been rationally inferred from what nature teaches of God and the soul. In the Elysium of the Greek and Roman poets, departed ſpirits were viſible to mortal eyes ; and muſt therefore have been clothed with ſome material vehicle of ſufficient denſity to reflect the rays of light, though not to resist the human touch. In the mythology of the northern nations, as deceaſed heroes are represented as eating and drinking, they could not be conſidered as entirely diveſted of matter ; and in every popular creed of idolatry, future re­wards were ſuppoſed to be conferred, not for private virtue, but for public violence, upon heroes and conquerors and the deſtroyers of nations. Surely no admirer of what is now called natural religion will pretend that theſe are part of its doctrines ; they are evidently the remains of ſome primeval tradition obſcured and corrupted in its long progreſs through ages and nations.

The philoſophers of Greece and Rome, deſpiſing the po­pular mythology of their reſpective countries, employed much time and great talents in diſquiſitions concerning the human soul and the probability of a future ſtate ; and if the genuine conduirons of natural religion on this ſubject are anywhere to be found, one would naturally look for them in the writings of thoſe men whoſe genius and virtues did honour to human nature. Yet it is a fact which cannot be controverted, that the philoſophers held ſuch notions con­cerning the ſubſtance of the soul and its ſtate after death as could afford no rational ſupport to ſuffering virtue, (see Metaphysics, Part III. chap. 4). Socrates is indeed an exception. Confining himſelf to the ſtudy of ethics, and deſpiſing thoſe metaphyſical ſubtilties with which ſo many others had bewildered themſelves, that excellent person in­ferred by the common moral arguments (ſee Moral Phi­losophy, n⁰ 232—246), that the reality of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments is in the higheſt degree proba­ble. He was not, however, at all times abſolutely *convinced of* this important truth ; for a little before his death he ſaid to ſome who were about him, “ I am now about to leave this world, and ye are ſtill to continue in it ; which of us have the better part allotted us, God only knows @@\*.” And again, at the end of his moſt admired diſcourſe concern­ing the immortality of the soul, delivered at a time when he muſt have been serious, he ſaid to his friends who came to pay their laſt viſit, “ I would have you to know that. I have great hopes that I am now going into the company of good men ; yet I would not be too peremptory and confi­dent concerning it @@\*.”

Next to Socrates, Cicero was perhaps the moſt reſpectable of all the philoſophers of antiquity ; and he ſeems to have ſtudied this great queſtion with uncommon care: yet what were his concluſions ? After retailing the opinions of various ſages of Greece, and ſhowing that ſome held the soul to be the *heart ;* others, the *blood* in the heart ; ſome, the *brain ;* others, the *breath* ; one, that it was *harmony ;* another, that it was *number;* one, that it was *nothing* at all; and another, that it was a certain *quintessence* without a name, but which might properly be called ενΙελεχια he gravely adds, “ Harum ſententiarum quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit: quæ verisimillima, magna queſtio est @@\*.” He then proceeds to give his own opinion ; which, as we have ſhown elſewhere, was, that the soul is part of God.

To us who know by other evidence·, that the soul is im­mortal, and that there will be a future ſtate in which all the obliquities of the preſent ſhall be made ſtraight, the argu­ment drawn from the moral attributes of God, and the un­equal diſtribution of the good things of this life, appears to have the force of demonſtration. Yet none of us will ſurely pretend to ſay that his powers of reaſoning are greater than were thoſe of Socrates and Cicero : and therefore the probability is, that had we been like them deſtitute of the light of revelation, we ſhould have been diſturbed by the ſame doubts, and have ſaid with the latter, upon reading the arguments of the former as detailed by Plato, “ Neſcio quomodo, dum lego, aſſentior : cum poſui librum, et mecum ipſe de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, aſſenſio illa elabitur."

No one, we hope, will ſuſpect us of an impious attempt to weaken the evidence of a future ſtate, God forbid ! The expectation of that ſtate is the only ſupport of virtue and religion; and we think the arguments which we have stated elſewhere, and referred to on the preſent occaſion, make the reality of it ſo highly probable, that, though there were no other evidence, he would act a very fooliſh part who ſhould confine his attention wholly to the preſent life. But we do not apprehend that we can injure the cauſe either of virtue or of religion, by confeſſing, that those arguments which left doubts in the minds of Socrates and Cicero appear not to us to have the force of *complete demonstration of* that life and immortality which our Saviour brought to light through the goſpel.

Were the caſe, however, otherwiſe ; were the arguments which the light of nature affords for the immortality of the human soul as abſolutely convincing as any geometrical de­monitration— natural religion would ſtill be defective; be­cauſe it points out no method by which ſuch as have offend­ed God may be certainly reſtored to his favour, and to the hopes of happineſs which by their sin they had lost. The he who knows whereof we are made would ſhow himſelf placable to ſinners, and that he would find ſome way to be reconciled, might perhaps be reasonably inferred ſrom the conſideration of his benevolence diſplayed in his works. But when we come to inquire more particularly *how* we are to be reconciled, and whether a p*ropitiation* will be re­quired, *nature* ſtops ſhort, and expects with impatience the aid of ſome particular revelation. That God will receive returning ſinners, and accept of repentance inſtead of perfect obedience, cannot be certainly known by thoſe to whom he has not *declared* that he will. For though repentance be the moſt probable, and indeed the only means of reconcilia­tion which nature ſuggeſts ; yet whether he, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, will not require something further before he reſtore ſinners to the privileges which they have forfeited, mere human reaſon has no way of discovering. From nature therefore ariſes no ſufficient comfort to ſinners, but anxious and endleſs solicitude about the means of appealing the Deity. Hence thoſe divers ways of sacrificing, and thoſe numberless ſuperſtitions which overſpread the heathen world, but which were ſo little ſatisfactory to the wiſer part of mankind, that, even in thoſe days of darkness, the philoſophers frequently declared that, in their opinion, these rites and oblations could avail “nothing towards appeasing the wrath of an offended God, or making their prayers acceptable to him. Hence Socrates and one of his disciples are repreſented by Plato@@\* as expecting a person divine­ly commiſſioned to inform them whether ſacrifices be ac­ceptable to the Deity, and as reſolving to offer no more till that person’s arrival, which they piouſly hoped might be at no great diſtance.

This darkneſs of the pagan world, wſhich the beſt of men who lived under it ſo pathetically deplored, is to us who live under the ſunſhine of the goſpel happily removed by the various revelations contained in the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtaments. These taken together, and in the order in which they were given, exhibit ſuch a diſplay of providence, ſuch a ſyſtem of doctrines, and ſuch precepts of

@@@[m]\* Plato in Apolog. Soc.

@@@[m]\* Tusc. Quest. Lib. i. 9, 10, 11.

@@@[m]\* In Alcibiades.