every fellow-creature, has ſtill, from the ties of blood, the endearments of friendſhip, or, perhaps from a regard to his own intereſt, ſome particular favourites whom, on a compe­tition with others, he would certainly prefer. But the equal Lord of all can have no particular favourites. His benevolence is therefore coincident with juſtice; or, to speak more properly, that which is called *divine justice,* is only be­nevolence exerting itſelſ in a particular manner for the pro­pagation of general felicity. When God preſcribes laws for regulating the conduct of his intelligent creatures, it is not becauſe he can reap any benefit from their obedience to thoſe laws, but becauſe ſuch obedience is neceſſary to their own happineſs ; and when he puniſhes the tranſgreſſor, it is not becauſe in his nature there is any diſpoſition to which the proſpect of ſuch puniſhment can afford gratification, but becauſe in the government of free agents puniſhment is neceſſary to reform the criminal, and to intimidate others from committing the like crimes. But on this ſubject we need not dwell. It has been shewn elſewhere (Metaphysics, n⁰ 312.), that all the moral attributes of God, his holi­ness, justice, mercy, and truth, ſhould be conceived as the ſame divine benevolence, acting in different ways according to different exigencies, but always for the ſame ſublime end—the propagation of the utmoſt poſſible happi­neſs.

The ſubſtance or eſſence of this ſelf-exiſtent, all-powerful, infinitely wise, and perfectly good Being, is to us wholly incomprehenſible. That it is not matter, is ſhewn by the proceſs oſ argumentation by which we have proved it to exiſt ; but what it is we know not, and it would be impious preſumption to inquire. It is ſufficient for all the purpoſes of religion to know that God is ſome how or other pre­ſent to every part of his works ; that existence and every poſſible perfection is essential to him ; and that he wiſhes the happineſs of all his creatures. From theſe truths we might proceed to prove and illuſtrate the perpetual ſuperintendance of his providence, both general and particular, over every the minutest part of the univerſe : but that ſubject has been diſcuſſed in a ſeparate article ; to which, therefore, we refer the reader. (See Providence). We ſhall only obſerve at preſent, that the manner in which animals are pro­pagated affords as complete a proof of the constant ſuperintendance of divine power and wiſdom, as it does of the im­mediate exertion of theſe faculties in the formation of the parent pair of each ſpecies. For were this busineſs of pro­pagation carried on by *neceſſary* and mechanical laws, it is obvious, that in every age there would be generated, in each ſpecies of animals, the very ſame proportion of males to fe­males that there was in the age preceding. On the other hand, did generation depend upon *fortuitous* mechaniſm, it is not conceivable but that, ſince the beginning of the world, or, according to this hypotheſis, during the courſe of eterni­ty, ſeveral ſpecies of animals ſhould in *ſome* age have ge­nerated nothing but *males,* and others nothing but *females ;* and that of courſe many ſpecies would have been long ſince extinct. As neither of theſe caſes has ever happened, the preſervation of the various ſpecies of animals, by keeping up conſtantly in the world a due, though not always the ſame, proportion between the ſexes of male and female, is a com­plete proof of the ſuperintendance of divine providence, and of that ſaying of the apoſtle, that it is “ in God we live, move, and have our being.”

Sect. **II.** Of the Ditties and Sanctions of Natural Religion.

From the ſhort and very inadequate view that we have taken of the divine perfections, it is evidently our duty to reverence in our minds the ſelf-exiſtent Being to whom they belong. This is indeed not only a duty, but a duty of which no man who contemplates theſe perfections, and be­lieves them to be real, can poſſibly avoid the performance. He who thinks irreverently of the Author of nature, can never have conſidered ſeriouſly the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs, diſplayed in his works ; for whoever has a tolerable notion of theſe muſt be convinced, that he who performed them has no imperfection ; that his power can accompliſh every thing, which involves not a contradiction ; that his knowledge is intuitive, and free from the poſſibility of error ; and that his goodneſs extends to all without parti­ality and without any alloy of selfiſh deſign. This convic­tion muſt make every man on whoſe mind it is impreſſed ready to proſtrate himſelf in the duſt before the Author of his being ; who, though infinitely exalted above him, is the ſource of all his enjoyments, conſtantly watches over him with paternal care, and protects him from numberleſs dan­gers. The ſenſe oſ ſo many benefits muſt excite in his mind a ſentiment of the liveliest gratitude to him from whom they are received, and an ardent wiſh for their conti­nuance.

Whilſt silent gratitude and devotion thus glow in the breaſt of the contemplative man, he will be careful not to form even a mental image of that all-perfect Being to whom they are directed. He knows that God is not material ; that he exiſts in a manner altogether incomprehenſible ; that to frame an image of him would be to aſſign limits to what is infinite ; and that to attempt to form a poſitive concep­tion of him would be impiously to compare himſelf with his Maker.

The man who has any tolerable notion of the perfec­tions of the Supreme Being will never ſpeak lightly of him, or make uſe of his name at all but on great and ſolemn occaſions. He knows that the terms of all languages are inadequate and improper, when applied directly to him who has no equal, and to whom nothing can be compared ; and therefore he will employ theſe terms with caution. When he ſpeaks of his mercy and compaſſion, he will not conſider them as feelings wringing the heart like the mercy and compassion experienced by man, but as rays of pure and disintereſted benevolence. When he thinks of the ſtupendous ſyſtem of nature, and hears it, perhaps, ſaid that God formed it for his own glory, he will reflect that God is ſo infinitely exalt­ed above all his creatures, and ſo perfect in himſelf, that he can neither take pleaſure in their applause, as great men do in the applauſes of their fellow-creatures, nor receive any acceſſion of any kind from the exiſtence of ten thouſand worlds. The immenſe fabric of nature therefore only diſplays the glory or perfections of its Author to *us* and to other *creatures* who have not faculties to comprehend him in himſelf.

When the contemplative man talks of s*erving* God, he does not dream that his ſervices can increaſe the divine feli­city ; but means only that it is his duty to obey the divine laws. Even the pronoun *He,* when it refers to God, cannot be of the ſame import as when it refers to man ; and by the philoſophical divine it will ſeldom be uſed but with a mental alluſion to this obvious diſtinction.

As the man who duly venerates the Author of his being will not ſpeak of him on trivial occaſions, ſo will he be ſtill further from calling upon him to witneſs impertinences and falſehood, (ſee Oath). He will never mention his name but with a *pause,* that he may have time to reflect in ſilence on his numberleſs perfections, and on the immenſe diſtance between himſelf and the Being of whom he is ſpeaking. The ſlighteſt reflection will convince him that the world with all that it contains depends every moment