

of pride, but empty of wisdom, destitute of God, and grace, and godliness.

Consequently all conceptions concerning God's universal love, universal redemption, universal grace, universal free-will to holiness or moral goodness, universal virtue, or in other words universal BENEVOLENCE TO BEING in a fallen depraved world, have no existence in fact: it is an error, a falshood, a fiction, a dream; it is a bubble, it is moon shine, it is smoke, it is the baseless fabric of a vision that will dissolve and leave nothing but a wreck of proud, lost, and ruined souls behind!

I will close this Contemplation with the words of one of the greatest masters of DIVINITY that has existed since the apostolic age; and they are words that set all rational and just contradiction at defiance. They are the words of the great, the good, the venerable, and accurate WITSIUS, the prince of divines in the protestant world; a man in whom elevation and penetration of thought, and elegance of TASTE, are equally and most happily united.

Quum Deus in omnibus actionibus suæ voluntatis prorsus independens, omniumque rerum ac personarum supremus arbiter sit; idemque unicus omnis boni, ac proinde omnis fidei, virtutis

tutis & sanctitudinis in hominibus auctor, quarum rerum gratiam liberrime cui vult confert; agens omnia ex consilio voluntatis suæ: nulla fides, nulla virtus, nihil denique omnino boni in his magis quam in illis hominibus præcognosci potuit, cujus intuitu hos potius quam illos elegerit; sed tota hujus discriminis ratio in absoluto Dei dominio & immensa libertate gloriosæ gratiæ, de qua nemini respondet, collocanda est.

Quandoquidem consilium Jehovæ in seculum consistit: quippe quo a Deo, penitere nescio, imperscrutabili sapientia ordinatum, immensæ omnipotentia vim, ad ipsas hominum mentes, citra ullam rationalis libertatis læsionem, quo vult flectendas, subservientem sibi habet: fieri nullo pacto potest ut illi non ferventur quos Deus destinauit ad consecutionem salutis.

### THE TRANSLATION.

Seeing God is entirely independent in all the acts of his will, and the supreme disposer of all persons and things; and the sole author of all good, and consequently of all faith, virtue, and holiness in men: the favour of which benefits he most freely bestows on whom he pleases; working all things according to the counsel of his own will. No faith, no virtue; in short, nothing that is truly good could be foreknown in any description of men more than in others; on the view of which he should chuse those men rather than these: but the whole reason of this distinction and favour is to be resolved into the absolute dominion of God, and the immense freeness of his glorious grace, concerning which he is responsible to no man, Job xxxiii. 13. for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

Considering

Considering that the counsel of GOD stands immutable, and to eternity; and that whatever GOD, who cannot repent, decrees in his unsearchable wisdom, he hath infinitely active power, without any injury to rational liberty, to bend the minds of men and make them subservient to himself: therefore it is absolutely impossible that those persons should not be saved whom GOD has appointed to salvation.—See *Animadversiones Irenicæ*, by Dr. WITSIUS, 12mo. 1696, page 12, 13.—The amiable Mr. Hervey gives the following character of this excellent Book: “A choice little piece of polemical divinity, perhaps the very best that is extant. In which the most important controversies are fairly stated, accurately discussed, and judiciously determined;—with a perspicuity of sense, and a solidity of reasoning, that are exceeded by nothing, but the remarkable conciseness, and the still more remarkable candour of the sentiments.”—Theron and Aspasio, vol. II. lett. V.

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### SELECT BOOKS.

1. The great, the accurate, and polite CHARNOCK, on the DOMINION of GOD, has gone into this sublime ATTRIBUTE with an elevation and penetration of thought, with a vast amplitude of mind, and a clearness and elegance of style beyond all the authors I have read. He lays down some very useful PRELIMINARIES to clear and confirm GOD's dominion—he shews on what the dominion of GOD is founded—he displays the nature of GOD's dominion, as it is absolute and independent; wise and prudent; just and holy; good and gracious; extending to all worlds, and eternal as the duration of GOD.

N. B. Christ's dominion is equal with his divine Father's, and is equally demonstrated by the evidences of scripture. It stands on the same principles, and will endure for ever and ever.

2. A PRACTICAL DISCOURSE of GOD's SOVEREIGNTY, by Elisha Coles. To this book I am exceedingly indebted for my materials on the Dominion of CHRIST. Whether my manner of expression and additional ideas be any improvement, must be left to the judgment and taste of my intelligent and judicious readers.

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DIGNITY described, as it resides in the Son of God, as it exists in true, generous CHRISTIANS; and shewn to be a correspondent QUALITY to that which is in CHRIST, in an infinite MANNER. DIGNITY in BELIEVERS arises wholly from RELIGION.—The PREROGATIVES of CHRIST are direct, arising from the intrinsic DIGNITY of his NATURE; or incidental and additional, arising from his BENEFITS in CREATION and SALVATION. MAN, in the SIGHT of GOD, has no PREROGATIVES or RIGHTS, except what arise from pure GOODNESS, or mere GRACE.—The TASTE of CHRIST, or his clear SENSE of the noble and beautiful CHARACTER of GOD; and whatever is good and true, beautiful and affecting in CREATURES.—TASTE in MAN described and illustrated, and shewn to correspond with the

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divine

divine TASTE of the LORD JESUS in numerous INSTANCES.—The AFFECTIONS of CHRIST. LOVE, GRACE, HATRED, ANGER, ZEAL, WRATH, the correspondent AFFECTIONS in true CHRISTIANS and ANGELS.

IX. The DIGNITY of CHRIST, as GOD, CONSISTS in the consciousness he has of the shining purity of his divine perfections; attended with the highest delight in his own infinite worth, and beauty of character. These unparalleled excellencies give him the utmost ground and reason for the greatest self-approbation and esteem, and inspire him with an ardent and invariable resolution to decree nothing, to say nothing, to act nothing unworthy of himself; nor suffer any thing to be thought, said or done in all his vast empire, but what shall be approved and rewarded, if good; or resented and punished, if evil.

Christ knows his own infinite consequence to the universe, to all creatures in heaven, earth, and hell; he knows his own infinite consequence to the church of God, and to every true christian with whom he is intimately and vitally united; and who receives from him every ray of light, life, liberty, joy, and beauty. He knows his own infinite and eternal consequence to GOD the FATHER, and GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, with whom  
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he is intensely united; and whose glories are displayed by HIM in the most illustrious manner.

CHRIST knows his own consequence to all created and uncreated nature, his consequence to his FATHER's glory, and to his FATHER's delight: he knows his own consequence to the glory and pleasure of the BLESSED SPIRIT, in his person and operations in nature and grace. Christ knows his own infinite consequence to the future revolutions of the universe, and the last grand conflagration: he knows his own consequence to the happiness of the WHOLE WORLD of his redeemed people in his spiritual empire, all round the globe, from pole to pole: he knows his own infinite consequence with respect to the final discovery of the whole nature, attributes, and actions of the GODHEAD; in the two eternal worlds of final misery and final happiness of the entire creation of intelligent agents, men, and angels!—Great God the Saviour, what unbounded and eternal dignity is thine!

The DIGNITY of Christ in his *human nature*, is an object of delightful contemplation, and is more adapted to our feeble powers: it endears him infinitely to the sons of Adam, and renders even his Godhead more familiar and more precious to our souls.

Let



Let us strive to attain a clear sense of the noble and beautiful nature of religion in Christ's soul. As to its ORIGINAL and fountain, it arose from GOD, and made its progress into GOD: it flowed from the eternal truth of GOD's nature, the infinite goodness of his heart, and the beauty and love of all the divine perfections united in one grand central blaze of light.

As to the NATURE of religion and dignity in Christ's precious and immortal soul. It furnishes these delightful ideas: his religion enabled him to live above the whole world: he lived in converse with his own immortal mind and reason: he conversed with himself: he knew how to love and value himself; to esteem and reverence himself in the best and noblest manner.

He lived up to the height of his own being and powers: he lived to the height of his own reason, taste, passions, and immortality.

Religion enlarged the capacity of his fine understanding to take in vast and sublime ideas of GOD, without pain or difficulty; to receive new and uncommon ideas of GOD and his purposes, without disgust or aversion; and to survey a rich variety of astonishing ideas in one view, without confusion. His understanding surveyed the person and ideas of GOD the Father with great delight:

delight : he surveyed the person and ideas of the eternal Son of God, to which he was united with boundless admiration and pleasure : he surveyed the person and ideas of God the Holy Spirit, who gave him grace without bounds or measure ; and every fresh view gave him new delight.

Christ's soul had a wonderful power of understanding to consider itself, and to survey his own rich, vast, boundless ideas ; he could compare his ideas of all past facts ; he could compare his ideas of all things present ; and he could compare his ideas of things future, and see facts that had yet no existence, except in the prescience of God.

Christ could propose the noblest ends, and the best means to attain those ends, in the most successful and beautiful manner ; his great understanding knew all the provinces of human science ; all that was rich and valuable amongst the sons of learning and philosophy ; and he saw that the whole world, with all their wisdom, *knew not* God. Christ had an astonishing keenness and quickness of thought to range into the omnipresent attributes of God ; he could fly in thought through all worlds in a moment ; he could pierce into hell with all its darkest horrors, or rise and range through heaven with all its beauties, in the twinkling an eye ! What a dignity of soul was here !

RELIGION

RELIGION inspired Christ with the dignity of SELF-DOMINION, and caused him to feel the delightful enjoyment of his own existence, and noble powers, affections, taste, and imagination! and nothing but religion will enable his people to enjoy their own souls, and have self-dominion over their wicked appetites and rebellious passions.

Christ's dignity animated him to the noblest end, that is, to be like God, that he might live to God. Christ's whole soul was intensely and ardently bent on glorifying God; by displaying, in the most illustrious manner, all the magnificence of God's natural and moral perfections; and opening to the view of men, devils, and angels, all the attributes and actions of the eternal GODHEAD.

His ZEAL for the divine glory was equal to his vast capacities to advance it: and his glorious powers to represent the whole of God to mankind, were equal to his boundless wishes and zeal for the divine honour!

The DIGNITY of Christ produced the greatest ease in his mind, and gave him the most perfect serenity and peace of heart: his affections were like spring-water in a glass of chrystal; no sediment, no impurity could be raised by the most  
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violent attempts to disturb or pollute his imagination and passions : he felt a constant, pure, satisfying peace in his own conscience : and thus will his people feel, as far as they keep close to him by faith and love.

This divine religion or participation of God advanced Christ's excellent soul to a holy boldness and sweet familiarity with God, and gave him a confidence in his Father's love towards him, and his best interests and honour, which the Father delighted to promote every moment : he speaks of his Father's house just as a prince speaks of the palace where he was born,\* and of his Father as one with whom he had the most familiar acquaintance : he contemplated all the divine perfections every morning of his life ; and he conversed with God in a way of devotion and love all the day, and every night he committed himself to his Father's care, and reposed his soul in his Father's bosom.

The DIGNITY of Christ, arising from vital religion in his soul, animated him to spiritualize the whole visible world, and to see God in all the BEAUTIES OF CREATION.

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\* The archbishop of Cambray hath fine thoughts on this subject.—See his Dialogues on Eloquence, Dial. III. page 157. Stevenson's excellent translation, 8vo. 1722. French edition, Dial. III. page

He saw every moment of his life, that this visible world was full of good order, harmony, and beauty.

With a vast understanding, and the most sublime admiration and joy, he contemplated the wonders of space, as the dwelling-place and temple of the eternal and omnipresent GOD-HEAD.

He saw the great variety and amazing number of creatures contained in universal space: he viewed the astonishing variety of creatures on this earth: in it's bowels, or under it's surface, all manner of stones, minerals, metals, and other substances: upon it's surface an incredible number of trees, shrubs, plants, grasses, seeds, leaves, flowers, and fruits!

On the earth, and in the air and seas: beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects; an immense variety and number past all the powers of BOYLE or NEWTON to comprehend.

Christ saw the exquisite minuteness of the parts of each creature, the beauty of each creature, and the curious and elegant structure of so many species of creatures.

He saw, with devotion and wonder, the harmonious connexion of the several parts of the universe, and the correspondence of every part  
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of the creation to the beauty and happiness of the whole.

Christ turned the structure of the universe into a temple, in which he adored God: he converted all nature into a school of instruction, in which he read new lessons every hour! O! that we could imitate Christ, and the best of his pupils, HERVEY and Le PLUCHE, who saw God in every creature all through their devout and happy course of life.

Christ's dignity raised and fixed his noble understanding to a keen and accurate attention to DIVINE PROVIDENCE. Every moment of his life he observed the motions of providence; he adored the depths of providence, and he complied with all the designs of providence. It is our wisdom, dignity, and felicity, to imitate our blessed Master and Lord!

The DIGNITY of Christ appears in the noble and wonderful PROGRESS of vital religion in his holy SOUL.

The Spirit of God perpetually carried on his soul towards greater heights of perfection in grander conceptions of God, more intense likenesses to God, and richer joys in God, with new and nobler fruitions of his goodness.

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The spirit of religion in HIM had the central force of heaven enlivening all his motions to GOD.

In the world of nature there are four kinds of attraction; and, in a divine sense, they appear in a nobler view in the soul of Christ: and in heaven we shall feel those four attractions in their most intense and pleasing force.

The attraction of gravitation towards GOD omnipresent in the most forcible degree every moment. This he felt in his holy soul, under the incessant agency of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The attraction of cohesion with GOD in the most close and intense manner. Christ's soul was blended with the divine goodness, holiness, and beauty; but without confusion, conversion into deity, or composition.

The attraction of magnetism. The Lord Jesus felt GOD omnipresent. GOD the Son, in all his beauties, was the eternal omnipresent magnet to Christ's noble and excellent soul.

The attraction of electricity. The divine nature was like the most pure and sublime fire to spread through the holy powers, passions, and thoughts of the Lord Jesus every moment of his existence.

Thus

Thus the path of Christ was the path of the just; like the shining light, shining more and more to the perfect day. It shone in point of certainty and evidence; beauty and excellence; pleasure and joy; alluring and instructive; progressive into God; improving in his clear apprehensions of God's lovely nature; in the adhesion of the will to God; shining brighter and brighter in the perfection of his example and character; advancing in the pleasures of divine action; and issuing at last in a state of boundless perfection; that is, the perfection of HOLINESS, or the steady order and operation of his mental powers; and in the perfection of HAPPINESS, or the sweetest enjoyment of his whole soul in God. Thus you see the dignity and divine excellence of religion in the soul of Christ displayed itself in it's last grand TERMINATION, or ultimate end; that is, perfect blessedness\* in the eternal God.

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X. The

\* It will be pleasing, instructive, and animating to true christians, to shew, in this connexion, wherein our dignity consists, as it is correspondent with the dignity of Christ. At the same time let me observe, that my note might be drawn out to a most pleasing length, by the aid of the above thoughts on the dignity of Christ.

#### THE DIGNITY OF MAN.

The dignity of man arises wholly from true religion; and true religion is a participation of a divine nature—a communication from God. The true christian's holy nature comes from heaven, and moves towards heaven again in it's inclinations, passions, and taste.

RELIGION



## X. The PREROGATIVE OF CHRIST, AS GOD.

A prerogative is something that is required or demanded for him, in preference to all other persons.

The prerogative of Christ is that special pre-eminence which he hath above all creatures in his vast empire, in right of his divine dignity.

Prerogatives are either direct, or incidental and additional.

The glorious prerogatives of Christ are direct in the highest degree; and they are likewise incidental and additional, by reason of his vast and various blessings bestowed on his People.

The direct prerogatives of Christ are such essential

RELIGION in the soul is the very highest dignity and excellence that God ever communicated to a creature. It flows from the fountain of God's good and beautiful nature; it is a beam of truth, from Christ the source of truth; it is a rill of goodness, from Christ the ocean of goodness; it is a stream of love, from Christ the fountain of love; it is a ray of beauty, from Christ the sun of righteousness; it flows from Christ's good will to us, and is the essence of his good work in us; it is the vigorous efflux and emanation from the immutable nature and beauty of Christ; from whence arises all the eternal rules and laws of truth, beauty, and goodness; which are the foundation of all religion in the soul of a true-christian.

A christian, in an holy frame, can discern in his soul those ideas of truth and beauty which relate to the nature and moral perfections of God.

essential parts of his original and eternal character, as are rooted in, and spring from his eternal nature and intrinsic dignity; without any reference to extrinsic circumstances, such as creation, providence, and redemption.

The direct prerogatives of Christ are such as regard his **DIGNITY**; including the most sublime attributes of absolute perfection, personal sovereignty, and perpetuity of dominion.

The prerogatives of Christ likewise regard his infinite authority over all his creatures, or his divine and regal **POWER** in the executive part of his government: and also his royal **REVENUE** due to him from his people; and which he has an infinite right to demand of all true believers: and this royal revenue consists in adoration, admiration, and fervent gratitude.\*

## XI. The

\* **CHRIST** has a right to every thing: man has a right to nothing. Christ has a right to life, for he is the **TRUE GOD** and eternal life: man has no life but what Christ freely gives him. Christ has a right to existence, for his name is **I AM THAT I AM**, Exod. iii. 14. but man has no right to existence; he might be, or he might not be, just as Christ pleases in his absolute dominion to determine. Christ has a right to infinite **LIBERTY**: but man has no right to any liberty since his fall, ruin, and rebellion. Christ has a right to all his boundless property in heaven, and earth, and hell: but man, by sin, has forfeited all his property: he has no right to health, strength, beauty, riches, honours, peace, safety, pleasure, or any other kind of good for one moment; but he deserves a dreadful confluence of all kinds of evil, to make him miserable in soul and body, world without end.

XI. The TASTE of CHRIST as GOD, and  
as GOD-man,

Consists in his clear sense of the noble, the beautiful, and the affecting, in all the objects in the universe, created and uncreated, material and spiritual, visible and invisible, mortal and immortal.

The first object of Christ's taste and complacency is the divine Father, in his noble nature and beautiful perfections. The next object of his taste is the Holy Spirit, in his noble and divine person, attributes, actions, and grace.

The next object of his taste is himself in his nature, perfections, and beauty. We have treated on this under the head of the dignity of Christ.

The next objects of his taste are the persons, graces, and noble and beautiful actions of his people in all the ages of the church to this very day.

The OBJECTS of Christ's TASTE,

With respect to his people, are the most lovely things in our world. Some of the principal are these:—the truth of grace in his peoples hearts—gratitude—generosity—holy liberty of soul—habitual joy, or cheerfulness in GOD—new obedience, or daily exercises of grace—a chaste and lively.

lively imagination exercised on the beauties of creation and scripture—personal beauty, or internal goodness of character—tender, ardent friendship towards their best friend—sublime conceptions of God—inward grandeur of thought and passion—solid greatness of mind, and noble actions flowing from the inward vigour and dignity of the soul. All these are the lovely objects of Christ's taste towards his people.

1. TRUTH is pleasing to Christ's taste. Truth in existence: truth in conception: truth of heart, which is sincerity: truth in words, which is veracity: truth in conduct, which is faithfulness. All this is highly delightful to the taste of Christ the eternal God of truth.

On the other hand: fiction, error, hypocrisy, lying, base unfaithfulness, covenant-breaking, and all dishonesty, are the objects of Christ's keenest hatred and infinite indignation. Thus we ought to conform to the taste of our divine example and master the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. GRATITUDE is a pleasing object to the TASTE of our Lord Jesus. Gratitude is a sense of benefits received, a complacency in the benefactor, a good will or hearty benevolence to our generous friend, and an ardent passion to make all possible returns, even beyond the bounds of justice, if it lies in our  
power

power. This temper carries in it every thing great and generous, and must always be pleasing to the taste of Christ.—Ingratitude is a most vile temper: it is a compound of insensibility, and stupidity of soul; a total want of delight in Christ; a frightful vacancy of benevolence, and an horrid neglect to make any kind of worthy return for all the blessings of nature, providence, and grace! Christ has an invariable will to disunite himself from such a resemblance of hell. Ingratitude is as ugly as the devil, and hateful to all men of sense and virtue in the whole world.

3. **GENEROSITY** is always pleasing to the **TASTE** of **CHRIST**. The liberal or princely soul deviseth liberal or princely things; and by liberal or princely things he shall stand,\* *Isai. xxxii. 8.* Generosity is ever pleasing to the taste of all worthy men; much more to the most worthy **LORD** and **GOD** of all true believers. Covetousness and misers are hated by **GOD** our Saviour, with the most intense and eternal aversion, scorn, and contempt. Every wise and good christian hates the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth, *Pf. x. 3.* The original Hebrew word **NAATS** signifies scorn and disdain; **GOD** abhors and scorns a covetous wretch: he is irritated and provoked to see him!

#### 4. **LIBERTY**

\* The Hebrew word **JAKUM** signifies he shall rise, as well as to stand and be established. He shall rise to higher degrees of wisdom, dignity, and usefulness, in the church and empire of **GOD**.

4. LIBERTY, the glorious liberty of the sons of God is always a pleasing object to the taste of our Lord Jesus. Liberty of mind and understanding from darknes: liberty of will from slavery to sin: liberty of conscience from guilt; and the tyranny of men: liberty of the affections from the seductions of Satan and lust; and liberty of the whole soul in God. On the other hand: slavery is the object of his disgust and aversion; and he will mark it out with the keenest abhorrence.

5. Habitual CHEERFULNESS is an object of the TASTE and delight of the Lord Jesus.

Cheerfulness is a sweet compound of habitual joy and benevolence; and this must be extremely agreeable to the nature and love of the divine redeemer. It suits his taste to see his people cheerfully walk before him: this brings credit and glory to the religion of Jesus: it shews all the world, that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace, Prov. iii. 17. See Mr. Henry and Grove on the Pleasures of Religion. On the other hand, all gloominess and hard thoughts of Christ are exceedingly disgustful to him: every thing dark, desponding, and melancholy, is very injurious to the character and religion of the Lord: for it makes an odious representation of him to the world; it hardens the

hearts of the wicked; it gives great advantage to the devil; it terrifies enquiring souls, and most horribly misrepresents the lovely, beautiful, and generous dispositions of our dear redeemer.

6. NEW EXERCISES of GRACE, every morning, and all the day long on every trying occasion, are an object exceedingly pleasing to the TASTE of our LORD JESUS. He beheld the new and noble exercises of faith in the centurion, Math. viii. 10. and in the poor Canaanitish woman, Math. xv. 28. with admiration and rapture: he was extremely pleased with Peter's act of faith and noble confession, Math. xvi. 16. and in all ages of the church to this moment, Christ is highly delighted to see new exercises of faith, love, humility, fortitude, and benevolence, rise into public observation from his people's hearts! Let this thought rouse our ZEAL to give Christ fresh pleasure in our graces and noble actions every day, and every hour.

7. A holy and lively IMAGINATION, devoted to the PLEASURES of contemplation and devotion, on the WORKS and WORD of GOD, is always a pleasing object to Christ; who has a clear sense of the goodness, beauty, and usefulness of it.

If we bear in mind, that CHRIST is truly and properly the CREATOR of all things, we shall be  
moved

moved by every thing in the CREATION, which we view with our eyes, or contemplate with our minds, to have high thoughts of him. Every thing that raises pleasure in our IMAGINATION ought to raise our ideas of the SON of GOD, whether it be the beautiful variety of flowers that adorn the garden, or the gay enamel that paints the meadow, or the curious drapery that veils the grove. All the tribes of living creatures proclaim his greatness.—See Dr. Ab. Taylor's True Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, 8vo. 1727, p. 353--356, on Christ being the CREATOR of all worlds.

IMAGINATION is a power of assembling images, and of painting in a lively manner those images on our mind, or on the minds of other men.

In man's original creation and structure, the power of imagination was a most beautiful, wonderful, and useful power. It had for its objects every thing great, new, and beautiful in the whole visible creation of GOD; and it was a medium of contemplating GOD himself in his attributes and actions, as displayed in the works of wisdom, power, and goodness, above, beneath, and all around him.—Mr. Addison's Essays on the Imagination are beyond all praise, Spect. vol. VI. No. 411--422. Dr. Akenfide's poem on the Pleasures of Imagination is a noble amplification