

The Hymns of Orpheus



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PREFACE

THERE is doubtless a revolution in the literary, correspondent to that of the natural world. The face of things is continually changing; and the perfect, and perpetual harmony of the universe, subsists by the mutability of its parts. In consequence of this fluctuation, different arts and sciences have flourished at different periods of the world: but the complete circle of human knowledge has I believe, never subsisted at once, in any nation or age. Where accurate and profound researches, into the principles of things have advanced to perfection; there, by a natural consequence, men have neglected the disquisition of particulars: and where sensible particulars have been the general object of pursuit, the science of universals has languished, or sunk into oblivion and contempt.

Thus wisdom, the object of all true philosophy, considered as exploring the causes and principles of things, flourished in high perfection among the Egyptians first, and afterwards in Greece. Polite literature was the pursuit of the Romans; and experimental enquiries, increased without end, and accumulated without order, are the employment of modern philosophy. Hence we may justly conclude, that the age of true philosophy is no more. In consequence of very extended natural discoveries, trade and commerce have increased; while abstract investigations, have necessarily declined: so that modern enquiries, never rise above sense; and every thing is despised, which does not in some respect or other, contribute to the accumulation of wealth; the gratification of childish admiration; or the refinements of corporeal delight. The author of the following translation, therefore, cannot reasonably expect, that his labours will meet with the approbation of the many: since these Hymns are too ancient, and too full of the Greek philosophy, to please the ignorant, and the sordid. However, he hopes they will be acceptable to the few, who have drawn wisdom from its source; and who consider the science of universals, as first in the nature of things, though last in the progressions of human understanding. The translator has adopted rhyme, not because most agreeable to general taste, but because, he believes it necessary to the poetry of the English language; which requires something as a substitute, for the energetic cadence, of the Greek and Latin Hexameters. Could this be obtained by any other means, he would immediately relinquish his partiality for rhyme, which is certainly when well executed, far more difficult than blank verse, as the following Hymns must evince, in an eminent degree.

And, here it is necessary to observe, with respect to translation, that nothing is more generally mistaken in its nature; or more faulty in its

execution. The author of the Letters on Mythology, gives it as his opinion, that it is impossible to translate an ancient author, so as to do justice to his meaning. If he had confined this sentiment, to the beauties of the composition, it would doubtless have been just; but to extend it, to the meaning of an author, is to make truth and opinion, partial and incommunicable. Every person, indeed, acquainted with the learned languages, must be conscious how much the beauty of an ancient author generally suffers by translation, though undertaken by men, who have devoted the greatest part of their lives to the study of words alone. This failure, which has more than any thing contributed to bring the ancients into contempt with the unlearned, can only be ascribed to the want of genius in the translators for the sentiment of Pythagoras is peculiarly applicable to such as these that many carry the Thyrsis, but few are inspired with the spirit of the God. But this observation is remarkably verified, in the translators of the ancient philosophy, whose performances are for the most part without animation; and consequently retain nothing of the fire and spirit of the original. Perhaps, there is but one exception to this remark, and that is Mr. Sydenham: whose success in such an arduous undertaking can only be ascribed to his possessing the philosophical genius, and to his occasionally paraphrasing passages, which would otherwise be senseless and inanimate.

Indeed, where languages differ so much as the ancient and modern, the most perfect method, perhaps, of transferring the philosophy from the one language to the other, is by a faithful and animated paraphrase: faithful, with regard to retaining the sense of the author; and animated, with respect to preserving the fire of the original; calling it forth when latent, and expanding it when condensed. Such a one, will every where endeavour to improve the light, and fathom the depth of his author; to elucidate what is obscure, and to amplify, what in modern language would he unintelligibly concise.

Thus most of the compound epithets of which the following Hymns chiefly consist, though very beautiful in the Greek language; yet when literally translated into ours, lose all their propriety and force. In their native tongue, as in a prolific soil, they diffuse their sweets with full-blown elegance; but shrink like the sensitive plant at the touch of the verbal critic, or the close translator. He who would preserve their philosophical beauties, and exhibit them to others in a different language, must expand their elegance, by the supervening and enlivening rays of the philosophic fire; and, by the powerful breath of genius, scatter abroad their latent but copious sweets.

If some sparks of this celestial fire shall appear to have animated the bosom of the translator, he will consider himself as well rewarded, for his laborious undertaking. The ancient philosophy, has been for many years, the only study of his retired leisure; in which he has found an

inexhaustible treasure of intellectual wealth, and a perpetual fountain of wisdom and delight. Presuming that such a pursuit must greatly advantage the present undertaking, and feeling the most sovereign contempt for the sordid drudgery of hired composition, he desires no other reward, if he has succeeded, than the praise of the liberal; and no other defence if he has failed, than the decision of the candid, and discerning few.

A DISSERTATION ON THE LIFE AND THEOLOGY OF ORPHEUS

SECTION 1

THE great obscurity and uncertainty in which the history of Orpheus is involved, affords very little matter for our information; and even renders that little, inaccurate and precarious. Upon surveying the annals of past ages, it seems that the greatest geniuses, have been subject to this historical darkness as is evident in those great lights of antiquity, Homer and Euclid, whose writings indeed enrich mankind with perpetual stores of knowledge and delight; but whose lives are for the most part concealed in impenetrable oblivion. But this historical uncertainty, is no where so apparent, as in the person of Orpheus; whose name is indeed acknowledged and celebrated by all antiquity (except perhaps Aristotle alone); while scarcely a vestige of his life is to be found amongst the immense ruins of time. For who has ever been able to affirm any thing with certainty, concerning his origin, his age, his parents, his country, and condition? This alone may be depended on, from general assent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, whose father was Æagrus, who lived in Thrace, and who was the son of a king, who was the founder of theology, among the Greeks; the institutor of their life and morals; the first of prophets, and the prince of poets; himself the offspring of a Muse; who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perpetual and abundant fountain, the divine muse of Homer, and the philosophy of Pythagoras, and Plato, flowed; and, lastly, who by the melody of his lyre, drew rocks, woods, and wild beasts, stopt rivers in their course, and ever, moved the inexorable king of hell; as every page, and all the writings of antiquity sufficiently evince. Since thus much then may be collected from universal testimony, let us, pursue the matter a little farther, by investigating more accurately the history of the original Orpheus; with that of the great men who have, at different periods, flourished under this venerable name.

The first and genuine Orpheus, was a poet of Thrace, and, according to the opinion of many, the disciple of Linus; who flourished, says Suidas, at the time when the kingdom of the Athenians was dissolved. Some assert that he was prior to the Trojan wars, and that he lived eleven, or according to others nine generations. But the Greek word γενεα, or generation, according to Gyraldus¹, signifies the space of seven years;

for unless this is supposed, how is it possible that the period of his life can have any foundation in the nature of things? Plutarch indeed, Heraclitus, Suidas, and some grammarians, assert that this word signifies a space of thirty years: but omitting the discussion of this latter opinion, from its impossibility, we shall embrace the former, agreeable to which Orpheus lived sixty-three years; a period, if we may believe the astrologers fatal to all, and especially to great men, as was the case with Cicero and Aristotle.

Our poet, according to fabulous tradition, was torn in pieces by Ciconian women: on which account, Plutarch affirms the Thracians were accustomed to beat their wives, that they might revenge the death of Orpheus. Hence, in the vision of Herus Pamphilius, in Plato, the soul of Orpheus, being destined to descend into another body, is reported to have chosen rather that of a swan than to be born again of a woman; having conceived such hatred against the sex, on account of his violent death. The cause of his destruction is variously related by authors. Some report that it arose from his being engaged in puerile loves, after the death of Eurydice. Others, that he was destroyed by women intoxicated with wine, because he was the means of men relinquishing their connexion. Others affirm, according to the tradition of Pausanias, that upon the death of Eurydice, wandering to Aornus, a place in Threspotia, where it was customary to evocate the souls of the dead, having recalled Eurydice to life, and not being able to detain her, he destroyed himself; nightingales building their nests, and bringing forth their young upon his tomb; whose melody, according to report, exceeded every other of this species. Others again ascribe his laceration, to his having celebrated every divinity except Bacchus, which is very improbable, as among the following hymns there are nine to that Deity, under different appellations. Others report that he was delivered by Venus herself, into the hands of the Ciconian women, because his mother Calliope, had not determined justly between Venus and Proserpine, concerning the young Adonis. Many affirm that he was struck by lightning, according to Pausanias; and Diogenes confirms this by the following verses composed as he asserts, by the Muses upon his death: Here, by the Muses plac'd, with golden lyre,
Great Orpheus rests; destroy'd by heav'nly fire.

Again, the sacred mysteries called Threscian, derived their appellation, from our Thracian bard, because he first introduced sacred rites and religion into Greece; and hence the authors of initiation in these

mysteries, were called Orpheotelestæ. Besides according to Lucian, our Orpheus brought astrology, and the magical arts into Greece; and with respect to his drawing trees and wild beasts by the melody of his lyre, Palæphatus accounts for it as follows ². The mad Bacchanalian nymphs, says he, having violently taken away cattle and other necessaries of life, retired for some days into the mountains. When the citizens having expected their return for a long time, and fearing the worst for their wives and daughters, called Orpheus, and intreated him to invent some method of drawing them from the mountains. But he tuning his lyre, agreeable to the orgies of Bacchus, drew the mad nymphs from their retreats; who descended from the mountains bearing at first ferulæ and branches of every kind of trees. But to the men who were eye-witnesses of these wonders, they appeared at first to bring down the very woods; and from hence gave rise to the fable.

But so great was the reputation of Orpheus, that he was deified by the Greeks; and Philostratus relates, that his head gave oracles in Lesbos, which, when separated from his body by the Thracian women, was, together with his lyre, carried down the river Hebrus into the Sea. In this manner says Lucian³, singing as it were his funeral oration, to which the chords of his lyre impelled by the winds, gave a responsive harmony, it was brought to Lesbos and buried. But his lyre was suspended in the Temple of Apollo; where it remained for a considerable space of time. Afterwards, when Neanthus, the son of Pittacus the tyrant, found that the lyre drew trees and wild beasts with its harmony, he earnestly desired its possession; and having corrupted the priest privately with money, he took the Orphean lyre, and fixed another similar to it, in the temple. But Neanthus considering that he was not safe in the city in the day time, departed from it by night; having concealed the lyre in his bosom, on which he began to play. But as he was a rude and unlearned

youth, he confounded the chords; yet pleasing himself with the sound, and fancying he produced a divine harmony, he considered himself as the blessed successor of Orpheus.

However, in the midst of his transports, the neighbouring dogs, roused by the sound, fell upon the unhappy harper and tore him to pieces. The former part of this fable is thus excellently explained by Proclus in his commentaries (or rather fragments of commentaries) on Plato's Republic; a work I would earnestly recommend to the liberal, for the great light it affords to the recondite theology of the Greeks. Orpheus, says he, on account of his perfect erudition, is reported to have been destroyed in various ways; because, in my opinion, men of that age, participated partially of the Orphic harmony; for they could not receive a universal and perfect science. But the principal part of his melody was received by the Lesbians; and on this account, perhaps, the head of Orpheus, when separated from his body, is said to have been carried to Lesbos. Fables of this kind, therefore, are related of Orpheus, no otherwise than of Bacchus, of whose mysteries he was the priest. Thus far Proclus, and thus much concerning the first, or Thracian Orpheus. The second Orpheus was an Arcadian, or, according to others, a Ciconian, from Bisaltia of Thrace; and is reported to be more ancient than Homer, and the Trojan war. He composed figments of fables called (μυθοποιϊα) and epigrams; and is, according to Gyraldus, the author of the following hymns; though I rather chuse to refer them, with the Fathers Vossius and Eschenbach, to Onomacritus, or the fourth Orpheus, of Crotonia. The third Orpheus was of Odrysius, a city of Thrace, near the river Hebrus; but Dionysius, in Suidas, denies his existence. The fourth Orpheus was of Crotonia, who flourished in the time of Pisistratus, about the fiftieth Olympiad; and is doubtless the same Onomacritus the author of these hymns. He writ Decennalia,

δεκαετηρια, and, in the opinion of Gyraldus, the Argonautics, which are now extant under the name of Orpheus, with other writings called Orphical, but which, according to Cicer⁴, some ascribe to Cecrops the Pythagorean. The last Orpheus, was Camarinæus, a most excellent versifier; and the same according to Gyraldus whose descent into hell is so universally known. And thus much for the life of Orpheus.

SECTION 2

LET us now proceed to his theology; exchanging the obscurity of conjecture for the light of clear evidence; and the intricate labyrinths of fable for the delightful though solitary paths of truth.

And here I must acquaint the reader, that I shall every where deduce my information from the writings of the latter Platonists; as the only sources of genuine knowledge, on this sublime and obsolete enquiry⁵.

The vulgar systems of mythology are here entirely useless; and he who should attempt to elucidate the theology, or hymns of Orpheus, by any modern hypothesis, would be as ridiculously employed, as he who should expect to find the origin of a copious stream, by pursuing it to its last and most intricate involutions. In conformity with modern prejudices, the author of the Letters on Mythology, endeavours to prove, that the Orphic hymns deify the various parts of nature, not considered as animated by different intelligences but as various modifications of inert and lifeless matter. This hypothesis is no doubt readily embraced by the present philosophers, a great part of whom, deny the existence of any thing incorporeal; and the better sort, who acknowledge one supreme immaterial Being, exclude the agency of subordinate intelligences in the government of the world; though this doctrine is perfectly philosophical, and at the same time consistent with revelation. The belief indeed of the man, who looks no higher than sense, must be necessarily terminated by appearances. Such a one introduces a dreadful chasm in the universe; and diffuses the deity through the world

like an extended substance; divided with every particle of matter, and changed into the infinite varieties of sensible forms. But with the ancient philosopher, the deity is an immense and perpetually exuberant fountain; whose streams originally filled and continually replenish the world with life. Hence the universe contains in its ample bosom all general natures; divinities visible and invisible; the illustrious race of dæmons; the noble army of exalted souls; and men rendered happy by wisdom and virtue. According to this theology, the power of universal soul does not alone diffuse itself to the sea, and become bounded by its circumfluent waters, while the wide expanse of air and æther, is destitute of life and soul; but the celestial spaces are filled with souls, supplying life to the stars, and directing their revolutions in everlasting order. So that the celestial orbs in imitation of intellect, which seeks after nothing external, are wifely agitated in perpetual circuit round the central sun. While some things participate of being alone, others of life, and others are endued with sentient powers; some possess the still higher faculty of reason; and lastly others, are all life and intelligence. But let us rise a little higher, and contemplate the arguments by which the Platonists, establish the Orphic doctrine of the existence and agency of subordinate intelligences. Thus then they reason⁶, Of all beings it is necessary that some should move only, that others should be entirely moved; and that the beings situated between these two, should participate of the extremes, and both move and be moved. Among the first in dignity and order are those natures which move only; the second, those which move themselves; the third, those which move and are moved; and the fourth, those which are moved only. Now the second class of these, or the self-motive natures, since their perfection consists in transition and mutation of life, must depend upon a more ancient cause, which subsists perpetually the same; and whose life is not

conversant with the circulations of time, but is constituted in the stable essence of eternity. But it is necessary that the third class, which both move and are moved, should depend on a self-motive nature. For a self-motive being, is the cause of motion to those, which are moved by another, in the same manner as that which is immovable, inserts in all beings the power of moving. And again, that which is moved only, must depend on those natures, which are indeed moved by another, but which are themselves endued with a motive-power. For it is necessary that the chain of beings should be complete; every where connected by proper mediums, and deduced in an orderly and perpetual series, from the principle to the extremes. All bodies therefore belong to those natures which are moved only, and are naturally passive; since they are destitute of all inherent energy, on account of their sluggish nature, which participates of division, magnitude, and weight.

But of incorporeals some are divisible about bodies; while others are entirely free from such an affection about the lowest order of beings. Hence such things, as are divided about the dead weight of bodies, whether they are material qualities or forms, belong to the orders of nature's moving, and at the same time moved. For such as these because incorporeal, participate of a motive faculty; but because they are also divided about bodies, they are on this account exempt from incorporeal perfection; are filled with material inactivity, and require the energy of a self-motive nature. Where then shall we find this self-motive essence? For such things as are extended with magnitude, oppressed by material weight, and inseparably reside in bodies, must necessarily either move only, or be moved by others. But it is requisite, as we have before observed, that prior to this order, the self-motive essence should subsist. And hence we conclude that there is another certain nature exempt from the passivity and imperfection of bodies, existing not only in the heavens, but in the ever-changing elements, from which the motion of bodies is primarily derived. And this nature is no other than soul, from which animals derive their life and motive power; and which even affords an image of self-motion to the unstable order of bodies. If then the self-motive essence is more ancient than that which is moved by another, but soul is primarily self-motive, hence soul must be more ancient than body; and all corporeal motion must be the progeny of soul, and of her inherent energy. It is necessary, therefore, that the heavens, with all their boundless contents, and their various natural

motions (for a circular motion, is natural to such bodies), should be endued with governing souls, essentially more ancient than their revolving bodies. According to the Platonic philosophers, therefore, these souls which orderly distinguish the universe and its contained parts, from their inherent cause of motion, give life and motion to every inanimate body. But it is necessary that every motive essence, should either move all things rationally, or irrationally; that is, either according to the uniform and unerring laws of reason, or according to the brutal impulse of an irrational nature. But the constant order observed in the periods of the celestial bodies, the convenience of positions, and the admirable laws by which their revolutions are directed, plainly evince that their motions are governed by a rational nature. If therefore, an intellectual and rational soul governs the universe, and if every thing eternally moved is under the directing influence of such a soul; may we not enquire whether it possesses this intellectual, perfect, and beneficent power, by participation, or essentially? for if essentially, it is necessary that every soul should be intellectual, since every soul is naturally self-motive. But if by participation, there must be another nature more ancient than soul, which operates entirely from energy; and whose essence is intelligence, on account of that uniform conception of universals, which it essentially contains. Because it is also necessary that the soul, essentially rational, should receive intellect by participation, and that intellectual energy should be of two kinds; one primarily subsisting in the divine intellect; but the other subsisting secondarily in its offspring soul. You may add too, the presence of intellectual illumination in body, which is received in as great perfection as its unstable and obscure nature will admit. For how is it possible that the celestial orbs should be for ever circularly moved in one definite order, preserving the same form, and the same immutable power, unless they participated of an intellectual nature. For soul is indeed the constant supplier of motion; but the cause of perpetual station, of identity and uniform life, reducing unstable motion to a circular revolution, and to a condition eternally the same, must be more ancient than soul.

Body, indeed, and whatever is the object of sense, belongs; to the order of things moved by another. But soul is self-motive, embracing in itself, in a connected manner, all corporeal motions. And prior to this is immovable intellect. And here it is requisite to observe, that this immaterial nature must not be conceived as similar to any thing inert, destitute of life, and endued with no spirit, but as the principal cause of all motion, and the fountain of all life; as well of that whose streams perpetually return into itself, as of that which subsists in others, and has, on this account only, a secondary and imperfect existence.

All things, therefore, depend upon unity, through the medium of intellect and soul. And intellect is of an uniform essence; but soul of a mental form νοειδής, and the body of the world vivific, or vital ζωτικὸς. The first cause of all is indeed prior to intellect, but intellect is the first recipient of a divine nature; and soul is divine, so far as it requires an intellectual medium. But the body which participates a soul of this kind is divine, in as great a degree as the nature of body will admit. For the illustration of intellectual light, pervades from the principle of things, to the extremes; and is not totally obscured, even when it enters the involutions of matter, and is profoundly merged in its dark and flowing receptacle.

Hence we may with reason conclude, that not only the universe, but each of its eternal parts is animated, and endued with intellect, and is in its capacity similar to the universe. For each of these parts, is a universe if compared with the multitude it contains, and to which it is allied. There is, therefore, according to the Orphic and Platonic theology, one soul of the universe; and after this others, which from participating this general soul, dispose the entire parts of the universe into order; and one intellect which is participated by souls, and one supreme God, who comprehends the world in his infinite nature, and a multitude of other divinities, who distribute intellectual essences, together with their dependent souls, and all the parts of the world, and who are the perpetual sources of its order, union, and consent. For it is not reasonable to suppose that every production of nature, should have the power of generating its similar, but that the universe and primary essences should not more abundantly possess an ability of such like procreation; since sterility can only belong to the most abject, and not to the most excellent natures.

In consequence of this reasoning, Orpheus filled all things with Gods, subordinate to the demiurgus of the whole Δημιουργῶ, every one of which performs the office destined to his divinity, by his superiour leader. Hence according to his theology there are two worlds, the intelligible and the

sensible. Hence too his three demiurgic principles: Jovial, Dionysiacal, and Adonical, Δί#, Διονυσιακή, Αδωναϊκή, from whence many orders and differences of Gods proceed, intelligible⁷, intellectual, super-mundane, mundane, celestial, authors of generation. And among these some in the order of guardian, demiurgic, elevating and comprehending Gods; perfecters of works, vivific, immutable, absolute, judicial, purgative, &c. and besides these to each particular divinity, he added a particular multitude of angels, dæmons, and heroes; for according to Proclus, relating the opinion of Orpheus, and the theologians:⁸ "About every God there is a kindred multitude of angels, heroes, and dæmons. For every God presides over the form of that multitude which receives the divinity." He likewise considered a difference of sex in these deities, calling some male, and others female; the reason of which distinction⁹ Proclus, with his usual elegance and subtilty, thus explains.

"The division of male and female comprehends in itself, all the plenitudes of divine orders. Since the cause of stable power and identity, and the leader Χορηγος of being, and that which invests all things with the first principle of conversion, is comprehended in the masculine order. But that which generates from itself, all various progressions and partitions, measures of life and prolific powers, is contained in the female division. And on this account Timæus also, converting himself to all the Gods, by this division of generated natures, embraces their universal orders. But a division of this kind, is particularly

accommodated and proper to the present Theory, because the universe is full of this two-fold kind of Gods. For that we may begin with the extremes, heaven corresponds with earth, in the order and proportion of male to female. Since the motion of the heavens imparts particular properties and powers, to particular things. But on the other hand earth receiving the celestial defluxions, becomes pregnant, and produces plants and animals of every kind. And of the Gods existing in the heavens, some are distinguished by the male division, and others by the female and the authors of generation, since they are themselves destitute of birth, are some of this order and others of that, for the demiurgic choir is abundant in the universe. There are also many canals as it as it were of life, some of which exhibit the male and others the female form. But why should I insist on this particular? since from the absolute unities, whether endued with a masculine, or a feminine form, various orders of beings flow into the universe." Thus far Proclus.

But that Orpheus was a monarchist, as well as a polytheist, is not only evident from the preceding arguments, originally derived from his Theology, but from the following verses quoted by Proclus¹⁰.

Hence with the universe great Jove contains
The æther bright, and heav'ns exalted plains
Th' extended restless sea, and earth renown'd
Ocean immense, and Tartarus profound;
Fountains and rivers, and the boundless main,
With all that nature's ample realms contain,
And Gods and Goddesses of each degree
All that is past, and all that e'er shall be,

Occultly, and in fair connection¹¹, lies

In Jove's wide womb, the ruler of the skies.

And in the same place, Proclus has preserved to us another copy of Orphic verses, which are also found in the writer (de Mundo); previous to which he observes, that the demiurgus, or artificer of the world, being full of ideas, comprehended by these all things within himself, as that theologer (Orpheus) declares. With these verses we have connected others, agreeable to the order of Stephens, Eschenbach, and Gesner, as follows.

Jove is the first and last thund'ring king,
Middle and head, from Jove all beings spring;
In Jove the male and female forms combine,
For Jove's a man, and yet a maid divine;
Jove the strong basis of the earth contains,
And the deep splendour of the starry plains;
Jove is the breath of all; Jove's wondrous frame
Lives in the rage of ever restless flame;
Jove is the sea's strong root, the solar light,
And Jove's the moon, fair regent of the night;
Jove is a king by no restraint confin'd,
And all things flow from Jove's prolific mind;
One is the pow'r divine in all things known,
And one the ruler absolute alone.
For in Jove's royal body all things lie,
Fire, night and day, earth, water and the sky;
The first begetters pleasing love and mind;
These in his mighty body, Jove confin'd:
See, how his beauteous head and aspect bright
Illumine heav'n, and scatter boundless light!
Round which his pendant golden tresses shine
Form'd from the starry beams, with light divine;
On either side two radiant horns behold,

Shap'd like a bull's and bright with glittering gold;
And East and West in opposition lie,
The lucid paths of all the Gods on high;
His eyes, the sun, and moon with borrow'd ray;
Royal, ætherial; and his ear refin'd
Hears ev'ry voice, and sounds of ev'ry kind.
Thus are his head and mind immortal, bright,
His body's boundless, stable, full of light;¹²
Strong are his members, with a force endu'd
Pow'rful to tame, but ne'er to be subdu'd;
Th' extended region of surrounding air
Forms his broad shoulders, back, and bosom fair;
And thro' the world the ruler of the skies
Upborne on natal, rapid pinions flies;
His sacred belly earth with fertile plains,
And mountains swelling to the clouds, contains;
His middle zone's the spreading sea profound,
Whose roaring waves the solid globe surround;
The distant realms of Tartarus obscure
Within earth's roots, his holy feet secure;
For these earth's utmost bounds to Jove belong,
And form his basis permanent and strong.
Thus all things Jove within his breast conceal'd,
And into beauteous light from thence reveal'd.

These verses contain what Dr. Cudworth calls the grand arcanum of the Orphic theology, that God is all things; which is likewise an Egyptian doctrine, from whence it was derived through Orpheus into Greece: and this sublime truth Plotinus¹³ himself proves with his usual sagacity and depth. But here it is necessary to observe, that Orpheus and the

Platonists do not conceive the Deity to be all things, as if he were a divisible, corporeal nature; but that he is all things, because present every where, and to every being totally, though more or less intimately present, according to the various gradations and approximations of being. So that he is to be considered as containing all things, and yet as separate and apart from all; as the source of all multitude, yet himself perfect unity; and as immensely prolific, yet divinely solitary and ineffably good. Thus, according to Porphyry¹⁴, explaining the properties of incorporeal natures, God, intellect, and soul are each of them every where, because no where. But God is every where, and at the same time, in no place of any being posterior to his nature; but he is only such as he is, and such as he willed himself to be. But intellect is indeed in the Deity, yet every and in no place of its subordinate essences. And soul is in intellect, and in the Deity, every where and no where with respect to body; but body exists in and in intellect, and in God. And though all beings, and nonentities, proceed from, and subsist in the Deity, yet he is neither entities, or nonentities, nor has any subsistence in them. For if he was alone every where, he would indeed be all things, and in all: but because he is likewise no where, all things are produced by him; so that they subsist in him because he is every where, but are different from him because he is no where. Thus also intellect being every where and no where, is the cause of souls, and of natures subordinate to soul: at the same time it is neither soul, nor such things as are posterior to the soul, nor has it any subsistence in them; and this because it is not only every where in its subordinate natures, but at the same time no where. Thus too, soul is neither body, nor in body, but is the cause of body; because while it is every where diffused through body, it is no where. And this procession of the universe, extends as far as to that nature¹⁵, which is incapable of being at the same time every where and no where, but

which partially participates of each, And in another place of the same excellent fragment, he tells us that the ancients explaining the property of an incorporeal nature, as far as this can be effected by discourse, when they affirmed it to be one, at the same time add, that it is likewise all things; that it is every where, and no where, and that it is totally present in every whole. He adds, they express its nature entirely by contrary properties, that they may remove from it the fictitious and delusive conceptions of bodies which obscure those properties by which true being is known¹⁶.

We have before observed, that the Platonic philosophers, agreeable to the doctrine of Orpheus, considered fecundity as, in an eminent degree, the property of a divine nature; and from this principle filled the universe with Gods¹⁷. This opinion a modern philosopher, or a modern writer on mythology, will doubtless consider as too ridiculous to need a serious refutation the one, because he believes the phenomena may be solved by mechanical causes; and the other, in consequence of a system originating from prejudice, and supported without proof. However, prejudice apart, let us hear what the philosophers can urge in defence of this doctrine, in addition to what we have already advanced. To begin then with Onatus¹⁸ the Pythagorean: "Those," says he, "who assert that there is but one God, and not many Gods, are deceived, as not considering that the supreme dignity of the divine transcendence consists in governing beings similar to itself, and in surpassing others. But the other Gods have the same relation to this first and intelligible God, as the dancer, to the Coryphæus, and as soldiers to their general, whose duty is to follow their leader. And although the same employment is common both to the ruler, and those who are ruled; yet the latter, if destitute of a leader, could no longer conspire together in one occupation; as the concord of the fingers and dancers, and the

expedition of the army, must fail, if the one is deprived of the Coryphæus and the other of the captain or commander." To the same purpose Plotinus¹⁹ shews that it is perfectly philosophical to suppose a multitude of Gods subordinate to the One supreme. "It is necessary," says he, "that every man should endeavour to be as good as possible, but at the same time, he should not consider himself as the only thing that is good but should be convinced that there are other good men, and good dæmons in the universe, but much more Gods: who though inhabiting this inferior region, yet look up to that higher world; and especially that most blessed Soul, the ruling Divinity of this universe. From whence a man ought to ascend still higher, and to celebrate the intelligible Gods, but above all their great King; declaring his majesty in a particular manner, by the multitude of Gods subordinate to his divinity. For it is not the province of those who know the power of God, to contract all into one, but rather to exhibit all that divinity which he has displayed, who himself, remaining one, produces many, which proceed from him and by him. For the universe subsists by him, and perpetually speculates his divinity, together with each of the Gods it contains." Should it be objected, that if such Gods (or exalted beings) really existed, we should be able to demonstrate the reality of their existence, in the same manner as that of one supreme God; we cannot frame a better reply than in the words of Proclus²⁰. "And perhaps," says he, "you may affirm that souls more swiftly forget things nearer to them; but have a stronger remembrance of superior principles. For these last operate on them more vigorously, through the sublimity of their power, and appear to be present with them by their energy. And this happens with respect to our corporeal sight; which does not perceive many things situated on the earth, yet observes the inerratic sphere, and the stars it contains; because these strongly irradiate our eyes with their light. So the eye of

our soul is more forgetful, and sooner loses the sight of principles proximate to its nature, than of such as are more elevated and divine. In like manner all religions and sects confess that there is one highest principle, and men every where invoke God as their helper; but that there are Gods in subordination to this first cause, and that there is a providence proceeding from these to the universe, all men do not believe; and this because the one appears to them more perspicuously than the many."

Indeed in consequence of the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, it is not strange that we should know so little of those divine and exalted beings above us; since from our union with generation and material concerns, we are imbued with oblivion, ignorance, and error. "We are similar," as Porphyry²¹ well observes, "to those who enter or depart from a foreign region, not only in casting aside our native manners and customs; but from the long use of a strange country we are imbued with affections, manners, and laws foreign from our natural and true religion, and with a strong propensity to these unnatural habits." As, therefore, it is not wonderful that the greatest part of those who inhabit a pestiferous region, should languish and decline, but that a very few should preserve their natural strength; so we ought not to wonder, that thus placed in generation, the multitude of mankind are obnoxious to passions and depraved habits; but we ought rather to be astonished if any souls, thus involved in the dark folds of the body, and surrounded with such great and unceasing mutations, are found sober, pure, and free from destructive perturbations. For it is surely astonishing that the soul should live immaterially, in material concerns; and preserve itself uncontaminated amidst such base defilements; that it should drink of the cup of oblivion, and not be laid asleep by the intoxicating draught; that it should elevate its eye above the sordid darkness with which it is