

considered virtue as something *ultimate*, as bounding the mental prospect. They never supposed for a moment there was any thing to which it stood merely in relation of *means*, or that within the narrow confines of this momentary state any thing great enough could be found to be its *end* or *object*.

It never occurred to their imagination, that that religion, which professes to render us superior to the world, is really nothing more than an instrument to procure the temporal, the physical good of individuals, or of society. In their view, it had a nobler destination; it looked forward to eternity: and if ever they appear to have assigned it any end or object beyond itself, it was an union with its Author, in the perpetual fruition of God.

They arranged these things in the following order: religion, comprehending the love, fear, and service of the Author of our being, they placed first; social morality, founded on its dictates, confirmed by its sanctions, next; and the mere physical good of society they contemplated as subordinate to both.

Every thing is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted: the first is last, and the last first. Religion is degraded from its pre-eminence, into the mere hand-maid of social morality; social morality into an instrument for advancing the welfare of society; and the world is all in all.

THE FOLLY OF INFIDELITY.

EDUCATED infidels covet the character of men of good taste; and boast of possessing it in a superior degree. The primary objects of taste are novelty, grandeur, beauty and benevolence. the three former are extensively diffused over the natural world; the moral world is replenished with them all.

The beauty and grandeur of the natural world: the beauty of the landscape, and of the sky; the grandeur of the storm, the torrent, the thunder, the volcano, the magnificence of the mountains, and the ocean, the sublimities of the heavens; may undoubtedly be relished by the mind of an infidel, as really as by that of a Christian. But how insignificant are even these splendid scenes of nature, if the universe is only a lifeless mass; a corpse devoid of an animating principle?

How changed is the scene; how enhanced the sublimity; when our thoughts discern, that an infinite Mind formed, preserves, controuls, and quickens, the whole; that this mind is every where present; lives, sees, acts; directs, and blesses the beings, whom it has made; that, *if we ascend into heaven, God is there; if we go down into hell; lo, He is there! if we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there his hand will lead us, and his right hand hold us.* At the same time, how infinitely more sublime is such a Mind, than all the works, which it has created!

In the moral world the loss of the infidel is entire. Of the beauty and greatness of that world they form no conceptions. For these objects their taste is not begun. The pleasures, derived from this source, are the privilege only of minds, which are invested with moral beauty, and adorned with the loveliness of the Gospel.

In the field of *intellectual enjoyment* they are not more happy. Their learning is usually mischievous to them; and their science, of no value: for both serve only to inflate them with pride, and estrange them from their Maker.

What is this world in the eye of an infidel? A product of fate, chance, or necessity; without design; without government; without a God: its inhabitants born, none knows why; and destined to go, none knows whither.