

vinced that the reverence displayed to them, is a yielding to custom rather than what is due to real truth. The philosopher will observe prayer, as commanded by the civil law, and not as gratifying to the gods." Thus the idolatry, while it was tenaciously held by the mass of the people, was kept up by the powerful and the intellectual as a police establishment, and in which, as political economists—not as religionists—they had an interest. Ancient Rome—proud Rome!—exhibits what human power and philosophy can do, in making a religion for man; and the sad spectacle we see is, that her very religion encouraged hypocrisy and licentiousness, and did more to brutalize her than if she had adopted—had it been possible—pure atheism, and had never had a temple or a god.

From these brief notices of the leading characteristics of ancient heathen religion, we arrive at two indisputable facts.—First—that all ancient idolatry had one great common origin. There was certainly, at first, the knowledge of the true God, but "when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations," and "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator." The natural mind and imagination everywhere ran in the same track, and either intuitively conceived the same idolatrous ideas, or willingly copied and adopted those which had been already propounded; for we uniformly find that the idolatries of all nations—though wide apart in point of time and distance—bore a great and remarkable family likeness.—Second—we find that not one nation that had departed from the knowledge of the true God, ever, without revelation, found its way back, but, instead, that in every case the idolatry was downward—more multiplied—more corrupting—more degrading—and in no case was the religious sentiment pure, the reason of the inquirer satisfied, or the state secure. The intellect was crushed under the weight of superstition; the reason was in darkness because it had extinguished the divine light; and mankind were without God and without hope in the world.

Infidelity, in its opposition to Christianity, may talk and boast of heathen religion, but nowhere are its excellencies to be seen. It had gods, for whose existence a proud and evil imagination was the only authority; it had priesthoods that lived and ruled on the fears, the ignorance, the superstition, and the complete demoralisation of the multitude; and for a man who may profess any intelligence, and regard to reason and decency of social life, to contrast the very best system with