

in every age and country, that a few observations may suffice concerning the religion of the ancient Romans. Cicero* affirms that they surpassed all other nations in piety and religion, and in the wise and devout ascription of all things to the disposal and government of the immortal gods. But who does not instantly perceive, that in the same breath, he pronounces their eulogy; and exposes their blind and abject superstition? They impiously snatched the sceptre of the universe from the hands of 'the blessed and only potentate,' and committed it to fabulous deities, of whom they acknowledged and adored an immense number. To these they were incessantly adding, by the profane deification of heroes and emperors. The debasing passions, and malignant diseases, to which human nature is incident were arrayed by them, in divine attributes, and worshipped as gods.

Hitherto we have passed over in silence the *characters* of those imaginary divinities that claimed the service and adoration of the infatuated heathen. Nor shall I pollute the sanctity of the place where I stand, by a recital of those enormities which, for the most part, form the incidents of their history. They are with the strictest impartiality characterised by the poet, as

'Gods, hateful, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust.'

The estimate which their deluded votaries formed of their moral qualities, is repulsively conspicuous in the rites with which they worshipped them; but on these deeds of darkness we shall at present, from motives which none can mistake, allow the mantle of obscurity to rest. These, oh! reason, are thy triumphs!

How loudly, my brethren, did such lamentable circumstances of spiritual destitution, call for a divine interposition, to roll back the dense clouds of error that impended over the world, and to relume the human understanding with the radiance of truth. 'Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear what many prophets and kings and righteous men, and we may add pagan philosophers, desired to see, but died without seeing them.'—When experience had, through a series of ages, amply and satisfactorily attested the insufficiency of reason, though aided by all the advantages that civilization and learning could supply, to direct man in the way to true and eternal happiness, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.'

SECOND.—To this consolatory fact, then, we at length invite your attention: and if after having felt the rigours, and witnessed the desolations of winter, we hail with exultation the advances of Spring, to deck the earth with the bloom of a fresh vegetation, and fill the grove with melody;—if the mariner after having been tossed on the deep, during a starless and tempestuous night, rejoices to behold the ascending sun pouring his splendours upon the world: what conscious and unmingled pleasure must we feel, in averting our thoughts from the gloomy and degrading superstitions of heathenism, to contemplate the simple, the majestic, the efficient plan of Heaven, for the recovery of ruined man.

As a manifestation of the wondrous attributes of God uniting in sublime accord, to accomplish purposes the most beneficent and glorious, the redeeming scheme of the Gospel stands pre-eminent. The contemplatist of nature finds, amid the partial discoveries of the Creator, that dimly gleam from his works, much to perplex and confound him. The attentive observer of the arrangements of Providence is often baffled in his calculations, and hesitates as to the conclusions to

* Pietate ac Religione, atque hac una sapientia quod Deorum immortalium Numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes Gentis Nationesque superavimus.

Oratio de Arusp.