

and reward, so must vice of hatred and punishment. That the gods neither resent nor hurt, was the general maxim of all the different sects of the ancient philosophy; and if by resenting be understood that violent and disorderly perturbation which often distracts and confounds the human heart; or if by hurting be understood the doing of mischief wantonly, and without regard to propriety or justice, such weakness is undoubtedly unworthy of the divine perfection. But if it be meant that vice does not appear to the Deity to be for its own sake the object of abhorrence and aversion, and what, for its own sake, it is fit and reasonable should be punished, the truth of this maxim can by no means be so easily admitted. If we consult our natural sentiments, we are apt to fear lest before the holiness of God vice should appear to be more worthy of punishment, than the weakness and imperfection of human virtue can ever seem to be of reward. Man, when about to appear before a Being of infinite perfection, can feel but little confidence in his own merit, or in the imperfect propriety of his own conduct. In the presence of his fellow-creatures he may often justly elevate himself, and may often have reason to think highly of his own character and conduct, compared to the still greater imperfection of theirs. But the case is quite different, when about to appear before his infinite Creator. To such a Being, he can scarcely imagine, that his littleness and weakness should ever appear to be the proper objects either of esteem or of reward. But he can easily conceive how the numberless violations