

tenuous, if not immaterial principle. Especially would educated men, those devoted to philosophical pursuits, come at length to have a clear conception of a spiritual being, neither visible by the senses, nor dependent upon the senses for the exercise of its faculties. Very soon would the imagination fill the universe with such beings, and conceive them as holding intercourse with one another, and as presiding over all the objects of this lower world, and directing all its destinies. It would be very natural, however, to endow these superior beings with human characteristics, and to suppose them actuated by human passions; and thus would the celestial society be represented as a counterpart of that on earth, deformed by the same vices and crimes. This would lead to the idea of a gradation in rank, power, and intellect among the gods, and to the conception of one as supreme. In the popular mythology, however, even Jupiter was represented as acting under the influence of selfishness, pride, lust, and passion; and as sometimes brought into peril by his powerful inferiors. Some of the philosophers of Greece and Rome did, indeed, give descriptions of their supreme divinity not unworthy the biblical views of Jehovah. It may be that they got the clew to these just and elevated conceptions from the Bible. But it is not difficult to conceive that, in the manner which I have described, they might, by reasoning, with, perhaps, some hints derived from revelation, have gradually attained to these just and noble conceptions of the supreme divinity. Yet it ought not to be forgotten that these exalted views of the philosophers were not shared at all by the common people, and that even the philosophers themselves were for the most part polytheists.

The next step in man's knowledge of God was an immeasurable advance upon polytheism. *I refer to the revelation which God made of himself to the Jews in the Old Testament.* Most of this revelation did, indeed, precede the writings of the Greek and Roman philosophers, but it was confined to a rude and almost unknown people, until the days of their glory had gone by, and did not spread over the globe till an opportunity had been afforded to prove that *the world by wisdom knew not God.* You may, indeed, find, in the writings of a few philosophers, passages descriptive of the natural attributes of the Deity that will compare favourably with those of the Old Testament. But his moral attributes, his benevolence,