plexed the law of nature with a multitude of abſtracted rules and precepts, referring merely to the fitneſs or unfitneſs of things, as ſome have vainly ſurmiſed; but has graciouſly reduced the rule of obedience to this one paternal precept, "that man ſhould "purſue his own happineſs." This is the foundation of what we call ethics, or natural law. For the ſeveral articles, into which it is branched in our ſyſtems, amount to no more than demonſtrating, that this or that action tends to man's real happineſs, and therefore very juſtly concluding that the performance of it is a part of the law of nature; or, on the other hand, that this or that action is deſtructive of man's real happineſs, and therefore that the law of nature forbids it.

THIS law of nature, being co-eval with mankind and dictated by God himſelf, is of courſe ſuperior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this; and ſuch of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original.

BUT in order to apply this to the particular exigencies of each individual, it is ſtill neceſſary to have recourſe to reaſon: whoſe office it is to diſcover, as was before obſerved, what the law of nature directs in every circumſtance of life; by conſidering, what method will tend the moſt effectually to our own ſubſtantial happineſs. And if our reaſon were always, as in our firſt anceſtor before his tranſgreſſion, clear and perfect, unruffled by paſſions, unclouded by prejudice, unimpaired by diſeaſe or intemperance, the taſk would be pleaſant and eaſy; we ſhould need no other guide but this. But every man now finds the contrary in his own experience; that his reaſon is corrupt, and his underſtanding full of ignorance and error.

THIS has given manifold occaſion for the benign interpoſition of divine providence; which, in compaſſion to the frailty, the imperfection, and the blindneſs of human reaſon, hath been