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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 531. Saturday, November 8.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

" tell thee that I know them. I have had my share in their graces, but
 " no more of that. It shall be my business hereafter to live the life of an
 " honest man, and to act as becomes the master of a family. I question
 " not but I shall draw upon me the raillery of the town, and be treated
 " to the tune of *the marriage-bater matched*; but I am prepared for it.
 " I have been as witty upon others in my time. To tell thee truly, I
 " saw such a tribe of fashionable young fluttering coxcombs shot up, that
 " I did not think my post of an *Homme de ruelle* any longer tenable. I
 " felt a certain stiffness in my limbs, which entirely destroyed that jaun-
 " tyness of air I was once master of. Besides, for I may now confess my
 " age to thee, I have been eight and forty above these twelve years.
 " Since my retirement into the country will make a vacancy in the Club,
 " I could wish you would fill up my place with my friend *Tom Dapper-*
 " *wit*. He has an infinite deal of fire, and knows the town. For my
 " own part, as I have said before, I shall endeavour to live hereafter
 " suitable to a man in my station, as a prudent head of a family, a good
 " husband, a careful father (when it shall so happen,) and as

Your most sincere friend and humble servant,

WILLIAM HONEYCOMB.

N^o 531. *Saturday, November 8.*

Qui mare et terras variisque mundum

Temperat horis:

Unde nil majus generatur ipso,

Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum.

Hor.

SIMONIDES being asked by *Dionysius* the tyrant what God was,
 desired a day's time to consider of it before he made his reply.
 When the day was expired, he desired two days; and afterwards,
 instead of returning his answer, demanded still double the time to con-
 sider of it. This great Poet and Philosopher, the more he contemplated the

the nature of the Deity, found that he waded but the more out of his depth; and that he lost himself in the thought, instead of finding an end of it.

If we consider the idea which wise men, by the light of reason, have framed of the Divine Being, it amounts to this: that he has in him all the perfection of a spiritual nature; and since we have no notion of any kind of spiritual perfection but what we discover in our own souls, we join infinitude to each kind of these perfections, and what is a faculty in a human soul becomes an attribute in God. *We* exist in place and time, the divine Being fills the immensity of space with his presence, and inhabits Eternity. *We* are possessed of a little power and a little knowledge, the Divine Being is Almighty and Omniscient. In short, by adding infinity to any kind of perfection we enjoy, and by joining all these different kinds of perfections in one Being, we form our idea of the great Sovereign of nature.

Though every one who thinks, must have made this observation, I shall produce Mr. *Locke's* authority to the same purpose, out of his *Essay on Human Understanding*. "If we examine the *Idea* we have of the incomprehensible supreme Being, we shall find, that we come by it the same way; and that the complex *Ideas* we have both of God and separate spirits, are made up of the simple *Ideas* we receive from *Reflection*: v. g. having from what we experiment in our selves, got the *Ideas* of existence and duration, of knowledge and power, of pleasure and happiness, and of several other qualities and powers, which it is better to have, than to be without; when we would frame an *Idea* the most suitable we can to the supreme Being, we enlarge every one of these with our *Idea* of infinity; and so putting them together, make our complex *Idea of God*."

It is not impossible that there may be many kinds of spiritual perfection, besides those which are lodged in a human soul; but it is impossible that we should have ideas of any kinds of perfection, except those of which we have some small rays and short imperfect strokes in our selves. It would be therefore a very high presumption to determine whether the supreme Being has not many more attributes than those which enter into our conceptions of him. This is certain, that if there be any kind of spiritual perfection which is not marked out in a human soul, it belongs in its fulness to the Divine Nature.

Several eminent Philosophers have imagined that the soul, in her separate state, may have new faculties springing up in her, which she is not capable

capable of exerting during her present union with the body; and whether these faculties may not correspond with other attributes in the divine nature, and open to us hereafter new matter of wonder and adoration, we are altogether ignorant. This, as I have said before, we ought to acquiesce in, that the Sovereign Being, the great Author of nature, has in him all possible perfection, as well in *kind* as in *degree*; to speak according to our methods of conceiving. I shall only add under this head, that when we have raised our notion of this infinite Being as high as it is possible for the mind of man to go, it will fall infinitely short of what he really is. *There is no end of his greatness*: the most exalted creature he has made, is only capable of adoring it, none but himself can comprehend it.

The advice of the Son of *Sirach* is very just and sublime in this light. *By his word all things consist. We may speak much, and yet come short: wherefore in sum, he is all. How shall we be able to magnify him? for he is great above all his works. The Lord is terrible and very great; and marvellous in his power. When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for even yet will he far exceed. And when you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough. Who hath seen him, that he might tell us? and who can magnify him as he is? there are yet hid greater things than these be, for we have seen but a few of his works.*

I have here only considered the Supreme Being by the light of reason and philosophy. If we would see him in all the wonders of his mercy, we must have recourse to revelation, which represents him to us, not only as infinitely Great and Glorious, but as infinitely Good and Just in his dispensations towards man. But as this is a Theory which falls under every one's consideration, though indeed it can never be sufficiently considered, I shall here only take notice of that habitual worship and veneration which we ought to pay to this Almighty Being. We should often refresh our minds with the thoughts of him, and annihilate our selves before him, in the contemplation of our own worthlessness, and of his transcendent excellency and perfection. This would imprint in our minds such a constant and uninterrupted awe and veneration as that which I am here recommending, and which is in reality a kind of incessant prayer, and reasonable humiliation of the soul before him who made it.

This would effectually kill in us all the little seeds of pride, vanity and self-conceit, which are apt to shoot up in the minds of such whose thoughts

turn

turn more on those comparative advantages which they enjoy over some of their fellow-creatures, than on that infinite distance which is placed between them and the supreme model of all perfection. It would likewise quicken our desires and endeavours of uniting our selves to him by all the acts of religion and virtue.

Such an habitual homage to the supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using his name on the most trivial occasions.

I find the following passage in an excellent Sermon, preached at the funeral of a Gentleman who was an honour to his country, and a more diligent as well as successful enquirer into the works of Nature, than any other our nation has ever produced. "He had the profoundest veneration for the great God of heaven and earth that I have ever observed in any person. The very name of God was never mentioned by him without a pause and a visible stop in his discourse; in which, one that knew him particularly above twenty years, has told me, that he was so exact, that he does not remember to have observed him once to fail in it.

Every one knows the veneration which was paid by the *Jews* to a name so great, wonderful and holy. They would not let it enter even into their religious discourses. What can we then think of those who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most impertinent passions? of those who admit it into the most familiar questions and assertions, ludicrous phrases and works of humour? not to mention those who violate it by solemn perjuries? it would be an affront to reason to endeavour to set forth the horror and prophaneness of such a practice. The very mention of it exposes it sufficiently to those in whom the light of nature, not to say religion, is not utterly extinguished.



Thursday,