

estimate its standing in the scale of civilization. For instance, if we are told that the inhabitants of a certain part of the world are fire-worshippers, we are at once able to form an idea of their mental tendencies, their manner of life and social condition. We know, that as they have no conception of a supreme ruler their every action will, to a great extent, be controlled by their own selfish desires, that having no ideal of purity and goodness, they cannot be otherwise than in a state of moral and physical degradation, and that their reasoning and imaginative faculties must have sunk low indeed, before they could bow in adoration to one of the commonest phenomena of nature. But if we learn that those same people have embraced Christianity, how sweeping is the revolution which we know must have been effected in the condition of their lives; law and order, substituted for licentious freedom; peace and love replacing hatred and broils, and their souls reclaimed from the darkness of death, to live in the pure effluence of a merciful and everlasting God.

Concerning the origin of the religion of Greeks, which the Romans also subsequently adopted, there are two existing theories; the one, which is of recent date, holds that the Grecian mythology is but a corruption of the old religion of the Hebrews. The other, and by far the more generally accepted, maintains that the whole system is a highly poetic creation, representing nature in all her various forms. Now, the force of argument by which both of these theories are supported is so great, that neither of them can be set aside in preference to the other; and this being the case, there is only one conclusion that we can come to, that both theories are to some extent true, and that the Grecian religion is in reality a corrupted form of the religion of the Old Testament, greatly augmented by a worship of the many beauties and phenomena of nature, which were being constantly presented to the Hellenic mind. Hence

might be explained the fact, that with the exception perhaps of the people of Ancient India the Greeks and Romans possessed a loftier and nobler conception of a supreme being than is to be found in any other nation in heathendom, and that amid all their intricate beliefs, their beautiful fictions and enchanting imagery they always maintained a clear distinction between right and wrong and an abhorrence of low deceit. Their high sense of honor and love of integrity was certainly not inferior to that of modern times. Virtue was to them a source of real delight. Their principles of government too, were just and sound. Yet notwithstanding the existence of all these qualities so material to social progress, the civilization both of Greece and Rome began to wane, and this is more remarkable from the fact that the beginning of the decline in both nations forms the most brilliant intellectual epoch in their respective careers. This relapse may be accounted for partly by the lack of education among the masses, which will be treated of farther on, and partly by the following considerations. The religion of the ancients, however conducive it might have been to the advancement of literature and the plastic arts, was not of a nature to promote that most essential feature of true civilization—social harmony. Fear and selfishness were the principal incentives to religious worship. Brotherly love formed no part of their creed. Each individual found in himself all that was worth living for. In private life his pleasures gave way to nothing; in public he scrupled not to ruin whoever stood in the road to his own success. To this there are indeed some noble exceptions, but these only serve by the contrast to show more strongly the characteristics of the age they lived in. How brightly do the names of the two Gracchi stand forth from the pages of Roman history, and yet only to show in their true colors, the bloody greed of their patrician assassins and the cow-