comparison, being that inflection of adjective nouns that serves to augment and heighten their signification, and shows the quality of the thing denoted to be in the highest degree.

SUPERPARTICULAR Proportion, or *Ratio,* is that in which the greater term exceeds the less by unit or 1 : as the ratio of 1 to 2, or 2 to 3, or 3 to 4.

SUPERPARTIENT Proportion, or *Ratio,* is when the greater term contains the less terra once, and leaves some number greater than 1 remaining : as the ratio of 3 to 5, which is equal to that of 1 to 12/3; of 7 to 10, which is equal to that of 1 to 13/7.

SUPERSTITION, a word that has been used so inde­finitely that it is difficult to determine its precise meaning. From its resemblance in sound to the Latin word *superstes,* a survivor, it is evidently derived from it, and different attempts have been made to trace their connection in sig­nification. In the dialogue of Cicero “ De Natura Deorum,” Balbus says that they who prayed and sacrificed whole days that their children might *surrιι∙e* them, were called superstitious. Lactantius censures this etymology, and avers that they were not called superstitious who wished that their children might survive them (for this we all wish), but because they who survived their parents wor­shipped their images. Others again affirm that supersti­tion is derived from *superstes,* because it consisted in con­sidering the dead as if they were alive. But these etymo­logies are solely conjectural, and we consider conjectures as absurd in philology as we do in science ; they may mis­lead, but are seldom of any benefit. The usual meaning affixed to the word superstition, both in the Latin and Eng­lish languages, is so different from *superstes,* that its change of meaning must be owing to some accident after which it is in vain to inquire. If we had not known that the word *paganus,* a pagan, was derived from *pagus,* a village, because the heathens in a certain period of the Christian history lived in villages, the whims and fancies of etymolo­gists would not have thrown much light on the subject.

Without labouring, from the aid of etymology, to define superstition, which is a word of a very extensive signification, we shall consider to what objects it is applied ; and then, by observing what is common to them all, we shall be en­abled to fix with some degree of precision the meaning of the term. We apply it to the idolatry of the heathens; we apply it also to the Jews, who made the will of God of no effect by their traditions, and substituted ceremonies in place of the religion of their fathers. We say also that Christians are guilty of superstition ; the Romanists, who believe in transubstantiation and in the efficacy of prayers to saints ; and those Protestants who esteem baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the punctual performance of other ceremonies, without regard to morality, as sufficient to en­sure salvation. Those persons are also reckoned supersti­tious who believe, without any evidence, that prophecies are still uttered by divine inspiration, and that miracles are still performed. The word is also extended to those who believe in witchcraft, magic, and apparitions, or that the divine will is declared by omens or augury; that the fortune of individuals can be affected by things indifferent, by things deemed lucky or unlucky, or that diseases can be cured by words, charms, and incantations.

Through all the particulars which we have enumerated, there runs one general idea, the belief of what is false and contrary to reason. From this, however, we must not sup­pose that whatever is false and contrary to reason may be denominated superstition. Superstition has always a refer­ence to God, to religion, or to beings superior to man. We do not however distinguish all false and irrational opinions in religion by the name of superstition. We do not, for instance, apply this name to the opinions which some of the ancients entertained, that God is the soul of the world, and that men are only portions of him separated for a time ; or that the soul after death lives successively in different bodies. If we examine the subject with more attention, we shall discover that the foundation of superstition is ignorance of the moral attributes of God ; for we never say a man is su­perstitious for entertaining erroneous opinions of the natu­ral attributes of God. Some of the Socinians have denied the prescience of God ; and a French philosopher has not only rejected the belief that he is a spirit, but has presumed to say that he is composed of a species of crystals. The first of these opinions discovers very imperfect ideas of God, and the second is the height of impiety and absurdity ; yet the Socinians have not been accused of superstition, nor can this French philosopher be suspected of it. We do not call every false opinion concerning the unity or moral attributes of God by the name of superstition, as, for instance, the opinion which some sceptics have supported, that God is not good; for, as was mentioned before, superstition always involves the idea of credulity. It does not consist in falsely denying that God possesses any particular moral attributes, but in believing more than what is true concerning them ; in forming mean, unworthy ideas of them ; in supposing that he is guided by blind passion like mankind, and en­joins upon his creatures commandments which are irrational and absurd.

As superstition arises from ignorance and credulity in the understanding, so it has also a seat in the passions. Fear has been commonly considered as a passion of the human mind, from which it chiefly derives its origin ; and there is no doubt that more superstition has arisen from fear united with ignorance and credulity, than from any other passion ; yet it would certainly be improper to exclude all other pas­sions. We cannot account for the superstition of the Egyp­tians, without supposing that much of it arose from grati­tude. They worshipped the Nile, because it distributed fertility and abundance over the land of Egypt ; and they worshipped some animals, merely because they prevented the increase of other animals which were noxious. Thus they adored the ibis, because it destroyed the eggs of the crocodile.

Having thus endeavoured to analyse the ideas compre­hended under the word superstition, we may sum them up in a few words. It respects God and beings superior to man, and extends to our religious opinions, worship, and practices ; and may be defined absurd opinions and actions arising from mean and defective ideas of the moral attri­butes of God. Let us apply this definition to the different species of superstition already mentioned.

But before entering upon this application, it may be pro­per to observe, that superstition involves the idea of a blameable inattention to reason, or a credulity arising from an indolence of understanding. We generally make a dis­tinction between the imperfect opinions which a savage, from the necessary effects of his situation, forms of the at­tributes of God, and those which civilized nations enter­tain. We say the savage is ignorant, and we ascribe his ignorance to bis situation ; but we call the Roman Catholic superstitious, and we blame him for not having those just ideas of God which he might have obtained by opening his Bible, or by the exercise of his understanding in the favourable situation in which he is placed. Superstition, then, does not originate so much from the natural weakness of the human understanding, as from a misapplication or a neglect of ft.

We cannot therefore with any propriety apply the name *superstition* to polytheism in general ; for what all the an­cient philosophers, after much study and reflection, con­cluded to be true, could never proceed from credulity and inattention, but from their situation. We speak very pro­perly, however, when we call idolatry by the name of su­perstition ; because there is no man so devoid of under­standing as not to be capable of discovering that a piece of