

a peculiarity of religious system to prepare it for its maturity. It was "as an heir under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father," when risen, as to speak, to its maturity, through the previous experience and training, then, "God sent forth his Son" as the great Teacher, to bring it to the elementary condition and character, and divulge a system of a spiritual, universal, and perpetual nature.

But we pass from the divinely instituted religious systems—or rather the shadowy phases of the one system—to those directly under review. We can contrast Judaism with Christianity, and show that the one was the type, the other the reality; that the former was the "coming era which had cast its shadow before." We can prove, that the religious system given to the Jews, was only adapted to their national design and circumstances, which confined them to their own land, and made them an agricultural, rather than a commercial, nation; which shut them in, in every sense, as a peculiar people; and that their institutions, "temple, priesthood, sacrifices, emblems and law, rendered it an impossibility that it ever could become universal;—but we have now to consider the other systems, as they exhibited the tendency and utmost powers of the unaided human reason, and thus we will see what the mind, religion, morals, and civilization are worth, when left without the teaching of God.

The first form of an idolatrous religion, the nature of which history gives us any data to judge, was called Sabæism, and consisted in the worship of the fundamental bodies. Before the flood, it is evident that there must have been idolatry, for "the whole earth had corrupted its way," though we cannot tell of what kind it was; but early in the post-deluvian age, and after the dispersion at Babel, the tendency to idolatry rapidly displayed itself. Tribes were then formed, separated, and scattered; and having only a traditional faith, and away from the control, instructions, and priesthood of the great line of patriarchs, and left to tribal independence, to corruptions introduced, and the truth in tradition forgotten, and to the vain imaginations natural to the human brain, each altered the parent religious belief, and changed customs and worship; and the truth thus became so mixed up and diluted with religious fancies, arising both from ignorance and perversion, from fear and folly, that it could not be discerned. Error thus grew till it formed into a system; and that first systemised form of idolatry, was Sabæism, and had its origin in western Asia. Mankind gradually lost the knowledge of the true God, of his being and attributes, but still looking upward to powers supreme, formed the idea that the sun and moon were the two great divinities;—the one they called the King, and the other the Queen of heaven—and to each they gave a peculiar homage. They, then, farther supposed them to be parents, and that all the stars were their offspring, and to the most brilliant of these they gave names and worship. When once this idea was fixed in their minds, they next attributed peculiar functions and powers to each, and thence began the opinion of lucky and unlucky stars;—thence originated the whole system of ancient astrology—which, instead of recognising the one, supreme, over-ruling Providence, led to the most erroneous conceptions of astral influence. That, then, was the first step. It was leaving the Creator to worship his works—it was multiplying their gods—it was still looking upward—it was still seeing their divinities in the heavens;—but having lost God, they lost the first truth and purity of religion;—and there was but another step, which they soon took, to form idols on earth—likenesses of what they supposed were the gods, in the sun, moon, and stars; and to these they began to pay their worship, and thus their foolish minds became darkened, and even when "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." From Sabæism, then, was all idolatry derived. It was the first step that man took from the throne of God, and we will find that the human race declined exactly in proportion, as their religion became more and more "of the earth, earthy;" and from this great parent system of error, we can see that all subsequent systems bore evidence of their perversity.

Next in age was the Egyptian religion. Sabæism was succeeded by material, terrestrial, idolatry. The religious rationalisation connected with celestial objects, gradually decayed, and the earth took the place of the sky in furnishing gods, and Egypt—the boasted Egypt—ranked the first in making, worshipping, and extending, the lowest and meanest system that was, or is, or can be. It was full of the most fantastic and degrading absurdities, and yet it seems to have had a kind of dignity through

the pomp which attended it, and by the pretended mysteries, learning, and philosophy which supported it. The ancient Egyptian philosophers held the eternity of mind and matter, and represented one Great Mind, or Being, as presiding over all other gods in the spiritual and material worlds. Thus they held the fact, it is true, of One Supreme Being, but they failed to know and worship him as he is, and they degraded him, by making gods to divide his glory. They kept on this fact as a dim traditional truth, but through they held it, it was a mere philosophical myth, to give consistency to an idolatrous theory, and that they might have a divine personage for every thing, real or imaginary, which they might choose to worship. This Supreme Mind was the god Ammon—evidently called after their progenitor Ham, if indeed it was not an actual dedication of him—in whose honor the city of No Ammon, or Thebes, was called, and where was the splendid temple which, though dedicated to him, was in fact their pantheon; and where were also, the great schools, or colleges, of religion and philosophy. To Ammon, was joined their supreme goddess Neith, or Neiths, and from these two came the whole offspring of divinites, to which, according to the supposed offices they held, religious service was paid. This was the department of their system which may be called their celestial idolatry.——They had next, the god Osiris, united to the goddess Isis, and which seem to have been the chief powers of earth, hades, and the infernal regions. Osiris had attributed to him many functions similar to the Pluto of the Greeks; and that he took charge of the souls of men after death, and according to their doctrine of metempsychosis, had the power to send the soul to animate another body, whether of a reptile or a man, as he judged the former merits deserved. From Osiris and Isis there was another offspring of lesser divinites, with their several powers and offices. This was the second great department of their system, which may be called their infernal idolatry. It was worship to the celestial gods to do them all good; and to the infernal gods to do them no harm.——To these innumerable, great and little gods of good and evil, they had a third department, which may be called their terrestrial idolatry, or visible objects of worship, such as the Nile, the crocodile, the serpent, and the cow.

The whole system was an immense conglomeration of the conceptions of the imaginative and the drowsy, run mad, and no efforts of power and expense were spared to carry it out; and an excessive, as well as honorable was the priesthood, so rich were the temples, and so important, laborious and punctilious was the worship, that the first born of every Egyptian family was entitled, if not required, to study and rank as a priest. This was the line of the priesthood, and thus it—that may be called the church—came to hold the superior proprietorship or lordship of the soil of the whole country, and the mass of the people were the mere serfs. On this fact we can see and understand the design of the extraordinary judgment of God, when the first born of every family was doomed to death by the destroying angel. By the hand of Moses, Jehovah had proved himself "high above all gods" in their celestial or infernal catalogue. The plagues came, and by these their celestial gods were shown to be powerless for good; in year, even their great god, the Sun, was overcome by "a darkness that might be felt;" and their infernal gods, according to their belief, were shown to be active against them in the hail, the locusts, and the murrain; and the objects of their terrestrial worship were destroyed. "The temples became polluted, so that there could be no service in them; and the people became polluted, so that they could not worship though their temples had been clean. Their sacrifices, too, were all destroyed; and thus by judgment on judgment, they were left without the help of their gods, and without the means and opportunity to propitiate them; and, last of all, by one terrible sword, to consummate the destruction, and display the majesty of the God of Israel, the whole priesthood was annihilated.

The religion of Egypt is often spoken of as philosophical and refined, but we ask, was that either philosophy or refinement, which led to the worship of gods they knew not what or where—the creations of wild and superstitious fancies and fears—and which condescended even to pay religious honors to the river, the reptile, and the brute! No, for while there is a fictitious honor thrown around the throne of the Pharaohs and the history of a once famous land, yet the religion was a mystery to the people, a trade to the priests, and a curse to all. Egypt may stand prominent for the magnitude of her idolatrous establishment, but not one sound religious principle can be found in her annals; and the most favorable facts we can gather, are only testimonies to the folly of a