wise the faith of the earlier Egyptians. It was therefore with wiſdom truly divine, that God, to ſhow the vanity of their imaginations, brought upon thoſe votaries of light, who fancied themſelves the offspring of the sun, a preter­natural darkneſs, which, for three days, all the powers of their ſupreme deity and his ſubordinate agents could not diſpel.

The tenth and laſt plague brought upon this idolatrous people was more univerſally and ſeverely felt than any which had preceded it. It was likewiſe, in ſome ſenſe, an inſtance of the *lex talionis,* which requires an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, &c. Moſes was commanded, at his first interview with Pharaoh, to say, “Thus ſaith the Lord, Iſrael is my ſon, even my first-born. Let my ſon go that he may ſerve me : and if thou refuſe to let him go, behold, I will ſlay thy ſon, even thy first-born.” Before this threat was put in execution, every attempt was made to ſoften the hardened heart of the obſtinate tyrant. The waters of his ſacred river were turned into blood, and all the fishes that it contained ſlain ; frogs were brought over all the land to pol­lute the people ; the miniſters of religion were rendered ſo impure by vermin, that they could not diſcharge their wont­ed offices ; the animals moſt revered as gods, or emblems of gods, were cut off by a murrain ; the elements, that were everywhere worſhipped as divinities, carried through the land a devaſtation, which was completed by ſwarms of locuſts ; the aſhes from the ſacred furnace, which were thought to convey bleſſings whitherſoever they were wasted, were made to communicate incurable diſeaſes ; a thick and preternatural darkneſs was ſpread over the kingdom, in de­fiance of the power of the great Oſiris ; and when the hearts of the people and their ſovereign continued ſtill obdurate, the eldeſt ſon in each family was ſlain, becauſe they refuſed to let go Iſrael, God’s first-born. From this universal peſtilence the Iſraelites were preſerved by ſprinkling the door- poſts of their houſes with the blood of one of the animals adored in Egypt ; a fact which, as it could not be unknown to Pharaoh or his ſubjects, ought to have convinced that people of the extreme abſurdity of their impious ſuperſtitions. This effect it ſeems not to have had ; but the death of the firſt-born produced the deliverance of the Hebrews ; for when it was found that there was not a houſe where there was not one dead, “ Pharaoh called for Moſes and Aaron by night, and ſaid, Riſe up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Iſrael ; and bleſs me alſo. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they ſaid, We be all dead men @@(y). The wonted obstinacy of the monarch indeed very ſoon returned ; and his ſubjects, forgetting the loſs of their children, joined with him in a vain attempt to bring back to bondage the very people whom they had been thus urgent to send out of the land ; but their attempt was defeated by Jehovah, and all who engaged in it drowned in the Red Sea.

The God of Iſrael having thus magnified himself over the Egyptians and their gods, and reſcued his people from bon­dage by ſuch means as muſt not only have ſtruck terror and aſtoniſhment into the whole land, but alſo have spread his same through all the countries which had any communica­tion with that far-famed nation, proceeded to inſtruct and exerciſe the Hebrews for many years in the wilderneſs. He inculcated upon them the unity of the Godhead ; gave them ſtatutes and judgments more righteous than thoſe of any other nation ; and by every method conſiſtent with the freedom of moral agency guarded them againſt the contagion of idolatry and polytheiſm. He ſent his angel before them to keep them in the way, took upon himſelf the of­fice of their ſupreme civil governor, and by his preſence directed them in all their undertakings. He led them with repeated ſigns and wonders through the neighbouring nations, continued to try and diſcipline them till they were tolerably attached to his government and establiſhed in his worſhip, and introduced them into the Promiſed Land when its inhabitants were ripe for deſtruction. At their entrance into it, he gave them a ſummary repetition of their former laws, with more ſuch ordinances, both of a ceremonial and moral kind, as were both ſuited to their temper and circumſtances, as well as to prefigure, and by degrees to prepare them for, a more perfect diſpenſation under the Meſſiah.

The Jewiſh law had two great objects in view ; of which the first was to preſerve among them the knowledge of the true God, a rational worſhip ſpringing from that know­ledge, and the regular practice of moral virtue ; and the se­cond was to fit them for receiving the accomplishment of the great promiſe made to their anceſtors, by means analo­gous to thoſe which a schoolmaſter employs to fit his pupils for diſcharging the duties of maturer years. Every thing in that law peculiar to itſelf, its various ceremonies, modes of ſacrificing, the sanctions by which it was enforced, and the theocratic government by which it was adminiſtered, had a direct tendency to promote one or other of theſe ends ; and keeping these ends in view, even the minuteſt laws, at which impious ignorance has affected to make itſelf merry, will be diſcovered by thoſe who ſhall ſtudy the whole ſyſtem, and are at the same time acquainted with the genuis of an­cient polytheiſm, to have been enacted with the moſt conſummate wiſdom.

It is not eaſy for us, who have been long bleſſed with the light of revelation, and who have cultivated our minds by the ſtudy of the ſciences, to conceive the propensity of all nations, in that early age of the world, to the worſhip of falſe gods, of which they were daily adding to the number. It is indeed probable, from many passages of Scripture, as well as from profane authors of the greateſt antiquity, that one ſupreme *numen* was everywhere acknowledged ; but he was conſidered as an extramundane being, too highly exalt­ed to concern himſelf with the affairs of this world, the go­vernment of which, it was believed, he had delegated to va­rious orders of ſubordinate deities. Of thoſe deities, ſome were ſuppoſed to have the charge of one nation and ſome of another. Hence it is, that we read of the gods of Egypt, the gods of the Amorites, and the gods of the different na­tions round about Paleſtine. None of thoſe nations denied the exiſtence of their neighbour’s gods ; but all agreed, that while the Egyptians were the peculiar care of Oſiris and Iſis, the Amorites might be the favourites of Moloch, the Phoenicians of Cronus, and the Philiſtines of Dagon ; and

@@@(Y) For this account of the plagues of Egypt, we are indebted to the very valuable *Obſervations* on the ſubject lately publiſhed by *Mr Bryant.* We have not quoted the authorities by which the learned and pious author ſupports his opinions ; becauſe it is to be hoped, that for a fuller account of theſe important transactions the reader will have recourſe to his work, of which we have given only a very brief abſtract. For much of the preceding parts of this ſection, we acknowledge our obligations to the late Bishop Law’s admirable diſcourse on the *Several Dispenſations of Revealed Religion.*