

a more general respect is paid to the decency of external appearances, and to the sentiments of virtuous and pious men; and although much wickedness still remains among the *nominal* professors of the Christian faith, who are Christians in name, but little better than heathens in practice, yet a large portion of piety and virtue silently exists among the middle and lower classes of mankind, who in every age and country form the greatest part of the community. Nay, in Christian countries, even the wicked themselves (who have not cast off all religion and deliberately renounced the gospel) are greatly restrained by the fear of future punishments, which are so clearly set forth in the gospel. So that mankind are, upon the whole, even in a temporal point of view, under infinite obligations to the mild and pacific temper of the gospel, and have reaped more substantial benefits from it, than from any other institution upon earth: and, whatever of sobriety or moral virtue is to be found either in the writings or lives of the opposers of revelation in modern times, they are indebted for it to that very Christianity, which they are impotently endeavouring to subvert. "To say nothing of the best ideas of the old philosophers on moral subjects being derived from revelation, (of which there is considerable evidence,*) it is manifest that, so far as the moderns exceeded them, it is principally, if not entirely owing to this medium of instruction. The Scriptures having diffused the light, they have insensibly imbibed

* A glance at the devotions of the Gentiles will show that, with very few exceptions, there was nothing spiritual in their prayers,—no thanksgiving,—no request for divine assistance in the performance of their duty,—no pious sorrow and acknowledgment of their offences. But "after the propagation of the Christian religion, we find forms of adoration in some *Pagan* writers, which are more rational and spiritual than the old hymns and prayers of their ancestors; and we may reasonably suppose that these improvements arose from the gospel. See *Procl. Hymn. ad Solem, et ad Musas*; *Jamblich. de Myst. Egypt.* § 5. c. 26; *Simpl. in Epictet. adfir.* to whom I wish I could add *Maximus Pyrius*. It is pity that he who on other accounts deserves commendation, should have taught that prayer to God was superfluous, *Disc.* 20. See also *Jurnal*, x. 246, and the Commentators. *Seneca* says, *Primus est deorum cultus, deos credere: deinde reddere illis majestatem suam, reddere bonitatem.*—*Vis deos propitiare? bonus esto. Salis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est.* *Epist.* 95. p. 470. But that he did not think prayer to be useless and unnecessary, as some may fancy from these words, will appear from the following places. *Nos quoque existimamus vota proficere, salvâ vi et potestate factorum.* *Quadam enim a Düs immortalibus ita suspensa relicta sunt, ut in bonum vertant, si admotæ Düs preces fuerint, si vota suscepta.* *Nat. Quest.* ii. 57. *Itaque non dat Deus beneficia,—non exhaudit precantium voces et undique sublatis in cælum manibus vota facientium privata ac publica. Quod profecto non fieret, nec in hunc furorē omnes mortales consensissent atlaquendi surda numina et inefficaces Deos, nisi nosset illorum beneficia nunc ultro oblata nunc orantibus data.* *De Benef.* iv. 4." (*Jortin's Discourses on the Christian Religion*, p. 267. Note.)