

physical knowledge; warns the philosopher against making Holy Scripture his text book, for a system of philosophy, which he says, is like seeking the dead amongst the living.\* I am disposed, however, to think that this illustrious philosopher, by this observation, did not mean to exclude all study of the word of God, with a view to discover what is therein delivered concerning physical subjects, for he himself speaks of the book of Job, as pregnant with the mysteries of natural philosophy;† but his object was to point out the evil effects of a superstitious and bigoted adherence to the *letter* of Scripture, concerning which men were very liable to be mistaken, and of inattention to its *spirit*, which is averse to all persecution, so that persons of a philosophic mind' might not be interrupted in their investigations of nature, by the clamours or menaces of mistaken men.

In the dark ages, anterior to the Reformation, superstition occupied the seat of true and rational religion. *Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures*, was an observation almost universally applicable. The armed hand of authority was lifted up against all such as endeavour to interpret either Scripture or nature upon just and rational principles. Every such effort was rejected, was reprobated *ex cathedra*, and persecuted as a dangerous and pestilent heresy: thus every avenue to the discovery of truth, either in religion or science, was attempted to be closed. This evil spirit it was that proscribed the system of Copernicus, and, because it appeared contrary to the *letter* of Scripture, persecuted Galileo for affirming that the earth moved round the sun. Lord Verulam clearly saw the evil consequences that would result to the cause of true philosophy, if the sober study of nature, and all experimental research into the works of creation, were to be denounced as impious, because of some

\* De Augment. Sc. l. ix. c. l. § 3.

† Ubi supr. l. ix. c. l, § 47, ed. 1740.