mankind capable of religion, became, upon the gross ignorance which succeeded their fall from a state of innocence, the chief agent in their misery and degradation; a native sentiment perverted from its original object and proper aim in the reverence and worship of the one living God, bent them prostrate before imaginary powers, miserable phantoms begotten of darkness and terror.

What the state of mankind would have still been, but for the gracious interference of the Father of all, is a problem which there is no oracle to solve. Even with all the light which God has communicated, the book of man contains but a melancholy history, and if it has been thus in the green tree, what would it have been in the dry? It was not, however, the counsel of heaven to leave mankind in a state of hopeless darkness and groveling idolatry, but evidently the design of the Most High, that they should rise above the low and shrunken stature of nature, to higher degrees of knowledge, moral purity, and spiritual life; that his favor and wisdom should be freely bestowed wherever there was a sincere desire of receiving them, and a well-warranted hope of a blessed immortality communicated beyond the trials of life and darkness of the grave; and hence, by this expectation of a heavenly heritage, and by an explicit exposition of the means by which it may be obtained, has this theatre of the world been in some degree converted, and is progressively being converted into a school of righteousness and discipline, preparatory for eternity—not suffered to remain merely a field for alternate production and dissolution, life and death, existence and rotteness, but a place to be blessed with the presence of God through Christ Jesus, with the means of Salvation from spiritual death, with faith and love, with charity and peace, whenever man shall be brought to reverence and obey the law of their Creator. “The law of God is perfect, converting the soul; the law of God is pure, making wise the simple.” There are no refinements of a spurious civilization that can supersede it even in point of utility; for spurious indeed and corrupt must