

the word of God ought to be listened to, appears from the sublime and emphatic manner in which the prophet Isaiah, commands all nature to hearken what he is going to announce it. *Hear, O ye trees, says he, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken.* And indeed all nature, and even the inanimate creation hears and obeys the word of God.

He commands the sun, and lo! he walketh forth with all his brightness; and taketh his appointed journey from east to west. At night he bids the moon lead on the starry host of heaven; and instantly their numerous squadrons are ranged in bright array. None of them are missing. Each one knows his place. He calls them by their names, and they answer him, lo, here we are. *He has set bounds to the ocean, and has made for it bars and doors.— He has said to it, thus far shalt thou come, and shalt go no farther; and here shalt thou break thy swelling waves.* Job xxxviii. 10. At his word the Spirit of the storm is roused. Whithersoever he directs, thither on the red wings of the lightning it directs its flight, and proclaims aloud his dread commission in thunder along the sky.— Again he speaks, and already it has fled. It has returned to the place from which it came. The seasons at his call are ready in their turns. The earth at his command renews her cloathing, and decks herself out in her gayest attire. She unlocks all her stores, displays her rich harvests, and pours forth her various herbs, fruits and flowers.

And shall all nature hear and obey the word of God, though not for her own sake, but for the sake of man, to whom God has made her subservient; and yet man remain deaf to his voice and disobedient to his commands! Man, whom God would not compel to obey him as a slave, but rather as a child should a father from motives of choice and affection! Shall man, whom God has so much honoured and loved above all the other creatures, be the only one who refuses all due respect and deference to his sacred word, though addressed to him merely with a view to secure his happiness for time and eternity.

ON THE LOVE OF GRATITUDE WHICH WE OWE TO GOD

*Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and soul and mind this is the greatest and the first commandment* Matth xxii 37.

There is something in our very nature, which compels us to love what is amiable, to admire what is beautiful, and to esteem and appreciate whatever is perfect and valuable. We naturally feel our hearts glow with gratitude towards an earthly benefactor. The sweet emotions of love and tenderness towards him are stirred within us: and we are never easy, nor can we rest satisfied, till we have made some suitable acknowledgements for all his favours.

Now Reason and Religion teach us that there is nothing so amiable and beautiful, nothing so perfect and estimable as God. He is beauty itself.— He is the sum of all perfection. In him all that is lovely and valuable is centered; and from him all that we love and admire in the creatures derives its

existence. He is our greatest, and, properly speaking, our only Benefactor, since from him we have received all that we have, and all that we are.— How come it then that, only when there is question of loving God, we act so contrary to the dictates of Reason and Religion, and struggle, I may say, so obstinately against the very impulse of our nature, as not to love above all things that which is most lovely! Not to desire most ardently that which is most beautiful and desirable! And not to prize above all things that which in itself is most perfect and estimable! The commandment of loving God above all things might seem unnecessary; and one would imagine it impossible for a rational creature such as man, a being created merely to love, not to burn with seraphic ardour, not to be all on fire with divine love, did not experience fatally convince us of the contrary. Whence all this coldness, and indifference for him, who ought to be the supreme object of our love, admiration, desire and esteem? It can proceed only from our want of reflection.— We seldom or never cast a thought on the sovereign excellence of God; or on the wonders of his goodness and merely towards us. Our minds are always so crowded with the ideas of the vain and transitory enjoyments of this life, as not to afford room for such pious and salutary considerations. Thus do we contract a habit of dissipation and thoughtlessness. We lose all relish for what is spiritual; and, like the brutes, we seek only those pleasures that affect the senses. *With desolation is the whole earth laid desolate, says the prophet, because there is no one who thinketh in his heart.* Jerem xii.

Let us then at present call back our wandering thoughts for a moment, and fix them upon God.— Let us take a view, if not of his infinite perfections, his intrinsic and essential excellence, for in the consideration of such, the imagination is apt to lose itself; at least of the stupendous effects of his mercy and predilection for us. These, indeed, are more the immediate object of our investigation, as they come within the sphere of the senses; and on this account require not such an effort of the mind, as the sublime and abstract contemplation of the Deity.

The effects of God's mercy and predilection for us are conspicuous in those gifts of Nature and of Grace, which he has so liberally bestowed upon us. By the gifts of nature I understand the good things which God has annexed to our being: which are derived to us from our nature; and which therefore are common to all. By the gifts of grace I mean those special favours, whether corporal or spiritual, to which our nature does not necessarily entitle us; but which, over and above the gifts of nature, God has been pleased to confer on mankind at large, or on certain individuals of the human race, whom he has singled out to be the special objects of his mercy and love. The gifts of nature tend chiefly to render happy, or supportable our condition in this world. Those of grace are generally granted in order to enable us to better our condition in the life to come. Now, if under both these heads we consider attentively the wonderful effects of God's mercy and predilection for us, we shall have motives more than sufficient to

stir up in our hearts that love of gratitude which we owe by so many titles to this our best of benefactors; and to induce us to love above all things that God, who has loved us with such an infinite love.

To begin then by the gifts of nature, of these the first is the creation of man. God has raised him up out of nothing, where he lay infinitely beneath the meanest creature existing; and has given him a dignified being, and assigned him an eminent rank among his creatures, to which he had not the least right or claim. He has made him to his own image and likeness, and has constituted him the Lord and Sovereign of this lower world. He has given him a soul capable of reflecting and reasoning, of investigating and discovering the truth. He has created this soul immortal and has designed her to be for ever happy in the enjoyment of himself hereafter. He has united this excellent creature the soul to a body the most comely and majestic of all others. And while the other animals grovel in the dust; while he makes them stoop towards their mother earth, which supplies them with all that can make them happy; he has placed man in a commanding posture, and has given him to stand erect; to look abroad upon the wonders of the creation, and contemplate the stupendous frame of this universe: to raise his eyes from off this earth, where he is to reside but for a time; and to carry his views towards his celestial country, where he shall live and reign for ever happy with his God in the company of the Angels. The Royal Prophet reflecting on all that God had done for man, exclaims in ecstasy of admiration: *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou shouldst regard him? Thou hast made him little less than the angels: thou hast crowned him with glory and honour; and thou hast placed him over all the works of thy hands. Thou hast placed all things under his feet; the sheep, the oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes the sea, that wander through the paths of the deep.— O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is thy name over all the earth.* Psalm viii.

Wherever we turn our eyes, we discover the effects of God's singular predilection to man. He has not only furnished him in his present imperfect state of existence with his absolute necessities; but he has also created numberless objects, calculated merely for his delight and amusement. What agreeable sensations do we not feel at the sight of that amazing variety of trees and herbs, fruits and flowers, so pleasing to the sight and taste and smell, which his hand has scattered so profusely over all the surface of the earth! What a beautiful scene has he not laid out before us of fields and meadows, hills and valleys, lakes, rivers, fountains and purling streams! The fire serves to enlighten, to warm us and to prepare our food. The earth, air, and water, are all equally subservient to us, and abound with numberless living creatures, made for our use and entertainment: and thus all nature ministers to man.