

VICES of the nation. Were it not that the system of worship under the Jewish economy was more of a ceremonial than of a preceptive nature—consisted more of an appeal to the senses than to the understanding, we should be inclined to believe, in the absence of direct testimony to the contrary; that the mass of the Hebrew nation, during the Theocracy, would be able to read and write. The laws were read and expounded, and the ceremonials prepared in presence of all the people—so that, probably, all were made to understand them by means of oral teaching.

Judea may therefore be considered the birth-place of learning; and from hence, in consequence of the universality of her language; her central position among the nations; the learning of her prophets, her poets, and her historians; education extended its boundaries to the surrounding countries. It is doubtful whether the Pagan nations possessed any knowledge of alphabetical writing, previous to the days of Solomon, whose reign was peace, and whose court was the most enlightened that ever existed. One thing, however, is certain—that hieroglyphical writing was introduced among the Egyptians probably through the Phœnicians and Chaldeans at an early age; and learning of various kinds was also introduced as their intercourse increased with the Jewish people.

Josephus, the Jewish historian and orator—born A. D. 37—inform us that the Jewish nation did “not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations, * * because they look upon this sort of accomplishment as common, not only to all sorts of free men, but to as many of the servants as please to learn them.” Speaking in the same connection, of those who were fully acquainted with Jewish laws, and become “able to interpret their meaning;” he says—“there have yet hardly been so many as two or three that have succeeded therein, who were immediately well rewarded for their pains.”

The same author further informs us—that the Greeks and Athenians, who pretend to be aborigines, had no public records of their early national transactions; and “as to the Arcadians, * * it was still later before they got their letters and learned them, and that with difficulty.”

Our historian informs us that the Jews paid great attention to the education of their children, and were also particular in keeping a true record of the transactions of their nation; while the Pagan nations, who entrusted all their public affairs to the care of the priests, were for a long time without having made any record of the transactions of their countries; and when they did so, they were not always particular as to truth—hence the difficulty of compiling a correct history. The idea that Josephus intends to convey as to the education of the Jewish children probably is—that they were particular in having them instructed orally in the rites and ceremonies of the temple worship; for frequent reference is made to the reading of the law, etc., in the presence of the people; but no mention is made of their reading for themselves. Why it pleased the Almighty to have instruction conveyed to the mass of the Jewish people, in an oral manner for so many ages, it is not for us to determine.

The mass of society among the heathen nations must have been in a deplorable state of ignorance. We are informed that in that “exceeding great City Nineveh, the Capital of the Assyrian Empire, which was three days journey”—or sixty miles in circumference—there were “more than six score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left hand.”

During the palmy days of the Chaldean, Venetian, and Egyptian dynasties, the study of astronomy, and the distribution of the heavenly bodies into constellations, and time into periods—was studied by the Chaldean Magi—under the cognomen of *Judicial Astrology*; and every object of study was mixed up with the most fabulous and untenable doctrines imaginable, and the whole made to portend the will of the Gods.

The term *philosophy* was applied indiscriminately to every object of human knowledge, whether physical, moral or intellectual. And the few who possessed learning were designated *wise men*.

In descending the stream of time we find the different nations who have in different ages divided among themselves as a kind of inheritance, the vast continent of Asia, were the Chinese, the Indians, the Tartars, the Arabs, and the

For
in t
of t
is t
but
the
tiva
exis
C
tiqu
gua
of t
to d
coun
cius
turic
littl
com
whic
the
beem
struc
In
have
dred
omet
navig
Pe
of th
in ob
viliza
that
that
ledge
cultiv
but t
Eg
as th
heath
cultiv
ing,
sever
edge
know
conve
A k
import
ancien
along
ences,
which
natur
ed to
more
of reli
The
Librar
valua
tal lit