

into whose hands it is a terrible thing to fall! In vain does he say: *Darkness encompasseth me and the waters cover me: none seeth me; of whom am I afraid?*—for his conscience tells him, that *the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men.* Eccles. xxi. 26, 28.

This last argument, in particular, is so obvious and convincing, that I cannot bring myself to believe there ever was a human being of sound sense who was really an Atheist. Those persons who have tried to work themselves into a persuasion that there is no God, will generally be found, both in ancient and modern times, to be of the most prodigal manners, who dreading to meet him as their judge, try to persuade themselves that he does not exist. This has been observed by St. Augustin, who says: "No man denies the existence of God, but such an one whose interest it is that there should be no God." Yet even they who, in the broad day-light, and among their prodigal companions, pretend to disbelieve the existence of a supreme Being, in the darkness of the night, and still more under the apprehension of death, fail not to confess it, as Seneca, I think, has somewhere observed. (1)

A son heareth his father, and a servant his master, says the prophet Malachi. *If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts, i. 6.* In a word, it is impossible to believe the existence of a supreme Being, our Creator, our Lord and our Judge, without being conscious at the same time of our obligation to worship him interiorly and exteriorly, to fear him, to love him, and to obey him. This constitutes *natural religion*: by the observance of which the ancient patriarchs, together with Melchisedec, Job, and we trust very many other virtuous and religious persons of different ages and countries, have been acceptable to God in this life, and have attained to everlasting bliss in the other: still we must confess, with deep sorrow, that the number of such persons has been small, compared with those of every age and nation, who, as St. Paul says, *When they knew God, glorified him not as God; neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations; and*

(1) It is proper here to observe, that a large proportion of the boasting Atheists who signalized themselves by their impiety, during the French Revolution, or a few years previous to its eruption, acknowledged, when they came to die, that their irreligion had been affected, and that they never doubted in their hearts of the existence of God and the truths of Christianity. Among those were the marquis d'Argens, Boulanger, La Mettrie, Collot d'Herbois, Egalite duke of Oleans, &c.

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