tion and self-knowledge, and disregard of personal responsibility, by those who implicitly received them ?

But whilst we ascribe to Socrates the merit of having given at once the impulse and the character to Grecian phi­losophy, we must yet single out for special commendation, his admirable services in reviving the forgotten theory of natural religion among his countrymen. Of religion, indeed, as an external system of positive laws enforced by the state, they had, as we have before observed, more than enough. But religion, as a system of truth, was scarcely thought of. When Aristophanes@@1 brings on the stage Demosthenes asking Ni­cias, well-known as Nicias was tor his superstitious feeling; «vîov ⅛γvi *yàp fffois ;* “ really, then, do you think there are gods?"@@2 the allusion is evidently to the real irreligion, which the most rigid and scrupulous worship of the hea­then but ill concealed. Resting their belief of a Divine agency in the world on tradition and authority, men omit­ted to explore the witness of God in their own nature, and in the world around them. Consequently, they were exposed to every objection which the ingenuity of theory, or the folly and wickedness of the world, might suggest to their uninformed credulity, against the positive truth of their religions system. As infidelity in these days finds its refuge in the belief of an infallible church, and is itself in its turn the miserable refuge from the despotism of the very infallibility before which it crouches in silence ; so among the votaries of heathen superstition, the doubts and misgiv­ings of the thoughtful intellect, and the troubled heart, were left to prey on themselves, shut up in abject submission to an external authority, and unprepared for their own defence and support. Socrates addressed a great portion of that practical information, which, in spite of his disclaimer of the office of a teacher, he was ever imparting to all around him, to the remedy of this distempered state of the religious feel­ings. He saw plainly enough that the vulgar theology could not be defended on the ground of rational evidence.@@3 This, therefore, in his respect for the ancient laws and cus­toms of his country, he was content to lean on the sanction of positive institution. A great reverence, he justly thought, was due to the wisdom embodied in ancient laws ; and he would not encourage persons wantonly to abandon the pre­sumptions of truth and right naturally belonging to establish­ed institutions. At least, he would not have men rashly set up their own notions against the presumptions in favour of the wisdom of other men and other days, recommended as these were by some experience of their stability and use, whilst each man’s private opinions had no such sanction, or no equiva­lent sanction. But he felt also, that the internal sense of re­ligion wanted other support,—that presumptions of human vanity and corruption were, and ever would be, brought to bear against this ; and that such assaults could only be re­pelled by a well-informed reason prepared for the encoun­ter. He therefore provided his hearer with a solid and im­pregnable argument in favour of the being and providence and moral government of the Deity. Tire argument was what is now familiarly known as the argument from final causes, or the evidences of almighty design in the fabric and course of nature. For this purpose, he gave an induc­tion of instances from the world without, and from the

intellectual and moral constitution of man himself, of ad­mirable design in the adaptation of means to ends. He called upon men, with such evidences of divine benevolence around them, not to wait for any more palpable proof, such as judging from the analogy of nature they had no ground to expect, but to believe in the existence of invisible things from their effects, and from the good received to reverence the Deity its author. The language, indeed, attributed to him by Xenophon, is in remarkable correspondence with that of St. Paul, declaring, that “ the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;"@@4 and the tenor of his argument throughout illustrates the inspired observation of the apostle. More particularly we may advert to his striking inculcation of the doctrine of the moral government of God. He refers to the sense of responsibility as in itself an evidence of the existence of a Divine Power to reward and punish;@@\* and he points to the pleasure and pain, advantage and dis­advantage, respectively consequent on virtuous and vicious conduct, in the course of things, as instances of a perfection of government beyond the power of human laws.@@6 The stock of instances has been enlarged by the researches of modern science, and strength has been added to them by their arrangement and combination. But Socrates, after all, has the distinguished merit of having given the argu­ment from final causes an explicit statement and due im­portance in the proof of natural religion.

When we think that truths of such high import and in­terest were sedulously propagated for so many years in the place of concourse of the civilized world, we naturally turn from the contemplation of the living philosopher, to ask, what was the result—what was the amount of beneficial in­fluence on the people to whom his mission was addressed. We cannot doubt, that on the whole the influence was great,—that the serious errors of many in regard to the conduct of life were corrected,—their minds opened to con­sider the great purposes for which they had been bom into the world, and to look for happiness, not from transitory sensual enjoyments, but from the sober and vigorous exer­tion of their powers of thought and action. In some con­spicuous instances, indeed, his endeavours strikingly failed. Critias and Alcibiades were known wherever the name of Athens was heard. And their wild and guilty career pre­sented to the public eye a splendid mirror, from which the most unjust censure was reflected on the philosopher him­self. But the many instances which must have occurred in humbler life, of his success in the work of moral reforma­tion, are passed over in silence. That there were such in­stances Xenophon has given us to understand, when he ob­serves, in his simple manner, that Socrates dismissed those who resorted to him, improved by their intercourse with him.@@7 To expect, however, any decisive and permanent public improvement from the teaching of the philosopher, would be to overlook the extent and the malignity of hea­then corruption. The men of that day, as of the present, had the voice of God distinctly speaking within them, “ their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts ac­cusing or excusing them,” according to that just descrip­tion of them which Scripture has set before us. But if they

@@@1 Aristoph. Eq. 82.

@@@\* Thucyd. ii. 53, v. 105. ,Er *rh ûtîov νομίστως,—*and *f∣γoiμd)a τh θiiov 6oξr∣,* are expressions of

Thucydides, which shew the low ground on which religion was rested in Greece.

@@@3 Plato, Euthyphro, p. 6. a. ,Aλλo *μoι lari πpi>ς φiλiov, σiι ώς t'ikηθi>ς ήγή ταυτα ytγovmu* Ôutmç; s.τ.λ. Op. i. 12.

@@@, Xenoph. Mem. iv. 3. 14. 'A *χρη κaτavoovvτa μf∣ κaτaφpovrιv των αοράτων, aKK' « τών γιγvoμivωv τhv ivvaμιv aυτi>v καταμαν-*

*βάνοντα τιμάν το δαιμόνιου.*

@@@‘ Ibid. i. 4. 16. Ο«ι δ’ *άν τούς 6ςoυς τόις άνύρώποις δόξαν lpφvσaι,* \*>r *Ικανοί tiσιv e!* καί *κακώς ποαΐν, li μh δυνατοί ήσαν,*

@@@• Ibid. iv. 4. 24. N⅛ *τf>v Δία,* «I *∑ωκpaτrς, tφη, θtιoις ταυτα πάντα toικf* τό *γάρ τους νόμους αυτούς τo7ς πapaβaivaυ<rt τάς τιμω­*

*ρίας iχeιv, βr∖τlovoς η κατ’ ανίρωπον voμo6iτoυ δοκϊι μοι είναι.* So Bishop Butler, in his Analogy, part i. ch. 2, observes, “ For if civil magistrates could make the sanctions of their laws take place, without interposing at all, after they had passed them, without a trial, and the formalities of an execution ; if they were able to make the laws execute themselves, or every offender to execute them upon him­self; we should be just in the same sense under their government then, as we are now ; but in a much higher degree, and more perfect manner.” P. 51.

@@@’ Xenoph. Mem. i. 2. 61. *βfKτioυς yap ποιαν τoi∕ς σvγγιyvoμfvnvs aπiπtμπrv.* Also ib. 4. 19; iv. 5. 24.