

in sacred history. Here I would take the liberty to remark that, historians seem to think that the old legends of a nation, however fanciful and absurd they may appear to us, are by no means devoid of truth and that we ought not to throw them aside as useless fictions, without examining them closely first, to see if we cannot discover some historical truth therein, as it is only by means of traditions and legends that the early history of a nation can be divined.

Notwithstanding the belief of the Indians of America in the existence of many gods, they acknowledge but one Supreme Being. They believe this Supreme God to be all powerful, all knowing, infinitely perfect and invisible. So far as it is possible to ascertain by verbal information as furnished by the Indians themselves in this part of America, this Supreme Being was never represented under any corporeal figure. The idea that he was subject to any imperfection appears never to have entered into their heads; and He was supposed to preside over the whole world, nothing escaping his eye. From this it is evident that their notion of the Supreme Being was far superior to that of the ancient Romans and Greeks, respecting their Jupiter and Zeus, whom their poets did not hesitate to represent as beings subject to all the passions and frailties of human nature.

It is true that the Indians sometimes introduced the name of the Lord of the Universe into their war songs. They did so, not with levity, but in a solemn manner and in token of their submission to His will, whatever might happen to them in the warlike enterprise in which they were about to engage.

I think they had a pretty correct idea of the doctrine of Omnipresence, for they were careful to impress upon the minds of their children that the Great Spirit was above their heads, watching over them continually; and in order to have them properly instructed in their duties towards their parents and neighbors, a certain number of discreet aged people were selected to exhort the children in the evening. To the residences of these instructors the children repaired after their work was done, where they received good counsel and caution against doing evil. They were made to understand that however careful they might be to avoid suspicion or detection when doing injury to a neighbor, the Great Spirit would see all their actions, who was always near them. That if they incurred his displeasure, they had no right to expect any favors from him, as He withheld his good gifts from those who took delight in creating discord by calumny, and in tormenting others by means of jugglery and poisonous weeds. That they were to respect and obey their parents, that they might put to shame the evil spirit