

stars. They feel that he must be superior to themselves; but how much superior, they know not. They never think of him as infinite, because the idea of infinity on any subject never enters their mind. They conceive of the earth only as a plain of considerable extent, bounded by a circle, beyond which their thoughts never wander; and they look up to the heavens as a dome, perhaps solid, studded by luminous bodies, it may be a few feet or yards in diameter. They suppose that, somehow or other, this superior Being has the control of their destinies; but the idea of any thing like worship is too spiritual to be conceived of, except, perhaps, some superstitious rite, performed to deprecate the divine displeasure. In short, every thing in their notion of God is indefinite, gross, and confined to the narrow sphere of the senses.

*In the second place, polytheism, especially among nations somewhat civilized, is an advance in man's conceptions of the Supreme Being.*

Polytheism probably originated in the deification of distinguished men. Superior minds, who had been the leaders or the benefactors of mankind, were suddenly torn from an admiring world by death. Their bodies were left behind, but the animating principle, the immortal mind, had vanished in a moment; and it was a most natural inquiry, even among the most ignorant, whether some undying principle had not escaped and gone to a higher sphere; for it would be difficult to conceive how so much intelligence and virtue should be quenched in a moment in eternal night. It would be a most natural and gratifying conclusion with survivors, that their departed leaders and benefactors still lived, and were in some way concerned in watching over their interests, and in controlling their destinies. Conjectures of this sort would, in a few generations, settle into positive belief. Now, this would be a most important advance upon the gross materialism, and indefinite ideas, which identified divinity with striking objects of nature; for if distinguished warriors and statesmen were still alive after their bodies were laid in the grave, there must have escaped at the moment of death, some principle too subtle to be cognizable by the senses, or by chemical, mechanical, or electrical agencies; and which, therefore, may have been immaterial. At least, by such a belief, men would be led insensibly to form an idea of the human soul as an extremely