

BOOK III.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

THE contemplation of the material universe exhibits God to us as the author of the laws of material nature; bringing before us a wonderful spectacle, in the simplicity, the comprehensiveness, the mutual adaptation of these laws, and in the vast variety of harmonious and beneficial effects produced by their mutual bearing and combined operation. But it is the consideration of the moral world, of the results of our powers of thought and action, which leads us to regard the Deity in that light in which our relation to him becomes a matter of the highest interest and importance. We perceive that man is capable of referring his actions to principles of right and wrong; that both his faculties and his virtues may be unfolded and advanced by the discipline which arises from the circumstances of human society; that good men can be discriminated from the bad, only by a course of trial, by struggles with difficulty and temptation; that the best men feel deeply the need of relying, in such conflicts, on the thought of a superintending Spiritual power; that our views of justice, our capacity for intellectual and moral advancement, and a crowd of hopes and anticipations which rise in our bosoms unsought, and cling there with inexhaustible tenacity, will not allow us to acquiesce in the belief that this life is the end of our existence. We are thus led to see that our relation the Superintendent of our moral being, to the Depository of the supreme