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Sect. I. Religious Worship.

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S E C T. I.

Religious Worship.

THE obligation we are under to worship God, or to walk humbly with him, is, as observed above, founded on the two great principles of gratitude and obedience; both of them requiring fundamentally a pure heart, and a well-disposed mind. But heart-worship is alone not sufficient: there are over and above required external signs, testifying to others the sense we have of these duties, and a firm resolution to perform them. That such is the will of God, will appear as follows. The principle of devotion, like most of our other principles, partakes of the imperfection of our nature: yet however faint originally, it is capable of being greatly invigorated by cultivation and exercise. Private exercise is not sufficient. Nature, and consequently the God of nature, require public exercise or public worship: for devotion is infectious, like joy or grief (*a*); and by mutual communication in a numerous assembly, is greatly invigorated. A regular habit of expressing publicly our gratitude and resignation, never fails to purify the mind, tending to wean it from every unlawful pursuit. This is the true motive of public worship; not what is commonly inculcated, viz. That it is required from us, as a testimony to our Maker of our obedience to his laws: God, who knows the heart, needs no such testimony*. I shall only add upon the general head,

(*a*) Elements of Criticism, vol. 1. p. 180. edit. 5.

* Arnobius (*Adversus gentes, lib. 1.*) accounts rationally for the worship we pay to the Deity: "Huic omnes ex more prosternimur, hunc collatis precibus adoramus."

head, that lawgivers ought to avoid with caution the enforcing public worship by rewards and punishments: human laws cannot reach the heart, in which the essence of worship consists: they may indeed bring on a listless habit of worship, by separating the external act from the internal affection, than which there can be nothing more hurtful to true religion. The utmost that can be safely ventured, is to bring public worship under censorian powers, as a matter of police, for preserving good order, and for preventing bad example.

The religion of Confucius, professed by the *literati* and persons of rank in China and Tonquin, consists in a deep inward veneration for the God or King of heaven, and in the practice of every moral virtue. They have neither temples, nor priests, nor any settled form of external worship: every one adores the supreme Being in the manner he himself thinks best. This is indeed the most refined system of religion that ever took place among men. There is however an invincible objection against it, which is, that it is not fitted for the human race: an excellent religion it would

“ mus, ab hoc justa, et honesta, et auditu ejus condigna, deposcimus. Non quo
 “ ipse desideret supplices nos esse, aut amet substerni tot millium venerationem vide-
 “ re. Utilitas hæc nostra est, et commodi nostri rationem spectans. Nam quia
 “ proni ad culpas, et ad libidinis varios appetitus, vitio sumus infirmitatis ingenitæ,
 “ patitur se semper nostris cogitationibus concipi: ut dum illum oramus, et mere-
 “ ri ejus contendimus munera, accipiamus innocentæ voluntatem, et ab omni nos
 “ labe delictorum omnium amputatione purgemus.”— [In English thus: “ It is
 “ our custom to prostrate ourselves before him; and we ask of him such gifts only
 “ as are consistent with justice and with honour, and suitable to the character of the
 “ Being whom we adore. Not that he receives pleasure or satisfaction from the
 “ humble veneration of thousands of his creatures. From this we ourselves derive
 “ benefit and advantage; for being the slaves of appetite, and prone to err from
 “ the weakness of our nature, when we address ourselves to God in prayer, and
 “ study by our actions to merit his approbation, we gain at least the wish, and the
 “ inclination, to be virtuous.”]



be for angels ; but is far too refined, even for sages and philosophers.

Proceeding to deviations from the genuine worship required by our Maker, and gross deviations there have been, I begin with that sort of worship which is influenced by fear, and which for that reason is universal among savages. The American savages believe, that there are inferior deities without end, most of them prone to mischief : they neglect the supreme Deity because he is good ; and direct their worship to soothe the malevolent inferior deities from doing harm. The inhabitants of the Molucca islands, who believe the existence of malevolent invisible beings subordinate to the supreme benevolent Being, confine their worship to the former, in order to avert their wrath ; and one branch of their worship is, to set meat before them, hoping that when the belly is full, there will be less inclination to mischief. The worship of the inhabitants of Java is much the same. The negroes of Benin worship the devil, as Dapper expresses it, and sacrifice to him both men and beasts. They acknowledge indeed a supreme Being, who created the universe, and governs it by his Providence : but they regard him not ; “ for,” say they, “ it is needless, if not impertinent, to invoke a being, who, good and gracious, is incapable of injuring or molesting us.”

The austerities and penances that are practised in almost all religions, spring from the same root. One way to please invisible malignant powers, is to make ourselves as miserable as possible. Hence the horrid penances of the Faquirs in Hindostan, who outdo in mortification whatever is reported of the ancient Christian anchorites. Some of these Faquirs continue for life in one posture : some never lie down : some have always their arms raised above their head : and some mangle their bodies with knives and scourges. The town of Jagrenate in Hindostan is frequented by pilgrims, some of them from the distance of 300 leagues, which they

they travel, not by walking or riding, but by measuring the road with the length of their bodies; in which method of loco-motion, some of them consume years, before they complete their pilgrimage. A religious sect made its way some centuries ago into Japan, termed *Bubidoists*, from *Bubs*, the founder. This sect has prevailed over the ancient sect of the Sintos, chiefly by its austerity and mortifications. The spirit of this sect inspires nothing but excessive fear of the gods, who are painted prone to vengeance, and always offended. The people of that religion pass most of their time in tormenting themselves, to expiate imaginary faults; and they are treated by their priests with despotism and cruelty, that is not paralleled but by the inquisitors of Spain. The manners of the people are fierce, cruel, and unrelenting, such as never fail to be inspired by horrible superstition. The notion of invisible malevolent powers, formerly universal, is not to this hour eradicated, even among Christians; for which I appeal to the fastings and flagellations among Roman-Catholics, held by them to be an essential part of religion. People infected with religious horrors, are never seriously convinced, that an upright heart and found morality make the essence of religion. The doctrine of the Jansenists, concerning repentance and mortification, shows evidently, however they may deceive themselves, that they have an impression of the Deity as a malevolent being. They hold the guilt contracted by Adam's fall to be a heinous sin, which ought to be expiated by acts of mortification, such as the torturing and macerating the body with painful labour, excessive abstinence, continual prayer and contemplation. Their penances, whether for original or voluntary sin, are carried to extravagance; and they who put an end to their lives by such severities, are termed the sacred victims of repentance, consumed by the fire of divine love. Such suicides are esteemed peculiarly meritorious in the eye of Heaven; and it is thought, that their sufferings cannot fail to appease the
anger



anger of the Deity. That celibacy is a state of purity and perfection, is a prevailing notion in many countries: among the Pagans, a married man was forbid to approach the altar, for some days after knowing his wife; and this ridiculous notion of pollution, contributed to introduce celibacy among the Roman-Catholic priests. The Emperor Otho, *anno* 1218, became a signal penitent: but instead of atoning for his sins by repentance and restitution, he laid himself down to be trod under foot by the boys of his kitchen; and frequently submitted to the discipline of the whip, inflicted by monks. The Emperor Charles V. toward the end of his days, was sorely depressed in spirit with fear of hell. Monks were his only companions, with whom he spent his time in chanting hymns. As an expiation for his sins, he in private disciplined himself with such severity, that his whip, found after his death, was tinged with his blood. Nor was he satisfied with these acts of mortification: timorous and illiberal sollicitude still haunting him, he aimed at something extraordinary, at some new and singular act of piety, to display his zeal, and to merit the favour of Heaven. The act he fixed on was as wild as any that superstition ever suggested to a distempered brain: it was to celebrate his own obsequies. He ordered his tomb to be erected in the chapel of the monastery: his domestics marched there in funeral procession, holding black tapers: he followed in his shroud: he was laid in his coffin with much solemnity: the service of the dead was chanted; and he himself joined in the prayers offered up for his *requiem*, mingling his tears with those of his attendants. The ceremony closed with sprinkling holy water upon the coffin; and the assistants retiring, the doors of the chapel were shut. Then Charles rose out of the coffin, and stole privately to his apartment.

The history of ancient sacrifices is not so accurate, as in every instance to ascertain upon what principle they were founded, whether

ther upon fear, upon gratitude for favours received, or to solicit future favour. Human sacrifices undoubtedly belong to the present head: for being calculated to deprecate the wrath of a malevolent deity, they could have no other motive but fear; and indeed they are a most direful effect of that passion. It is needless to lose time in mentioning instances, which are well known to those who are acquainted with ancient history. A number of them are collected in Historical Law-tracts (*a*): and to these I take the liberty of adding, that the Cimbrians, the Germans, the Gauls, particularly the Druids, practised human sacrifices; for which we have the authority of Julius Cæsar, Strabo, and other authors. A people upon the Mississippi, named *Tensas*, worship the sun, and, like the Natches their neighbours, have a temple for that luminary, with a sacred fire in it, continually burning. The temple having been set on fire by thunder, was all in flames, when some French travellers saw them throw children into the fire, one after another, to appease the incensed deity. The Prophet Micah (*b*), in a passage partly quoted above, inveighs bitterly against such sacrifices: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The ancient Persians acknowledged Oromazes and Arimanes as their great deities, authors of good and ill to men. But I find

(*a*) Tract 1.

(*b*) Chap. 6.



not that Arimanes, the evil principle, was ever an object of any religious worship. The Gaures, who profess the ancient religion of Persia, address no worship but to one God, all-good and all-powerful.

Next, of worshipping the Deity in the character of a mercenary being. Under that head come sacrifices and oblations, whether prompted by gratitude for favours received, or by self-interest to procure future favours; which, for the reason mentioned, I shall not attempt to distinguish. As the deities of early times were thought to resemble men, it is not wonderful, that men endeavoured to conciliate their favour, with such offerings as were the most acceptable to themselves. It is probable, that the first sacrifices of that kind were of sweet-smelling herbs, which in the fire emitted a flavour, that might reach the nostrils of a deity, even at a distance. The burning incense to their gods, was practised in Mexico and Peru; and at present is practised in the peninsula of Corea. An opportunity so favourable for making religious zeal a fund of riches to the priesthood, is seldom neglected. There was no difficulty to persuade ignorant people, that the gods could eat as well as smell: what was offered to a deity for food, being carried into the temple, was understood to be devoured by him.

With respect to the Jewish sacrifices of burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, sin-offerings, peace-offerings, heave-offerings, and wave-offerings, these were appointed by God himself, in order to keep that stiff-necked people in daily remembrance of their dependence on him, and to preserve them if possible from idolatry. But that untractable race did not adhere to the purity of the institution: they insensibly degenerated into the notion that their God was a mercenary being; and in that character only, was the worship of sacrifices performed to him: the offerings mentioned were liberally bestowed on him, not singly as a token of their dependence,

pendence, but chiefly in order to avert his wrath, or to gain his favour*.

The religious notions of the Greeks were equally impure: they could not think of any means for conciliating the favour of their gods, more efficacious than gifts. Homer paints his gods as mercenary to an extreme. In the fourth book of the Iliad, Jupiter says, "Of these cities, honoured the most by the soul of Jove, is sacred Troy. Never stands the altar empty before me, oblations poured forth in my presence, favour that ascends the skies." Speaking in the fifth book of a warrior, known afterward to be Diomedes, "Some god he is, some power against the Trojans enraged for vows unpaid: destructive is the wrath of the gods." Diomedes prays to Minerva, "With thine arm ward from me the foe: a year-old heifer, O Queen, shall be thine, broad-fronted, unbroken, and wild: her to thee I will offer with prayer, gilding with gold her horns." Precisely of the same kind, are the offerings made by superstitious Roman-Catholics to the Virgin Mary, and to saints. Electra, in the tragedy of that name, supplicates Apollo in the following terms.

————— O! hear Electra too;
Who, with unsparing hand, her choicest gifts
Hath never fail'd to lay before thy altars;
Accept the little All that now remains
For me to give.

The people of Hindostan, as mentioned above, atone for their

* There is no mention in ancient authors of fish being offered to the gods in sacrifice. The reason I take to be, that the most favourable food of man was reckoned the most agreeable to their gods; that savages never thought of fish till land-animals became scarce; and that the matter as well as form of sacrifices were established in practice, long before men had recourse to fish for food.



fin by austere penances ; but they have no notion of presenting gifts to the Deity, nor of deprecating his wrath with the blood of animals. On the contrary, they reckon it a sin to slay any living creature ; which reduces them to vegetable food. This is going too far ; for the Deity could never mean to prohibit animal food, when man's chief dependence originally was upon it. The abstaining, however, from animal food, shows greater humanity in the religion of Hindostan, than of any other known country. The inhabitants of Madagascar are in a stage of religion, common among many nations, which is, the acknowledging one supreme benevolent deity, and many malevolent inferior deities. Most of their worship is indeed addressed to the latter ; but they have so far advanced before several other nations, as to offer sacrifices to the supreme Being, without employing either idols or temples.

Philosophy and sound sense, in polished nations, have purified religious worship, by banishing the profession at least of oblations and sacrifices. The Being that made the world, governs it by laws that are inflexible, because they are the best possible ; and to imagine that he can be moved by prayers, oblations, or sacrifices, to vary his plan of government, is an impious thought, degrading the Deity to a level with ourselves : “ Hear, O my people, and I
 “ will testify against thee : I am God, even thy God. I will take
 “ no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy fold : for
 “ every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand
 “ hills. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ?
 “ Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows to the Most
 “ High. Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee,
 “ and thou shall glorify me (a).” “ Thou desirest not sacrifice,
 “ else would I give it ; thou delightest not in burnt-offering.

(a) Psalm 50.

“ The



“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (a).” “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings (b).” In dark ages, there is great shew of religion, with little heart-worship: in ages of philosophy, warm heart-worship, with little shew*.

This is a proper place for the history of idolatry; which, as will anon appear, sprung from religious worship, corrupted by

* Agathias urges a different reason against sacrifices. “Ego nullam naturam esse existimo, cui voluptati sint fœdata sanguine altaria, et animantium lanienæ. Quod si qua tamen est cui ista sint cordi, non ea mitis et benigna est aliqua, sed fera ac rabida, qualem pavorem poetæ fingunt, et Metum, et Bellonam, et Malam Fortunam, et Discordiam, quam indomitam appellant.”—[*In English thus*: “I cannot conceive, that there should exist a superior being, who takes delight in the sacrifice of animals, or in altars stained with blood. If such there be, his nature is not benevolent, but barbarous and cruel. Such indeed were the gods whom the poets have created: such were Fear and Terror, the goddesses of War, of Evil Fortune, and of Discord.”]—Arnobius batters down bloody sacrifices with a very curious argument. “Ecce si bos aliquis, aut quodlibet ex his animal, quod ad placandas cœditur mitigandasque ad numinum furias, vocem hominis sumat, eloquaturque his verbis: Ergone, O Jupiter, aut quis alius deus es, humanum est istud et rectum, aut æquitatis alicujus in æstimatione ponendum, ut cum alius peccaverit, ego occidar, et de meo sanguine fieri tibi patiaris satis, qui nunquam te læserim, nunquam sciens aut nesciens, tuum numen majestatemque violarim, animal, ut scis, mutum, naturæ meæ simplicitatem sequens, nec multiformium morum varietatibus lubricum?”—[*In English thus*: “What if the ox, while he is led out to slaughter to appease the fancied wrath of an offended deity, should assume the human voice, and in these words astonish his conductors: Are these, O merciful God, are these the dictates of humanity, or of justice, that for the crime of another I should forfeit my life. I have never by my will offended thee, and, dumb as I am, and uninformed by reason, my actions, according to the simplicity of my nature, cannot have given thee displeasure, who hast made me as I am.”]—If this argument were solid, it would be equally conclusive against animal food.

(a) Psalm 51.

(b) Hosea vi. 6.



men of shallow understanding and gross conceptions, upon whom things invisible make little impression.

Savages, even of the lowest class, have an impression of invisible powers, tho' they cannot form any distinct notion of them. But such impression is too faint for the exercise of devotion. Whether inspired with love to a good being, or with fear of an ill being, savages are not at ease without some sort of visible object to animate them. A great stone served that purpose originally; a very low instrument indeed of religious worship; but not altogether whimsical, if it was introduced, which is highly probable, in the following manner. It was an early and a natural custom among savages, to mark with a great stone, the place where their worthies were interred; of which we have hints every where in ancient history, particularly in the poems of Ossian. "Place me," says Calmar, mortally wounded, "at the side of a stone of remembrance, that future times may hear my fame, and the mother of Calmar rejoice over the stone of my renown." Superstition in later times having deified these worthies, their votaries, rejoicing as formerly over the stones dedicated to them, held these stones to be essential in every act of religious worship performed to their new deities*.

* Frequent mention is made of such stones in the poems of Ossian. "But remember, my son, to place this sword, this bow, and this horn, within that dark and narrow house marked with one gray stone." p. 55. "Whose fame is in that dark-green tomb? Four stones with their heads of moss stand there, and mark the narrow house of death." p. 67. "Let thy bards mourn those who fell. Let Erin give the sons of Lochlin to earth, and raise the mossy stones of their fame; that the children of the north hereafter may behold the place where their fathers fought." p. 78. "Earth here incloses the loveliest pair on the hill: grass grows between the stones of the tomb." p. 208. In the same poems we find stones made instruments of worship. The spirit of Loda is introduced threatening Fingal: "Fly to thy land, replied the form: receive the wind and fly. The blasts are in the hollow of my hand: the course of the storm is mine. The King of Sora is my son: he bends at the stone of my power." p. 200.

Tradition



Tradition points out many stones in different parts of the world, that were used in religious worship. A large stone worshipped by the Pessenuntians, a people of Phrygia, under the name of *Idea mater*, was, upon a solemn embassy to that people, brought to Rome; it being contained in the Sybilline books, that unless the Romans got possession of that goddess, they never would prevail over Hannibal. And Pausanias mentions many stones in Greece, dedicated to different divinities; particularly thirty square stones in Achaia, on which were engraved the names of as many gods. In another place, he mentions a very ancient statue of Venus in the island Delos, which, instead of feet, had only a square stone. This may appear a puzzling circumstance in the history of Greece, considering that all the Grecian gods were originally mortals, whom it was easy to represent by statues: but in that early period, the Greeks knew no more of statuary than the most barbarous nations. It is perhaps not easy to gather the meaning of savages, with respect to such stones: the most natural conjecture is, that a great stone, dedicated to the worship of a certain deity, was considered as belonging to him. This notion of property had a double effect: the worshippers, by connection of ideas, were led from the stone to the deity: and the stone tended to fix their wandering thoughts. It was probably imagined, over and above, that some latent virtue communicated to the stone, made it holy or sacred. Even among enlightened people, a sort of virtue or sanctity is conceived to reside in the place of worship: why not also in a stone dedicated to a deity? The ancient Ethiopians, in their worship, introduced the figure of a serpent as a symbol of the deity: two sticks laid cross represented Castor and Pollux, Roman divinities: a javelin represented their god Mars; and in Tartary, formerly, the god of war was worshipped under the symbol of an old rusty sabre. The ancient Persians used consecrated fire, as an emblem of the great God. Tho' the negroes of Congo
and



and Angola have images without number, they are not however idolaters in any proper sense: their belief is, that these images are only organs by which the deities signify their will to their votaries.

If the use that was made of stones and of other symbols in religious worship, be fairly represented, it may appear strange, that the ingenious Greeks sunk down into idolatry, at the very time they were making a rapid progress in the fine arts. Their improvements in statuary, one of these arts, was the cause. They began with attempting to carve heads of men and women, representing their deified heroes; which were placed upon the stones dedicated to these divinities. In the progress of the art, statues were executed complete in every member; and at last, statues of the gods were made, expressing such dignity and majesty, as insensibly to draw from beholders a degree of devotion to the statues themselves. Hear Quintilian upon that subject. “ At quæ Polycleto defuerunt, Phidiæ atque Alcameni dantur. Phidias tamēn diis quam hominibus efficiendis melior artifex traditur: in ebore vero, longe citra æmulum, vel si nihil nisi Minervam Athenis aut Olympium in Elide Jovem fecisset, cujus pulchritudo adjecisse aliquid etiam receptæ religioni videtur; adeo majestas operis deum æquavit.*” Here is laid a foundation for idolatry: let us trace its progress. Such statues as are represented by Quintilian, serve greatly to enflame devotion; and during a warm fit of the religious passion, the representation is lost,

* “ The deficiencies of Polycletus were made up in Phidias and Alcamenes. Phidias is reckoned to have had more skill in forming the statues of gods than of men. In works of ivory he was unrivalled, altho’ there had been no other proofs of his excellence than the statue of Minerva at Athens, and the Jupiter Olympius in Elis. Its beauty seems to have added to the received religion; the majestic statue resembling so much the god himself.”

and

and the statue becomes a deity; precisely as where King Lear is represented by Garrick: the actor vanishes; and, behold! the King himself. This is not singular. Anger occasions a metamorphosis still more extraordinary: if I happen to strike my gouty toe against a stone, the violence of the pain converts the stone for a moment into a voluntary agent; and I wreak my resentment on it, as if it really were so. It is true, the image is only conceived to be a deity during the fervour of devotion; and when that subsides, the image falls back to its original representative state. But frequent instances of that kind, have at last the effect among illiterate people, to convert the image into a sort of permanent deity: what such people see, makes a deep impression; what they see not, little or none at all. There is another thing that concurs with eye-sight, to promote this delusion: devotion, being a vigorous principle in the human breast, will exert itself upon the meanest object, when none more noble is in view.

The ancient Persians held the consecrated fire to be an emblem only of the great God: but such veneration was paid to that emblem, and with so great ceremony was it treated, that the vulgar came at last to worship it as a sort of deity. The priests of the Gaures watch the consecrated fire day and night: they keep it alive with the purest wood, without bark: they touch it not with sword nor knife: they blow it not with bellows, nor with the mouth: even the priest is prohibited to approach it, till his mouth be covered with fine linen, lest it be polluted with his breath: if it happen to go out, it must be rekindled by striking fire from flint, or by a burning glass.

The progress of idolatry will more clearly appear, from attending to the religion of the Greeks and Romans. The Greeks, as mentioned above, made use of stones in divine worship, long before idolatry was introduced: and we learn from Varro, that for a hundred and seventy years after Numa, the Romans had no statues

tues



tues nor images in their temples. After statues of the gods came in fashion, they acquired by degrees more and more respect. The Greek and Roman writers, talk of divine virtue being communicated to statues; and some of the Roman writers talk familiarly, of the *numen* of a deity residing in his statue. Arnobius, in his book against the Gentiles, introduces a Gentile delivering the following opinion. "We do not believe, that the metal which composes a statue, whether gold, or silver, or brass, is a god. But we believe, that a solemn dedication brings down the god to inhabit his image; and it is the god only that we worship in that image." This explains the Roman ceremony, of inviting to their side the tutelar deities of towns besieged by them, termed *evocatio tutelarium deorum*: the Romans, cruel as they were, overflowed with superstition; and as they were averse from combating the tutelar deities even of their enemies, they endeavoured to gain these deities by large promises, and assurance of honourable treatment. As they could not hope that a statue would change its place, their notion must have been, that by this ceremony, the tutelar deity might be prevailed upon to withdraw its *numen*, and leave the statue a dead lump of matter. When Stilpo was banished by the Areopagus of Athens for affirming, that the statue in the temple of Minerva was not the goddess, but a piece of matter carved by Phidias; he surely was not condemned for saying, that the statue was made by Phidias, a fact universally known: his heresy consisted in denying that the *numen* of Minerva resided in the statue. Augustus, having twice lost his fleet by storm, forbade Neptune to be carried in procession along with the other gods; imagining he had avenged himself of Neptune, by neglecting the favourite statue in which his *numen* resided.

When saints in the Christian church were deified, even their images became objects of worship; from a fond imagination, that such worship draws down into the images, the souls of the saints they

they represent: which is the same doctrine that Arnobius, in the passage above mentioned, ascribes to the Gentiles; and is not widely different from the belief of the Pagan Tartars and Ostiaks, by and by to be mentioned. In the eleventh century, there was a violent dispute about images in the Greek church; many asserting, that in the images of our Saviour and of the saints, there resides an inherent sanctity, which is a proper object of worship; and that Christians ought not to confine their worship to the persons represented, but ought also to extend it to their images.

As ignorant and savage nations can form no conception of Deity, but of a being like a man, only superior in power and greatness, images are made of the Deity in several nations conformable to this conception. It is easy to make some resemblance of a man; but how is power and greatness to be represented? To perform this with propriety, would require a Hogarth. Savages go more bluntly to work: they endeavour to represent a man with many heads, and with a still greater number of hands. The northern Tartars seem to have no deities but certain statues or images coarsely formed out of wood, and bearing some distant resemblance to the human figure. To palliate so gross an absurdity, as that a god can be fabricated by the hands of man, they imagine this image to be endued with a soul: to say whence that soul came, would puzzle the wisest of them. That soul is conceived to be too elevated for dwelling constantly in a piece of matter: they believe that it resides in some more honourable place; and that it only visits the image or idol, when it is called down by prayers and supplications. They sacrifice to this idol, by rubbing its mouth with the fat of fish, and by offering it the warm blood of some beast killed in hunting. The last step of the ceremony is, to honour the soul of the idol with a joyful shout, as a sort of convoy to it when it returns home. The Ostiaks have a wooden idol, termed, *The Old Man of Oby*, who is guardian of



their fishery : it hath eyes of glafs, and a head with short horns. When the ice diffolves, they crowd to this idol, requesting that he will be propitious to their fishery. If unsuccessful, he is loaded with reproaches : if successful, he is entitled to a share of the capture. They make a feast for him, rubbing his snout with choice fat ; and, when the entertainment is over, they accompany the soul of the idol a little way, beating the air with their cudgels. The Ostiacs have another idol, that is fed with milk so abundantly, as to come out on both sides of the spoon, and to fall down upon the vesture ; which, however, is never washed, so little is cleanliness thought essential to religion by that people. It is indeed wonderfully absurd, to think, that invisible souls require food like human creatures ; and yet the same absurdity prevailed in Greece.

The ancient Germans, a sober and sensible people, had no notion of representing their gods by statues, nor of building temples to them. They worshipped in consecrated groves (a). The Egyptians, from a just conception that an invisible being can have no resemblance to one that is visible, employ'd hieroglyphical figures for denoting metaphorically the attributes of their gods ; and they employ'd, not only the figures of birds and beasts, but of vegetables ; leeks, for example, and onions. This metaphorical adjunct to religion, innocent in itself, sunk the Egyptians to the lowest degree of idolatry. As hieroglyphical figures, composed frequently of heterogeneous parts, resemble not any being human or divine ; the vulgar, losing sight of the emblematic signification, which is not readily understood but by poets and philosophers, took up with the plain figures as real divinities. How otherwise can it be accounted for, that the ox, the ape, the onion, were in Egypt worshipped as deities ? But this must be under-

(a) Tacitus de moribus Germanorum, cap. 9.

stood



stood of the vulgar only. It is scarce supposable, that the better sort of people could think so grossly; and we have the authority of Plutarch for doubting. In his chapter upon Isis and Osiris, he observes, that the Egyptians worshipped the bull, the cat, and other animals; not as divinities, but as representatives of them, like an image seen in a glass; or, as he expresses it in another part of the same chapter, "just as we see the resemblance of the sun in a drop of water." However this be, the Egyptian worship is an illustrious instance of the influence of devotion: how powerful must it be in its purity, when even in a wrong direction, it can force its way against every obstacle of common sense! And such respect was paid to these animals, if we can trust Diodorus Siculus, that in a great famine, the Egyptians ventured not to touch the sacred animals, tho' they were forc'd to devour one another. The veneration paid to a cow in Hindostan arose probably from the same cause, viz. its having been used as a symbol of the Deity. A snake of a particular kind, about a yard long, and about the thickness of a man's arm, is worshipped by the Whidans in Guinea. It has a large round head, piercing eyes, a short pointed tongue, and a smooth skin, beautifully speckled. It has a strong antipathy to all the venomous kind; in other respects, innocent and tame. To kill them being a capital crime, they travel about unmolested, even into bedchambers. They occasioned, ann. 1697, a ridiculous persecution. A hog, teased by one of them, gnashed it with his tusks till it died. The priests carried their complaint to the king; and no one presuming to appear as counsel for the hogs, orders were issued for slaughtering the whole race. At once were brandished a thousand cutlasses; and the race would have been extirpated, had not the king interposed, representing to the priests, that they ought to rest satisfied with the innocent blood they had spilt. Rancour and cruelty never rage more violently, than under the mask of religion.



It is amazing how prone the most polished nations formerly were to idolatry. The Tyrians, besieged by Alexander, chained down Hercules, their tutelar deity, to prevent him from deserting to the enemy; which is said to have been also practised in Sparta. The city of Ambracia being taken by the Romans, and every statue of their gods being carried to Rome; the Ambracians complained bitterly, that not a single divinity was left them to worship. How much more rational are the Hindostan bramins, who teach their disciples, that idols are emblems only of the Deity, intended merely to fix the attention of the populace!

The first statues in Greece and Tuscany, were made with wings, to signify the swift motion of the gods. These statues were so clumsy, as scarce to resemble human creatures, not to talk of a divinity. But the admirable statues executed in later times, were imagined to resemble most accurately the deities represented by them: whence the vulgar notion, that gods have wings, and that angels have wings.

I proceed to what in the history of idolatry may be reckoned the second part. Statues, we have seen, were at first used as representatives only of the Deity; but came afterward to be metamorphosed into divinities. The absurdity did not stop there. People, not satisfied with the visible deities erected in temples for public worship, became fond to have private deities of their own, whom they worshipped as their tutelar deities; and this practice spread so wide, as that among many nations every family had household gods cut in wood or stone. Every family in Kamiskatka has a tutelar deity in the shape of a pillar, with the head of a man, which is supposed to guard the house against malevolent spirits. They give it food daily, and anoint the head with the fat of fish. The Prophet Isaiah (a) puts this species of deification in a most ridi-

(a) Chap. 44.

culous



culous light: "He burneth part thereof in the fire: with part thereof he roasteth flesh: of the residue he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down, worshipping, and praying to it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god." Multiplication could not fail to sink household-gods into a degree of contempt: expectation of good from them, might produce some cold ceremonial worship; but there could be no real devotion at heart. The Chinese manner of treating their household-gods, will vouch for me. When a Chinese does not obtain what he prays for, "Thou spiritual dog," he will say, "I lodge thee well, thou art beautifully gilded, treated with perfumes and burnt-offerings; and yet thou withholdest from me the necessaries of life." Sometimes they fasten a cord to the idol, and drag it through the dirt. The inhabitants of Ceylon treat their idols in the same manner. Thor, Woden, and Friga, were the great deities of the Scandinavians. They had at the same time inferior deities, who were supposed to have been men translated into heaven for their good works. These they treated with very little ceremony, refusing to worship them if they were not propitious; and even punishing them with banishment; but restoring them after a time, in hopes of amendment. Domestic idols are treated by the Ostiaks not more reverently than by the people mentioned. But they have public idols, some particularly of brass, which are highly revered: the solidity of the metal is in their imagination connected with immortality; and great regard is paid to these idols, for the knowledge and experience they must have acquired in an endless course of time.

Saints, or tutelar deities, are sometimes not better treated among Roman Catholics, than among Pagans. "When we were in Portugal," says Captain Brydone, "the people of Castelbranco were so enraged at St Antonio, for suffering the Spaniards to plunder their town, contrary, as they affirmed, to his express agree-
ment



“ment with them, that they broke many of his statues to pieces; and one that had been more revered than the rest, they took the head off, and in its stead placed one of St Francis. The great St Januarius himself was in imminent danger, during the last famine at Naples. They loaded him with abuse and invective; and declared point-blank, that if he did not procure them corn by such a time, he should be no longer their saint.” The tutelar saint of Cattania, at the foot of Mount Etna, is St Agatha. A torrent of lava burst over the walls, and laid waste great part of that beautiful city. Where was St Agatha at this time? The people say, that they had given her just provocation; but that she has long ago been reconciled to them, and has promised never to suffer the lava to hurt them again. At the foot of Mount Etna, a statue of a saint is placed as a memorial, for having prevented the lava from running up the mountain of Taurominum, and destroying that town; the saint having conducted the lava down a low valley to the sea.

When a traveller once happens to deviate from the right road, there is no end of wandering. Porphyrius reports, that in Anubis, an Egyptian city, a real man was worshipped as a god; which is also asserted by Minucius Fœlix, in his apology for the Christians. A thousand writers have said, that the Tartars believe their high-priest, termed *Dalai Lama*, to be immortal. But that is a mistake: his death is published through the whole country; and couriers, sent even to Peking, intimate it to the Emperor of China: his effigy, at the same time, is taken down from the portal of the great church, and that of his successor is put in its stead. The system of the metempsychosis, adopted in that country, has occasion'd the mistake. They believe, that the holy spirit, which animates a Dalai Lama, passes upon his death into the body of his successor. The spirit therefore is believed to be immortal, not the body. The Dalai Lama, however, is the object of profound veneration.

The



The Tartar princes are daily sending presents to him, and consulting him as an oracle: they even undertake a pilgrimage in order to worship him in person. In a retired part of the temple, he is shown covered with precious stones, and sitting cross-legged. They prostrate themselves before him at a distance, for they are not permitted to kiss his toe. The priests make traffic even of his excrements, which are greedily purchased at a high price, and are kept in a golden box hanging from the neck, as a charm against every misfortune. Like the cross of Jesus, or the Virgin's milk, we may believe, there never will be wanting plenty of that precious stuff to answer all demands: the priests out of charity will furnish a quota, rather than suffer votaries to depart with their money for want of goods to purchase. The person of the Japan Pope, or Ecclesiastical Emperor, is held so sacred, as to make the cutting his beard, or his nails, a deadly sin. But absurd laws are never steadily executed. The beard and the nails are cut in the night-time, when the Pope is supposed to be sleeping; and what is taken away by that operation, is understood to be stolen from him, which is no impeachment upon his Holiness.

That the Jews were idolaters when they sojourned in the land of Goshen, were it not presumable from their commerce with the Egyptians, would however be evident from the history of Moses. Notwithstanding their miraculous deliverance from the Egyptian king, notwithstanding the daily miracles wrought among them in the wilderness; so addicted were they to a visible deity, that, during even the momentary absence of Moses conversing with God on the mount, they fabricated a golden calf, and worshipped it as their god. " And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee
" down: for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land
" of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside
" quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have
" made them a molten calf, have worshipped it, have sacrificed
" thereunto,



“thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt (a).” The history of the Jews, shows how difficult it is to reclaim from idolatry a brutish people, addicted to superstition, and fettered by inveterate habit. What profusion of blood, to bring that obstinate and perverse people to the true religion! all in vain. The book of Judges, in particular, is full of reiterated relapses, from their own invisible God, to the visible gods of other nations. And in all probability, their anxious desire for a visible king, related in the first book of Samuel, arose from their being deprived of a visible god. There was a necessity for prohibiting images (b); which would have soon been converted into deities visible: and it was extremely prudent, to supply the want of a visible god, with endless shews and ceremonies; which accordingly became the capital branch of the Jewish worship.

It appears to me from the whole history of the Jews, that a gross people are not susceptible but of a gross religion; and without an enlightened understanding, that it is vain to think of eradicating superstition and idolatry. And after all the covenants made with the Jews, after all the chastisements and all the miracles lavish'd on them, that they were not however reclaimed from the most groveling idolatry, is evident from the two golden calves fabricated by Jeroboam, saying, “Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt (c).” The people also of Judah fell back to idol-worship under Rehoboam, son of Solomon (d). Jehu, king of the ten tribes, did not tolerate the

(a) Exod. xxxii. 7.

(b) Deuteronomy, xvi. 22.

(c) 1 Kings, xii. 28.

(d) 1 Kings, xiv. 23.

worship



worship of other gods (*a*) ; but he continued to worship the two golden calves fabricated by Jeroboam (*b*). Down to the days of King Hezekiah, the Jews worshipped the brazen serpent erected by Moses in the wilderness. The Jews seem indeed to have been a very perverse people : the many promises and threatenings announced by their prophets, and the many miracles wrought among them, had no permanent effect to restrain them from idolatry ; and yet, during their captivity in Babylon, several of them submitted to be burnt alive, rather than to join in idol-worship (*c*). Captivity cured them radically of idolatry ; and from that period to this day, they have not been guilty of a single relapse. Xiphilin, in his abridgement of Dion Cassius, relating their war with Pompey, many centuries after the Babylonish captivity, gives the following account of them. “ Their customs are quite
“ different from those of other nations. Beside a peculiar manner of
“ living, they acknowledge none of the common deities : they ac-
“ knowledge but one, whom they worship with great veneration.
“ There never was an image in Jerusalem ; because they believe
“ their God to be invisible and ineffable. They have built him a
“ temple of great size and beauty, remarkable in the following
“ particular, that it is open above, without any roof.”

There lies no solid objection against images among an enlightened people, when used merely to rouse devotion. But as images tend to pervert the vulgar, they ought not to be admitted into churches : pictures are less liable to be misapprehended ; and the Ethiopians accordingly indulge pictures, tho' they prohibit statues, in their churches. The general council of Frankfort permit-

(*a*) 2 Kings, x. 25.

(*b*) 2 Kings, x. 29.

(*c*) Daniel, chap. 3.



ted the use of images in churches ; but strictly prohibited any worship to be addressed to them. So prone however to idolatry are the low and illiterate, that the prohibition lost ground both in France and in Germany ; and idol-worship became again general.

It is extremely probable, that the sun and moon were early held to be deities, and that they were the first visible objects of worship. It must indeed be acknowledged, that of all the different kinds of idolatry, it is the most excusable. Upon the sun depends health, vigour, and cheerfulness : during his retirement, all is dark and disconsolate : when he performs his majestic round, to bless his subjects, and to bestow fecundity upon every animal and vegetable, can a mere savage withhold gratitude and veneration ! Hear an old Pagan bard upon that subject. “ O thou who rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers ! “ Whence are thy beams, O sun, thy everlasting light ? Thou “ comest forth in thy awful beauty, and the stars hide their face : “ thou movest alone, for who can be a companion of thy course ! “ The oaks of the mountain fall : the mountains decay with “ years : the ocean shrinks and grows again : the moon herself is “ lost in heaven : but thou art for ever the same, rejoicing in the “ brightness of thy course. When tempests darken the world, “ when thunder rolls, and lightning flies, thou lookest in thy “ beauty from the clouds, and laughest at the storm (a).” Worship to the sun as a real deity, was in former times universal ; and prevails in many countries even at present. The American savages worship the sun, as sovereign of the universe, known by the name of *Ariskoui* among the Hurons, and of *Agriskoué* among the Iroquois. They offer him tobacco, which they term *smoking the sun* : the chief man in the assembly lights the calumet, and offers

(a) Ossian.



it thrice to the rising sun; imploring his protection, and recommending the tribe to his care. The chief proceeds to smoke; and every one smokes in his turn. This ceremony is performed on important occasions only: less matters are reserved for their Manitou. The Mississippi people offer to the sun the first of what they take in hunting; which their commander artfully converts to his own use. The Apalachites, bordering on Florida, worship the sun; but sacrifice nothing to him that has life: they hold him to be the parent of life, and think that he can take no pleasure in the destruction of any living creature: their devotion is exerted in perfumes and songs. The Mexicans, while a free people, presented to the sun a share of their meat and drink. The inhabitants of Darien, believe in the sun as their god, and in the moon as his wife, paying equal adoration to each. The people of Borneo, worship the sun and moon as real divinities. The Samoides worship both, bowing to them morning and evening in the Persian manner.

But if the sun and moon were the first objects of idolatry, knowledge and reflection reformed many from the error of holding these luminaries to be deities. "That original intelligence," say the Magians, "who is the first principle of all things, discovers himself to the mind and understanding only: but he hath placed the sun as his image in the visible universe; and the beams of that bright luminary, are but a faint copy of the glory that shines in the higher heavens." The Persians, as Herodotus reports, had neither temples, nor altars, nor images: for, says that author, they do not think, like the Greeks, that there is any resemblance between gods and men. The Gaures, who to this day profess the ancient religion of Persia, celebrate divine worship before the sacred fire, and turn with peculiar veneration toward the rising sun, as the representative of God; but they adore neither the sun, nor the sacred fire. They are professed e-



nemies to every image of the Deity cut with hands: and hence the havock made by the ancient Persians, upon the statues and temples of the Grecian gods. Such sublimity of thought was above the reach of other uninspired nations, excepting only the Hindows and Chinese.

I close the history of idolatry with a brief recapitulation of the outlines. Admitting the sun and moon to have been the first objects of idolatry, yet as Polytheism was once universal, they make only two of the many gods that were every where worshipped. We have seen, that the sacred fire was employ'd in the worship of the sun, and that images were employ'd in the worship of other deities. Images were originally used for the sole purpose of animating devotion: such was their use in Persia and Hindostan; and such was their use in every country among philosophers. The Emperor Julian, in an epistle to Theodore concerning the images of the gods, says, "We believe not that these images are gods: we only use them in worshipping the gods." In the progress toward idolatry, the next step is, to imagine, that a deity loves his image, that he makes it his residence, or at least communicates some virtue to it. The last step is, to imagine the image itself to be a deity; which gained ground imperceptibly as statuary advanced toward perfection. It would be incredible that men of sense should ever suffer themselves to be impressed with so wild a delusion, were it not the overbearing influence of religious superstition. *Credo quia impossibile est*, is applicable to idolatry as well as to transubstantiation. The worshipping the sun and moon as deities, is idolatry in the strictest sense. With respect to images, the first step of the progress is not idolatry: the next is mixed idolatry: and the last is rank idolatry.

So much upon idolatry. I proceed to what approaches the nearest to it, which is worship addressed to deified mortals. The ancient gods were exalted so little above men, that it was no hard task

task for the imagination to place in heaven, men who had made a figure on earth. The Grecian heaven was entirely peopled with such men, as well as that of many other nations. Men are deified every day by the Romish church, under the denomination of saints: persons are frequently selected for that honour who scarce deserved a place on earth, and some who never had a place there. The Roman Catholics copy the Pagans, in worshipping these subordinate divinities by prayers and oblations: and they are well rewarded, by being taken under protection of these saints in quality of tutelar deities. One branch of the office bestow'd on these saints, is to explain the wants of their votaries to the King of heaven, and to supplicate for them. The mediatorial office prevails with respect to earthly potentates, as well as heavenly: being struck with awe and timidity in approaching those exalted above us, we naturally take hold of some intermediate person to solicit for us. In approaching the Almighty, the mind, sinking down into humility and profound veneration, stops short, relying upon some friend in heaven to intercede in its behalf. Temples among the Cochin-Chinese are constructed with a deep and dark niche, which is their *sanctum sanctorum*. They hold, that no representation, whether by painting or sculpture, can be made of God, who is invisible. The niche denotes his incomprehensibility; and the good men placed by them in heaven, are believed to be their intercessors at the throne of grace. The prayers of the Chingulese are seldom directed to the supreme being, but to his vicegerents. Intercessors, at the same time, contribute to the ease of their votaries: a Roman Catholic need not assume a very high tone in addressing a tutelar saint chosen by himself.

False notions of Providence have prompted groveling mortals to put confidence in mediators and intercessors of a still lower class, viz. living mortals, who by idle austerities have acquired a reputation for holiness. Take the following instance, the strongest

est



est of the kind that can be figured. Louis XI. of France, sensible of the approach of death, sent for a hermit of Calabria, named *Francisco Martarillo*; and throwing himself at the hermit's feet in a flood of tears, entreated him to intercede with God, that his life might be prolonged; as if the voice of a Calabrian friar, says Voltaire, could alter the course of Providence, by preserving a weak and perverse soul in a worn-out body.

Having discussed the persons that are the objects of worship, the next step in order is, to take under view the forms and ceremonies employ'd in religious worship. Forms are necessary wherever a number of persons join in one operation: they are essential in an army, and little less essential at public worship. The use of ceremonies is to excite devotion: but to preserve a just medium, requires great delicacy of taste; for tho' ceremonies are necessary at public worship to prevent languor, yet superfluity of ceremonies quenches devotion, by occupying the mind too much upon externals. The Roman-Catholic worship is crowded with ceremonies: it resembles the Italian opera, which is all sound, and no sentiment. The Presbyterian form of worship is too naked: it is proper for philosophers more than for the populace. This is fundamentally the cause of the numerous secessions from the church of Scotland that have made a figure of late: people dislike the established forms, when they find less comfort in public worship than is expected; and without being sensible of the real cause, they chuse pastors for themselves, who supply the want of ceremonies by loud speaking, with much external fervor and devotion.

The frequent ablutions or washings among the Mahometans and others, as acts of devotion, show the influence that the slightest resemblances have on the ignorant. Because purification, in several languages, is a term applicable to the mind as well as to the body, shallow thinkers, misled by the double meaning, imagine that the mind, like the body, is purified by water.

The



The sect of Ali use the Alcoran translated into the Persian language, which is their native tongue. The sect of Omar esteem this to be a gross impiety; being persuaded, that the Alcoran was written in Arabic, by the Angel Gabriel, at the command of God himself. The Roman Catholics are not then the only people who profess to speak nonsense to God Almighty; or, which is the same, who profess to pray in an unknown tongue.

At meals, the ancients poured out some wine as a libation to the gods: Christians pronounce a short prayer, termed a *grace*.

The gross notion of Deity entertained by the ancients, is exemplified in their worshipping and sacrificing on high places; in order, as they thought, to be more within sight. Jupiter in Homer praises Hector for sacrificing to him frequently upon the top of Ida; and Strabo observes, that the Persians, who used neither images nor altars, sacrificed to the gods in high places. Balak carried Balaam the prophet to the top of Pisgah, and other mountains, to sacrifice there, and to curse Israel. The votaries of Baal always worshipped in high places. Even the sage Tacitus was infected with that absurdity. Speaking of certain high mountains where the gods were worshipped, he expresses himself thus: *Maxime cælo appropinquare, precesque mortalium a Deo nusquam propius audiri* *.

Ceremonies that tend to unhinge morality, belong more properly to the following section, treating of the connection between religion and morality.

It is now full time to take under consideration an objection to the sense of Deity hinted above, arguing from the gross conceptions of deity among many nations, that this sense cannot be innate. The objection is not indeed stated in the following passage,

* “As approaching nearer to heaven, the prayers of mortals are there more distinctly heard.”

borrowed



borrowed from a justly-celebrated author; but as it may be implied, the passage shall be fairly transcribed. “The universal
“propensity to believe invifible intelligent power, being a general attendant on human nature, if not an original instinct, may
“be confidered as a kind of stamp which the Deity has fet upon
“his work; and nothing furely can more dignify mankind,
“than to be the only earthly being who bears the stamp or image
“of the univerfal Creator. But confult this image as it commonly is in popular religions: how is the Deity diffigured! what
“caprice, abfurdity, and immorality, are attributed to him (a)!”
A fatisfactory answer to the objection implied in this paffage, will occur, upon recollecting the progrefs of men and nations from infancy to maturity. Our external fenfes, neceffary for felf-prefervation, foon arrive at perfection: the more refined fenfes of propriety, of right and wrong, of Deity, of being accountable creatures, and many others of the fame kind, are of flower growth: the fenfe of right and wrong in particular, and the fenfe of Deity, feldom reach perfection, but by good education and much ftudy. If fuch be the cafe among enlightened nations, what is to be expected from favages who are in the loweft ftage of underftanding? To a favage of New Holland, whofe fenfe of deity is extremely obfcure, one may talk without end of a being who created the world, and who governs it by wife laws; but in vain; for the favage will be never the wifer. The fame favage hath alfo a glimmering of the moral fenfe, as all men have; and yet in vain will you difcourfe to him of approbation and difapprobation, of merit and demerit: of thefe terms he has no clear conception. Hence the endless aberrations of rude and barbarous nations, from pure religion as well as from pure morality. Of the latter there are many instances collected in the preceding tract; and of

(a) Natural History of Religion.



the former, instances still more plentiful in the present tract. The sense of deity in dark times has indeed been strangely distorted by certain biases and passions that enslave the rude and illiterate: but these yield gradually to the rational faculty as it ripens, and at last leave religion free to found philosophy. Then it is that men, listening to the innate sense of deity purified from every bias, acquire a clear conviction of one supreme Deity who made and governs the world.

The foregoing objection then, impartially considered, weighs not against the sense of deity more than against the moral sense. If it have weight, it resolves into a complaint against Providence for the weakness of the sense of deity in rude and illiterate nations. If such complaint be solidly founded, it pierces extremely deep: why have not all nations, even in their nascent state, the sense of deity, and the moral sense, in purity and perfection? why do they not possess all the arts of life without necessity of culture or experience? why are we born poor and helpless infants, instead of being produced complete in every member, internal and external, as Adam and Eve were? The plan of Providence is far above the reach of our weak criticisms. I shall only observe, that as, with respect to individuals, there is a progress from infancy to maturity; so there is a similar progress in every nation, from its savage state to its maturity in arts and sciences. A child that has just conceptions of the Deity and of his attributes, would be a great miracle; and would not such knowledge in a savage be equally so? Nor can I discover what benefit a child or a savage could reap from such knowledge; provided it remained a child or a savage in every other respect. The genuine fruits of religion, are gratitude to the Author of our being, veneration to him as the supreme being, absolute resignation to the established laws of his providence, and chearful performance of every duty: but a child has not the slightest idea of gratitude nor of veneration, and very

