

be defended from evils.*—As an example of their devotion to the evil deity, it may be remarked, that as soon as Xerxes heard that the Athenians had banished Themistocles, he addressed his prayer to *Arimanius*, beseeching that his enemies might always be so infatuated as to banish from among them their bravest men.† When it is remembered, that Cyrus imbibed these erroneous views from education; the language in which the Lord addresses him by the prophet appears equally majestic and appropriate—

I am Jehovah, and none else,
Forming light, and creating darkness,
Making peace and creating evil.
I Jehovah am the author of all these things.

Lowth's Translation.

Thus, while that illustrious monarch was animated by prophetic assurances of unexampled success, to set forth in the splendid career of victory marked out for him by the finger of Divine Providence, he was furnished with accurate and sublime conceptions of that glorious being, who honoured him as the instrument of his purposes.

Having taken a brief and imperfect survey of the religious systems of Egypt and Persia, so humbling to the pride of reason, and so illustrative of the melancholy fact, that '*the world by wisdom knew not God,*' let us for a few moments transfer our attention to the favourite haunts of classic genius—Greece and Rome. And, were we to contemplate the scenes that here expand before us, merely as objects of taste, without any reference to the immortal interests of our species, we could not remain insensible to their numerous and potent charms. Memory would awaken from the slumber of oblivion, a thousand storied and fascinating associations. Our attention would be entranced by the grave instructions of the Lyceum and the porch; our strongest emotions would respond to the powerful and embellished periods of the Senate; while the enrapturing strains of the muse would lead captive the whole train of our affections. But those very objects, on which the mere scholar or philosopher dwells with unmingled complacency, and lavishes his applause, exhibit, when viewed under the influence of christian perceptions, very different aspects, and inspire sensations of just an opposite kind. For, amidst all this imposing array of human accomplishments, where do we behold the knowledge of '*Him, whom to know is life eternal?*' We see the lustre of science, on which death hastens to throw its sable mantle for ever; but where, oh! where, amid the glooms of paganism, do we discover THE LIGHT OF LIFE,—that light which alone shall blaze forth into immortality, and fill heaven with its splendour? Did it irradiate Greece?

The theology of the Greeks, like that knowledge which laid the foundation of their political eminence, was principally derived from Egypt. Emanating from so corrupt a source, it must have been sufficiently erroneous in speculation, and debasing in moral influence. The circumstances, too, under which it was introduced, largely contributed to extend the empire of superstition, by multiplying the objects of worship to an almost indefinite number. Their first instructors in theogony and mythology, were the poets; who expatiated in the ideal regions of fiction, and superinduced imaginative systems of their own, upon those which they had received from other nations. Hence their gods soon became so multiplied, that *Hesiod* enumerated *thirty thousand*. In order to prevent interference and confusion, they distinguished them into several classes, and assigned to each class their appropriate dignity, honours,

* De Isid. et Asirid.

† Plut. Vita Themist.