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THE  
 O R I G I N  
 AND  
 P R O G R E S S  
 OF  
 D E S P O T I S M.  
 IN THE  
 ORIENTAL, AND OTHER EMPIRES,  
 OF  
 AFRICA, EUROPE, and AMERICA.

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*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens. . . . .*  
*. . . . . Dii talem terris avertite pestem.*  
 VIRG.

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*This theologico-political Research is calculated for an  
 Introduction and Key to MONTESQUIEU's Spirit  
 of Laws, as the author declares in his last section.*

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AMSTERDAM:  
 PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXIV.

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THE  
ORIGIN  
OF

DESPOTISM.

SECTION I.

*Different opinions on the origin of Despotism.*

THE oriental monarchs are painted to us  
as the sovereign arbiters of the fate of  
the people over whom they reign; and  
their subjects as slaves devoted from the moment  
of their birth to bear the yoke of an humiliating  
and

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and deplorable servitude. If we take a review of the histories and accounts of Asia, we shall be amazed to find, that for so many succeeding ages no other law hath been known in these climates but the will of their monarchs, who have been always revered as visible gods; and before whom the rest of the earth, in prostrate silence, was to shrink into annihilation. Even in our times travellers are often spectators of barbarous and tragic scenes, the constant effects of a shocking and detestable constitution, where *one* makes the *whole*; and the *whole* is nothing.

It is in such distressful regions that man, destitute of will, is seen to kiss his chains; there, without any certainty as to fortune or property, he adores his tyrant; and without any knowledge of humanity or reason, is reduced to have no other virtue but fear; and what is still a greater cause for us to be surprized at, and to reflect upon, is, that men there carry servitude to such a degree of heroism as to be indifferent about their own existence, and often to bless with a religious imbecility the savage capriciousness that deprives them of life; the sole article they, doubtless, should freely possess; but which, according to the sove-

reign's

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reign's law, is to belong to him alone to dispose of at his pleasure.

THE more one has reflected on the features that characterise the Asiatic monarchs and their subjects, the more intense becomes the desire that was excited of investigating how the human race born free, enamoured with, and jealous in the extreme of their natural liberty, especially in the primitive ages, could dwindle into a total oblivion of their rights, their privileges, and lose that precious property which ratifies the worth of existence. In effect, what motives, what events have been able either to subdue, or to induce men, endowed with reason, to render themselves the mute instruments, and insensible objects, of the capriciousness of an individual, their equal; a being no better than themselves! Whence happened it, in a climate such as that of Asia, where religion hath always had so great an influence over the minds of men? Whence happened, I say, that there the human species, by an unanimous agreement, should reject the most beautiful, the most powerful, and the most valuable gift received from nature, and should renounce the dignity which they had derived from their creator?

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THIS strange disposition in Asiatic minds, and this miserable condition of the finest part of the world, hath extremely affected, in all times, philosophers, historians, and travellers; there are but few of them who have not endeavoured to account in some manner for it, and to trace it up to its source, whether in the moral or the physical causes of the climate; but a greater number have made researches in their imagination only, unfurnished with the knowledge requisite to resolve and unfold so difficult and so interesting a problem.

SOME were of opinion, that, in order to come at the primitive causes of this degradation of human nature, it was necessary to remount to the barbarous ages when mankind, wandering and timid, submitted themselves to the stronger; some first through choice, and others afterwards through force. They who adopted this opinion appear not to have sufficiently considered, that, during such a savage state of life, such a revolution was the less likely to take place; because in such an age the value of liberty ought to have been more known, and better felt, as it was then the only possession of mankind; how then could they suffer themselves to be despoiled thereof? It is now the only treasure in America; and who would

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would take upon himself to deny, that the love which the Americans have for it, is not the reason to be assigned why the European thunders, which, although they had terrified, have notwithstanding never been able to subdue them. The only slaves that have been known in that extensive territory were the natives of Peru and Mexico, whom they found ready made to their hands, as these Indians were not freemen, even at the time when Cortez and Pizarro arrived among them.

It is, therefore, equally repugnant to reason as to experience, to assert, that savage nations could in such a condition, or for any motive whatsoever, submit themselves voluntarily to *one*. It is also much less probable, that this kind of government could be established among such a people by force. For, by what means, with what arms, can a man be subjected, who enjoys the liberty of running away, who is accustomed to wander from place to place, and having but his freedom to preserve, can do it with so much ease? *In vain dost thou pursue the Scythians, said their embassador to the greatest conqueror of the world; I defy thee to overtake them; their poverty will be always nimbler than thy armies.*

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OTHERS have laboured to fix the Origin of Despotism, and its establishment amongst the rational and civilized nations; which some enterprising persons, too successfully ambitious, had subdued by violent means, that have since continued and have always been supported by terror, that must have given birth to slavery, or at least have prepared the yoke, and the people's being habituated thereto. History seems inclinable to this system; but if some affinity be found between the events happened since this cruel form of government had made its appearance, and hath extended its limits, it can, however, be deemed nothing more than a false conjecture, should an effort be made to apply it to primitive Despotism. The first man who attempted to subdue his equals, must, as well among the civilized, as the barbarous nations, have provoked the resistance of others against him. Before a conquest could be, he must have raised an army, whose very existence is an effect of conquest.

DOMESTIC government among the first of the human race hath also been looked upon by many politicians as the original source of Despotism. A father, the head of his family, was, in their sense, its king and Despot, in proportion as the family extended itself, and that its branches multiplied

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multiplied around the throne, began to form a numerous people. But, were it as certain as it is the reverse, that the power of fathers, in the first ages, was an absolute power over their children; the children, when become in their turn the heads of families, must, doubtless, have enjoyed the same right which their common father had; to wit, of presiding each in their respective habitations. By thus admitting the paternal power as the fountain of primitive authorities, so far from being able to discover thence issuing the great empires, and populous societies, governed by one and the same will, nothing else can be seen but a multitude of little centers and circles, detached one from the other, each separately governed after the model, but not by the law of the original circle.

It is true, that their common principle must have produced some connections, something relative amongst them. I should be very apt to think that it is to this relationship, certain Aristocracies in the sequel of time were indebted for their origin. The paternal power growing compounded, and, as it were, dependant on society, by the progressive encrease of families, must necessarily have given rise to it: but I do not descry therein the source of unlimited and arbitrary power. Besides,

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fides, how could paternal authority, that acknowledges the laws of nature, have been instrumental to produce Despotism, which disclaims them?

MANY have likewise fought for the secret cause of this government, in the natural disposition which people seem to receive from their climate, that qualifies them more or less to know the value of their existence, and to be more or less sensible of their own interest. History exhibits Europe to us always brave, ever jealous of her liberty. She, on the contrary, sheweth Asia to us at all times immersed in indolence and thralldom: it appeared thence not unnatural to attribute to the climate, effects so constant and successive. The uniformity of the character of those differing nations, that have succeeded each other from age to age, in two distant parts of the world, seeming to confirm this idea, induced enquirers to think that the climate of the one produced freemen, and that the climate of the other could never give birth to any but to slaves.

ALTHO' experience, and a multitude of facts, seem more and more to authenticate and justify this opinion, it would, however, be far from rational to look upon the nature of the ground, or the

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the temperature of Asia, as the only cause of the slavery which now prevails, and ever has prevailed there. That would be ascribing all to physical, to the disadvantage of a multitude of moral and political causes which may have concurred: that would be ascribing to one spring, which we pretend to know, all the effects of a machine which may, and ought to have, several other springs, that, through negligence, have perhaps escaped our observation.

WHATEVER may be the power of climates upon the different inhabitants of this earth, we may be certain, for instance, that there is no physical influence which can extinguish in man his natural perception, in regard to his own immediate interest, unless education, and prejudice co-operate, by imposing on him, from his infancy, false principles in regard to his real happiness and the true duties of life. Every object impresses on the mind of a young Asiatic that he is a slave, and ought to be so: the European learns, from every thing around him, that he is a rational being: the American sees and feels that he is a free agent.

THIS, doubtless, is the great and actuating principle which second the influence of climates, and

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is the true cause of that diversity in the customs of life, the manner of thinking, and the forms of government in all the different nations. Let us change their principles, then we may rest assured, that, independent of any virtue, or of any influence of the climate, we should, in consequence, see liberty in Asia; reason in America, and slavery in Europe. The difficulties that we should have to encounter, in attempting to bring about such a change, would, in all likelihood, be in proportion to the energy of the physical influence of each place; wherefore it would demand more or less trouble, and more or less time, according to the climate; but, in the end, education would certainly triumph over all obstacles.

ASIA can furnish us with a proof for what I have advanced on the insufficiency of the influence of climates, when said influence is not combined with the prejudices of men. That part of the world is too vast and too extensive to have every where the same heaven, the same zone, and the same temperature; yet no particular modification is to be observed in the prejudices which prevail throughout; for notwithstanding the diversity of ground, some secret power bends the Asiatics every where to submit to one and the same law. The north and the south,

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south, the east and the west of these immense regions, crouch under despotic sway, and are strangers to any other law but the will of their sovereign. Wherefore there must necessarily be countries in Asia where despotism owes nothing to the climate in which it prevails, therefore stands indebted for all to custom and the prejudiced notions of its born slaves. America might also produce similar objections to political naturalists; she contained two great despotic states, surrounded by free and wandering nations. The same can be said of Africa, where may be seen an odd mixture of people, subjected to great and little despotic princes; and barbarous nations wandering freely through her deserts.

I SHALL not here accumulate against these pretended influences of heaven and earth, a multitude of other reflexions, which sound philosophy and natural sense are capable of suggesting to all men of enquiry; the result whereof must always be, that the state of nations and their different governments are essentially dependent on their prejudices. Let us no longer dwell upon systems false in themselves, or at least unsatisfactory. Let us abandon researches, that have proved hitherto useless; and let us have no longer recourse to physical and po-

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litical chimeras to explain the errors of humanity ; of which Despotism is one.

SECTION II.

*The method to be pursued to come at the true source of Despotism.*

**D**ESPOTISM is an error, and a continuance of the errors of the human species ; wherefore it is neither by the physical influence of each place, nor by the assistance of any philosophical system, that we must research for its source in order to shew it to mankind for their instruction. It is to facts we must have recourse ; it is upon them we must found our proofs which also ought to be facts. The objects of our study should be to enter into the details, into the usages and all the customs of this sort of government ; then to collect, confront, and endeavour to conciliate them one with the other, as well as with the great chain of human errors, in order to know the true spirit of them, and consequently to attain the indisputable points of view, which those usages and customs primitively looked towards. It is by pursuing such a method, assisted with all the knowledge I have laboured to acquire in the history of nature, that

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that I think I have at last been enabled to discover the true Origin of Despotism ; which appears to me to have established itself upon earth, neither through consent nor by force : and in the very beginning was but the dire effect, and almost natural consequence, of that kind of government which men had forged for themselves in very remote ages, when they took for model the government of the universe, as it is reigned over by the supreme Being ; magnificent, but fatal project ! which has plunged all the nations into idolatry and thralldom, because a multitude of suppositions, that were then expedient to be made, have been since adopted as certain principles ; and that mankind, then losing sight of what ought to have been the true principles of their conduct here below, went in quest of supernatural ones ; which, not being fitted for this earth, not only deceived but rendered them unhappy.

**B**EFORE we enter into the research which led me to this discovery, it will be necessary to unfold the circumstances that induced human societies to conceive so elevated and so sublime an idea. We shall afterwards examine what was this kind of government, which they had chosen and established : we will make our researches after it in history, and



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and as we study its customs and usages, we shall observe a luxuriancy of unexpected information, flowing from this enquiry, by which we shall be instructed how this primitive point of view, so beautiful and so worthy of rational beings, was changed into a desert, replete with horror and misery: we shall come at a knowledge of those evils, derived from a plan whose sole object was the welfare of mankind; and we shall finally discover how man has been debased and degraded, by the consequences of a principle that once had, and always should, throw a glory round him.

THE strict and fatal alliance which I found subsisting between idolatry and Despotism, will increase the abhorrence this kind of government must excite in us; it will also oblige us to enquire into the origin thereof, because that is an essential part of its history. I shall not enumerate here the different systems imagined both by ancients and moderns, on the origin of this irrational worship of our fore-fathers. I will steer a new course towards idolatry, as well as towards Despotism, and such a one as hath never been attempted before. I am determined to reach the springs whence they flow, without perplexing myself with any hypothesis,

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thesis, conjectures, or prejudices of those who have preceded me upon this subject.

It will be impracticable for me to unravel these important anecdotes of the human mind, without presenting to it at the same time the picture of its errors, which exhibits a perspective truly humbling in itself, and dangerous by its consequences. If, however, there be some danger in doing this, it can only be in the manner of going about it, which would be the case were this picture to be offered to man; but in order to debase and to degrade him, but to make him bitter and unavailing reproaches; but to accomplish the total privation of the remaining small confidence he has in his own reason, and which has been already but too much enfeebled by mystic morality.

It would, no doubt, be dangerous to relate to man, with a philosophic austerity, and a misanthropy hostile to society, all the errors of his species; it would be the way to lead him to despair, and reduce him to the level of brutes. But that is not at all the object of the now beneficent and enlightened philosophy, which is the pride of our age, and whose spirit I mean to follow: for, being as much averse from all extremes in opinion,

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as a friend to truth, she knows how to chuse a sage medium between the false sublime of superstition, pretending to raise man above his sphere, and gloomy-minded savage stoicism; which, although an enemy of fanaticism, is itself to be deemed such: because it is equally capable of leading man astray, by communicating to him only a knowledge calculated to make him conceive wrong notions of his nature, of his condition, and of his duty in this world.

SOUND philosophy steers clear of all these dangers; she brings man home to himself, and administers comfort to him for all his errors. When she informs the inhabitants of this planet, that they have been deceived, it is not in order to persuade them that they labour under a privation of reason, or that they ought to fear such a disaster; no; it is to make them reflect that they have not always made a proper use thereof. This admonition carries always its instruction along with it; for, upon whatever part of their usages or of their opinions it may chance to fall, it sufficeth to recall with mildness, the human mind to reason, to make it tend towards her sooner or later; for all errors prove noxious to it. This same admonition afterwards furnisheth a true consolation; and the in-

struction

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struction it implies is not less so, for reason, naturally the friend of truth, and for which she hath always cherished an inclination that can never be effaced.

THERE is another advantageous and consolatory point of view that true philosophy neglects not to point out to mankind, even in the picture of their errors; which is, that all false opinions, all prejudices, all corrupted usages, have, in their origin, been founded on some great truth, and often upon principles that do honour to humanity: whence it follows, that an historical narrative of those errors becomes their most striking proof and thence is the courage of man raised up anew. He feels, re-infused into him, that proper confidence in his reason, which he was very near renouncing. He learns, that his fallen state is not owing to any abuse he has made of his reason, or to his pride; but that it is due to his having ceased to make use of his reason, and not having held it in the esteem he ought. He acknowledges, that if he has fallen into all sorts of errors, it is not because his nature has degenerated, and been infected with a pretended corruption, but because he has paid too great a respect to the institutes of his forefathers, without harbouring the least distrust against

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time, which corrupts the best things: because he has not perceived the alterations by which they have been insensibly vitiated: because he has continued blindly respectful of them, by ceasing to think and reflect for himself: and finally, because he has imagined that he always followed the laws and the customs of his ancestors, when he followed but the spectre and phantom of them.

It is by placing this important point of view in a just light, that we shall avoid any danger there might be in exhibiting to mankind an historical picture of their errors. By thus reminding them of their reason, they will be rendered better and happier: by destroying a multitude of false principles, and false motives, which sometimes raise men too high, sometimes sink them beneath themselves, they will be delivered from the uncertainty of their state, and be brought back to a true knowledge of their interest and their duty.

MAY mankind, which I love, which I respect, because nature prompts, and reason dictates so to do, one day turn to advantage the consolatory instructions which this work may appear capable of communicating. To mankind I dedicate this performance, rather than to my compatriots or fellow-

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fellow-citizens, whose weakness to spare I look upon as one part of my duty.

## SECTION III.

*The revolutions of nature in remote antiquity, are the innocent sources of all human errors.*

WE see every day instances of that facility, with which man restored to a tranquil situation, loses all remembrance of the hardships which he had suffered; and of the eagerness with which he labours to make himself amends for his former misery. We may often remark, that a ray of joy and content is sufficient to suspend our anguish, which we then incline to believe to be nothing more than a disagreeable dream. The like hath happened to the human kind. For, after having been almost totally exterminated by the pristine revolution of nature, they forgot all; and they no sooner found themselves restored to a tranquil state, than their thoughts were all employed on repairing the damages they had suffered.

REMOTE antiquity has seen deplorable times, when the order of nature, convulsed and over-

thrown, plunged all beings on our globe into numberless calamities. The world was deprived of its light, the course of the sun and planets was altered; the now inhabited continents exhibited moving scenes; whereon conflagrations, deluges, earthquakes, and darkness, prevailed; whereon rivers, floods, seas, sometimes by their irresistibly overflowing, and sometimes by their malignantly drying up, produced a thousand successive ills, with which the human race was miserably afflicted.

THERE have been æras when man looked upon himself as the object of the hatred and vengeance of irritated nature. There was an end of all society, mankind being obliged to wander, as chance directed, upon the ruins of the world, and as driven by those plagues that seemed to persecute him, being then destitute of succours, of subsistence, and of comfort; if wretched mortals then retired to the mountains, the crumbling mountains sunk from under their feet; if they were fugitives upon the plains, the waters hastened to overtake and drown them. If hid in dens and caverns, they were therein buried alive: in fine, thus ever wandering, thus ever seeking new climates and new asylums, they every where met with persecution.

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THE natural monuments that still remain throughout the world of those terrible catastrophes in remote antiquity, are now, and have been, for an inconceivable number of centuries, misunderstood by all the inhabitants of this earth. There are but a small number of philosophers, who, for about a century at most, have begun to study therein the history of nature and mankind in remote antiquity. But all that has been discovered is looked upon as no more than objects of amusement, and more frivolous than instructive or entertaining. The sublime anecdotes of nature, that are engraved over the earth in characters indelible and fitted to all the languages, are looked upon but as so many dreams and chimeras by the prejudiced vulgar, determined neither to see nor to think for themselves.

If the natural monuments of these important events have been overlooked; much more so have been the historical monuments: there has been a shameful neglect of gathering and preserving the usages,

\* See *Telliamed* --- *The Nat. Hist. of Mr. de Buffon, vol. 1.* --- *The preface of vol. 3. to the works of Mr. Lehman, &c.*

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usages, the customs, as well as the civil and religious institutions formed by the people in remote antiquity, in order to perpetuate for ever a remembrance of the devastations of this world; and thereby to instruct future races of its inconstancy and frailty. It is, however, true, that there are but few nations which have not preserved some confused traditions relative to this matter: even some among them have books of a very remote antiquity, that seem to inform us of all that can possibly be known concerning this part of the history of the world, and to fix precisely its time and duration.

But all that such traditions, such pretended history, revered as sacred by each people, have transmitted to us concerning the revolutions of the earth, present to us but weak, broken, and imperfect traces: the causes, the progress, the effect, and the consequences, are there but as fables, wherein we can discover no detailed account, bearing any conformity with the movements of nature, and analogous to the multitude and variety of the phenomena, as well as the accidents without number, that had happened both in heaven and on earth. Not one of those books pretending to display to mankind the history of their origin, layeth any

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any stress on that famous epoch, as the cause and source of laws, customs, governments, and religion: not one of them takes the least notice of the impressions which the catastrophes of the world had made upon mankind, nor of the consequences, good or evil, derived from those impressions.

THE universal deluge that drowned mankind, according to the annals of the Hebrews, seems to have been attended with even less alarming consequences, than was among the Romans an inundation of the Tiber; it is with them but a detached fact, as soon forgotten as told, and unconnected with the events in following ages. Yet the revolutions of nature, after having destroyed the nations, became subsequently the legislators of renewed society; and they also, after having rendered the nations as religious as they had been wretched, became the matter, object, and innocent cause of all the fables, of all the romances of antiquity, of all the political and religious errors that have seduced the mind of man; and of all the opinions that have caused his misfortune and his shame.

THE object we are now going to consider, is man escaped from the ruins of the world: by so doing

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doing we shall resolve an infinite number of problems which relate to the actual state of man, and to human kind from the earliest date. In our research, man will not appear either a savage, or a metaphysical being, or one created perfect, that suffered itself to be corrupted; a chimera, which so many theological doctors, and other learned men, have idly occupied themselves about; no, he will appear a real being, whom we shall examine in a real state. By following him thus, step by step, as he deviates from this epoch, he will not lead us to solitary conjectures that are unconnected with any thing else, and inconsequent; no, he will lead us to a spacious, to an immense road, wherein all the parts of fable and history terminate and meet; there reciprocally to throw a new light upon, and explain themselves by each other; for, therein arranging themselves according to due order, they will display to us the true chain of the moral and political world.

I MAKE no mention here, nor do I intend to make any in this work, of the times that immediately followed the epoch which gave to our universe its present Despotism, and that it is known to have had for a great number of ages. As for the time prior to said epoch, it is to me as if it had

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had never been; although the existence thereof is not to be doubted, yet it was so obscure a point, even in the eyes of remotest antiquity, that most people in those early days fancied that they saw the creation and the birth of all things in the already corrupted anecdote of what was but the renovation of the world; a gross error, whence an infinite number hath been derived, as will be seen in the sequel of this work.

SECTION IV.

*The impressions which the disasters of the world must have made upon mankind.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the obscurity into which it seems we must necessarily plunge by bounding over the limits prescribed to us by history; we shall want neither flambeau nor a sure guide to enlighten our research beyond them; to wit, when we penetrate into periods of darkness, which are by most people looked upon as imaginary, but where we shall find natural facts and human institutions. In order to clear up truth thus fallen into darkness, and force in their turn to be absorbed therein all the revered chimeras, that owe their existence to ignorance and imposture, there

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needs but to imagine ourselves for an instant, co-existent with those who were witnesses to the calamities the world was afflicted with; to examine how they were affected thereby, and to advert upon the natural impressions which those disasters must have caused in them, and the sentiments with which they were thence affected. We shall afterwards make an application of those very impressions, and of the natural effects of said impressions to all the usages of antiquity; that is, to the polity, to the ancient laws, to all the worship, to all the governments; in fine, to the general conduct, and to all the different opinions of the human kind, in all the ages of which we can acquire any knowledge. This is to be the method by whose mediation we shall easily resolve a multitude of enigmas and problems; whose solution will present the world with a new field of science and display to our astonished eyes an antiquity quite new.

BEFORE I enter upon this enquiry, it is proper that I forewarn my readers to be on their guard not to imagine, that the human race in those times, (the object of our present enquiry) and in which we mean to steal a march upon, and in a manner surprize it, was different from the human

race

race now existing; that is an error must be carefully avoided.

THE interval of six or seven thousand years, which is commonly allowed betwixt the first known of mankind and those of our age, hath induced a great number of learned men to suppose, that there ought to be a very characteristic and striking difference between them and us. The consequence of which opinion was, that in the philosophical questions relative thereto, we have been prone to encrease those difficulties in proportion to the distance of time; and that, in fact, we have really encreased them, because we have lost sight of ourselves, who are the resemblance of our forefathers, as they had been the resemblance of us. All the difference that can be found betwixt them and us, consists but in certain inventions, and in certain branches of knowledge, which we have acquired since their time. Notwithstanding any particular sentiments, or national prejudices, or peculiar ideas, which are almost identified with the mind and character of man, and which fasten upon him in his own despite on certain occasions, we ought to harbour no doubt that mankind, in remote antiquity, was the same that they now are. They thought, they felt as

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we do; and as our posterity will think and feel, in thousands of ages hence, if they shall be situated in circumstances proper to excite and give birth to similar ideas, and to kindred feeling.

BEING now prepossessed with the notion of this resemblance, it is immaterial, in order to delineate to us a representation of those impressions which the disasters of the world must have made upon those who were witnesses thereof, whether we start back amongst them, or that we suppose those disasters happened in our time, and that we are now spectators of calamities like to those which had formerly ravaged the universe, and almost annihilated the human race.

WHAT would be our thoughts if we were no more to receive light from the extinguished sun; if the sublimely concerting powers of nature were to be rendered forgetful of their harmony, and dashed into a new chaos? if the seas were to deluge the earth? if the earth was to rise up against them? what would our exclamations be, were we to see a thousand fiery volcanos break forth on every side? if we were to behold fire, sulphur, and bitumen vomited in torrents from the torn entrails of convulsed mountains? if most of the  
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continents, all shattered were to sink under us? what ultimately would be our thoughts if the now human beings were to find themselves in the midst of so many terrifying scenes, and such universal desolation? there needs neither philosophy nor metaphysics to form a conjecture.

ALL mortals in such a dire dilemma would think the end of the world near; they would imagine that the day of justice, and of vindictive wrath was come; they would expect every moment to see the coming of the supreme judge to call this world to a strict account, and to pronounce the formidable edict always feared by the wicked, and always hoped for by the just. With such sentiments and like to these would our minds be occupied and our imaginations affected.

THE revered doctrine of the end of the world, of the last judgment, of the great judge, and of the life to come, would be strongly impressed upon our minds, and would both deeply and universally affect all inhabitants in the different nations of the earth. These very dogms will hereafter affect our descendants, whenever they shall be alarmed by such fatal circumstances. It was they also, that affected our forefathers, on their beholding a  
cessation



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cessation of the primitive harmony of the universe.

PERHAPS these notions will be thought too simple or too complicated for those times, up to which I have remounted in idea. It may probably be wished, that I had penetrated into the human mind, to research how said notions were first engendered therein; but that is a work I resign to others, who may play the philosopher at their ease, about such moments of terrou, which are not the moments of philosophy. It is enough for me at present to know that these were the dogms that acted in so lively a manner upon the minds and hearts of the human race in all the violent vicissitudes of nature. Let us now proceed to the consequences, good or bad, that have emanated from these impressions.

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SECTION

The first effects of the impressions caused by the disasters of the world on the religion and government of mankind.

THEY must have but little knowledge of mankind who can doubt, that in such unhappy times, and in the immediately succeeding ages, afflicted mortals were not very religious, and that afflictive calamities did not serve in the stead of austere missionaries, and powerful legislators, who must have turned all their views towards heaven, religion, and morality. The great number of strict and rigid institutions, whose beautiful remains are to be seen in the histories of all nations, famous for their antiquity, proceeded in all likelihood from the same source, and the same may be said of their Polity. It is impossible, that consequent to those deplorable times, which had reduced and diminished the human species, overturned their dwelling places, and destroyed their means of subsistence, those admirable regulations were made, which we find among the nations of remote antiquity, concerning agriculture, labour, and industry, as well as upon population, education,

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tion, and upon every article relative to civil and domestic economy.

It was doubtless, in those early days, that the unity of principle, of object, and of action, being revived among mankind (then reduced to a small number, and they all pinched by the same wants) the first domestic laws were made the foundation; or, to speak more justly, the only laws of society: which may be proved by all the legislations of antiquity. As war is the school in which generals and soldiers are formed; and, as in times of trouble and commotions orators arise, so the extreme distresses of mankind, and the utmost stretch of their misery and wants, gave birth to the most simple and most prudent laws, as well as to all the primitive legislations, whose only object is the true interest of humanity.

In such critical times man being rendered cautious and sage, followed custom no longer for the guide of his conduct, as he might have done before, and as we do now. He found himself under a necessity of reflecting and judging for himself and providing for his welfare, by instituting the most solid, and the most advantageous he could devise.

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It is to such laws, framed in remote antiquity, and which were lucky consequences of the disasters of the world, that the Chinese and the Egyptians are indebted for the epithet of Wise, which has been given to them by all the ancient and modern nations. We must not, however, conclude, that they were the only people who had instituted a polity and laws for themselves; but, very probably, they acquired this reputation from their having preserved them during a longer series of time than any other nation has, and that they have maintained, with more respect and care, the edifice of their primitive legislation, which is confirmed by their history. This rare and singular privilege, granted to the Chinese and Egyptians, may induce people to look upon it as a proof, that one or the other of these two nations hath been the parental stock from which the inhabitants of all others have branched out since the renovation of the world. A great number of historical anecdotes, similitudes, and accordances, have already influenced some authors, more daring than others, to incline for the affirmative in this point; but many reasons, as cogent and as solid as theirs, have induced me to suspend my judgment.

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It is not an easy matter, for instance, to persuade one's self, that however general might have been the destruction of the human species, but one only society should have escaped, and in one only region of the earth. These destructive events, such as, under the guidance of reason, we ought to receive them, (disregarding all pre-conceived prejudices) must have spared, in every climate, some of its inhabitants, especially in the more elevated, in the mountainous parts, that must have proved an asylum and nursery for new-born society, much more naturally than the flat countries of China, of Egypt, and of Assyria. I could collect a variety of proofs, that, for a long period after these events, mankind made choice of the mountains for their abode, and that several societies, which came to a knowledge of each other afterwards, were not in the least indebted, on either side, for their origin.

BUT, that we may not deviate from this enquiry, the title of *autochton* (self-engendered) of which all the nations in remote antiquity were so jealous, affordeth us sufficient matter to think. Moreover, what to me seems a very strong proof of the multiplicity of witnesses concerning the revolutions happened to the earth, is the very diversity of traditions

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ditions about the deluge; and in each of them I have often observed details and anecdotes, that are evidently relative to the situation and influence of the climate in which they were preserved.

THE result of this observation would seem to make us surmise, that from the state of things in China and Egypt, the several wrecks of the primitive inhabitants of the world, scattered in different regions, were not all endowed with a like sagacity to provide for their wants; but it is what I cannot easily subscribe to; because there is not a people upon the earth that cannot produce to us remains of their primitive institutes, but indeed in a degree inferiour to the Chinese and Egyptians. I do not even except the savage nations of America, as will appear in the sequel of this work. For, as the disasters of the world were general and common to all, so the various inhabitants of the earth must have been most feelingly interested to find a remedy thereto: and although far separated from each other, yet they must have done it by means somewhat similar; because their sensations, and the wants that excited them, must have been as similar and uniform as the calamities which had caused them.

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THIS observation appeared to me very apposite for explaining certain resemblances, which history pointed out among people, very different and far distant from each other, to whom otherwise we must necessarily grant one common origin, by bounding over a great number of historical and physical difficulties. But, even if the Egyptians and Chinese have acquired a particular distinction, on account of their having preserved their primitive legislation, this exception ought not to occasion in us any surprize; especially when we call to mind, that the love and veneration with which they were actuated for the laws of their ancestors, had impelled them, from remotest antiquity, to prohibit and exclude all strangers from entering into their territories, and that their situation was very favourable for the execution of this law, the conservatrix of all the rest.

THIS remark likewise unfoldeth to us the causes of the destruction of the ancient legislation, or of its corruption in all the other nations that had not a like barrier-law, or that could not, by reason of their situation, maintain it for so long a time, and repel encroaching colonies, invasions, and war, which, in a series of time, changed the face of the earth and the condition of nations. I have some

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reasons

THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 37

reasons to think, that this law against any commerce with foreigners, in its origin was almost general. The words stranger and enemy were for a long time synonymous in many regions of Asia and Europe. The barbarous customs of sacrificing strangers could take their rise from no other source but this cruel law, which must have been universal, because the cruel abuse of it has been since practised amongst all nations. This barrier-law was no part of the first legislation, because repugnant to its general spirit. We shall hereafter trace what was the incentive to, and the cause thereof.

HOWBEIT we can find vestiges of those institutes subsequent to the world renewed, in whatever age or whatever climate on which we may chuse to turn our eyes. The Etrusci, the Phrygians, the Hebrews and the Persians, have treasured up precious remains which prove it. The Peruvians and the Mexicans, at the very time of their being discovered and destroyed, had laws and usages, whose date could be derived but from the primitive legislation: and, what was extraordinary on the side of the Americans, is, that they were better able to assign the true motives of their usages than were the Hebrews, the Greeks, or the Romans, who were possessed of similar; and could give no other

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## 38 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

interpretation of them but fables and lies, of which we shall see many very striking examples.

IN order to conclude this section with a remark not less singular, I here lay down for a maxim, that in the study of ancient history, which probably may one day be resumed, the true measure of antiquity, of all the human race, and of all their laws, civil and religious, will be no longer the tallied one of chronology; but a surer one, a moral measure, that will be always proportioned to the remains, more or less numerous, more or less pure, which shall be discovered concerning the legislation of the renovated world. The more the great and extensive picture of the several nations of the world hath been unfolded, and submitted to my view, the more I have been convinced, that their antiquity should no longer be judged of by their history; but by their customs. I perceived that customs belong to the people in general; while histories flow too often from ignorant and lying individuals.

THE Chinese government, for example, by conducting itself, at this day, with the same spirit of emulation and œconomy that excited the unhappy and wretched families, which in remotest pe-  
riods

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 39

riods had escaped from the wrecks of this world, exhibits to us the true seal that profoundly stamps its indisputable antiquity, which is no longer to be judged of by its dynasties and amazing annals. These presumptuous titles contain nothing more than mythological fables. In the same light are to be held all other nations, who have made a pompous boasting of their civil and sacred archives.

## SECTION VI.

*The principles of the first religious institutions, and the errors derived from the abuse of them.*

AFTER the fermentation of the earth was subsided, and the wrecks of the human species were collected in different countries, to form new societies there, and to give reciprocal aid for the supporting of their afflictions, and to provide for their wants, mankind having still in view the august spectacle of the universe destroyed and re-established, and having deeply impressed on their hearts the sacred dogms, which were inseparable from the amazing object, they instituted a religion, of which the principal motives were an infinite acknowledgement to the supreme Being, for  
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having saved them; and their desire of transmitting a knowledge of it to all posterity.

THAT the memory of the revolutions which they had been witnesses to, might be perpetuated, they instituted commemorative festivals, calculated by the details which they represented, constantly to remind the nations of the frailty of their abode, and to warn them, by the picture of past vicissitudes, of those that were to come. The judgements of God, which had been executed upon the East, were therein represented as monitory lessons of the divine judgements that should be hereafter executed; as well as remembrancers of past conflagrations, and so became fore-runners of the future ones. Hence was derived the universal doctrine of the expectation of the world's next end by fire; a dogm known and received in remotest antiquity. The Hebrew people, and the oriental doctors, made its origin to ascend to the first patriarchs, to Seth, and to Adam, which is a proof, that in the remotest antiquity known to us, there had already happened conflagrations, which were the foundation of this fear.

THESE commemorations have also, in succeeding ages, given rise to all the prophetic and apocalyptic

calyptic books that have so often disturbed the peace of mankind: such as were known to the Pagans under the name of *Sibylline oracles*, or the *Acherontic books*; to the Hebrew people under the title of Revelations made to their ancestors before and after the deluge \*. --- All these people were ignorant of their true origin, because these books, at long run, were rendered corrupt and degenerate. They consulted them, however, upon all the irregularities of nature, to wit, in all public calamities.

It is also not improbable, that the Hebrews have drawn from this magazine their prophecies of Jeremy, of Isaiiah, Ezechiel, and others, wherein they constantly associate with their ideas a crowd of apocalyptic details, which, it is evident, belong only to the general revolutions of the universe, concerning which the people were instructed in their assemblies and festival days, that the curb of fear might keep in those who would otherwise prove refractory to the voice of reason, and the inhibiton of the laws.

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\* The Jews had several revelations or apocalypses, ascribed to their first patriarchs.

## 42 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

THE descent of the great judge (of which all the meteors and phenomena that concur to the ruin of the world, as the forerunners and consequences) imposes upon mankind, and fills them with a religious terrour. The idea was frequently recalled to mind, and kept alive by the accidental phenomena produced by nature when most regular, and which happen every day. This coming of the great judge, heralded by the meteors, is the unravelling of all the obscure and extravagant usages practised by all the nations, without knowing wherefore, at the sight of an eclipse or comet, or any other circumstance, by which the order of nature seemed to be altered or changed: for, having forgot what had been the original and true cause of their alarms, they invented fables to account for them, and by so doing whelmed the whole under extravagant absurdities, and depraved institutions, that, in themselves, were rational and very religious. The Peruvians are the only people I know, who have not fallen into this forgetfulness.

THE eclipses of the sun and moon reminded them of the darkness, that, in remote antiquity, had covered the earth after its conflagration; thereby they explained all their customs, and were right  
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## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 43

in so doing. The same people, however, looked upon comets as the forerunners of the death or birth of some great personage; but they were deceived, as have been all the nations, who, for a long time, entertained the same idea. The comets were looked upon, originally, but as heralds of the ruin of the world, and of the coming of the great judge; they were then held as relative to a general fact, but wherein, through succeeding ages, every one has sought but for a particular fact.

SUBSEQUENT to all these objects of an instructive fear, with which religion had filled the minds of men, she presented to them the consolation and flattering aspect of the life to come, and of the kingdom of the just, in a state of felicity, abundance, and glory, which should be no longer exposed to the revolutions of nature. It was thus religion most commonly made her festivals, instructions, and spectacles to terminate; that all these dogms might be rendered more sensible by symbols and figurative ceremonies.

FROM the abuse of these representations were produced the fables of the gardens of Adonis, and Eden, of the Elysian Fields, and of the Terrestrial Paradise, &c Their being fixed in so many

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different regions by the poets and their commentators, proceeds from most of the ancient nations having each had rural and delicious spots, whither they annually repaired to assist at the figurative and mystic representations of the celestial life which is to follow that of this world. Thence took its rise, in Japan, the pilgrimage to the province of Isje, which the natives perform every year to obtain a remission of their sins, and merit the happiness to come. This also was the object of the annual processions, made by the Athenians to the territory of Eleufis; this was the origin of the Elyfian fields. The names of Isie, of Eleufis, and of Elyfian, are obviously analagous; for this very reason the future life was called, The Fields El-Isis, or, The Land of the divine Isis; a name given to the principal figure which was the symbol thereof.

THE object of those representations, were, in process of time, made to appear so grand and so elevated, that the priests, abandoning to the people the exterior part of these ceremonies, and leaving them in liberty to think thereupon as they pleased, resolved to reveal the meaning but to a small number of chosen persons. Hence sprang the mysteries of antiquity, known by the names of  
Isis,

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 45

Isis, of Ceres, of Osiris, of Adonis, &c. and to which no candidate could be admitted, but after a long and austere preparation.

ALTHOUGH the details of these mysteries have been in general so little known, there are, however, some anecdotes transmitted to us which may facilitate the intelligence of them. For instance, let us examine one concerning the mysteries of Adonis, and which, for many reasons, deserves to have a place here.

I SHALL previously suppose the reader to be acquainted with the history of Adonis. It relates, that this god died and returned to life every year. I take upon me to add, for a farther elucidation of this report, that originally he was but the commemorative symbol of the world antiently destroyed, and since renewed. This served, at the same time, as an instructive image of its destruction past, and grand renovation to happen hereafter. On a certain night of the festival, during which the representative of Adonis was placed in a tomb in the midst of darkness and lamentation, light suddenly appeared: one of the priests shewed himself with an air of serenity; and, after having anointed the lips of the initiated, (doubtless on account of the  
secret



## 46 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

secret they were bound to keep) he whispered in the ear of each, that the sun was come, and that deliverance was at hand. --- This important news revived in them a general sense of joy, and the resurrection of Adonis was celebrated with all manner of rejoicing \*. The exterior of this festival was known and spread abroad, not only in Phenicia and in Egypt, but also among the Greeks and Romans. During the first days nothing was to be seen but mourning and affliction; no sounds were heard, but the funereal cries of desolate and weeping females: on every side no other objects but tombs and coffins were to be seen.

WE may conclude from this singular worship, and especially by the anecdote here cited, that a Christian who might have lived a thousand years or more before the coming of the Messiah, and assisted at the festival or mysteries of Adonis, would fancy he saw therein the end of a popish Lent. Popish christianity, as hence appears, is of a very ancient date.

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\* See *Jul. Firmicus, and the English book, entitled, Purchas' Pilgrimage, book 1, chap. 17, page 90.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 47

BUT let us return from our digression, to the institutions of remote antiquity, because all the follies of mankind, both ancient and modern, will appear to be the consequences and the abuse thereof.

ALL the celestial motions, and the harmony of the universe revived, were, for a long time, the motives of a constant and boundless acknowledgement to the supreme Being. However, as if this religion had foreseen what was to happen in after-times, she sought, in this very harmony, matter for instructing mankind concerning their state of instability, fearing lest a forgetfulness of past calamities, and the habitude of a permanent felicity, should extinguish in them this salutary fear of the great judge, which it is most important to keep up. She turned every thing to instruction; the declining day, and setting of the sun, reminded her of the antient darkness, of the end of the old world, as well as of the future end of the new. The return of Aurora, was to her an image of the ancient and future renovation, as well as the rising of the grand judge in favour of the just.

HENCE all the festivals of antiquity began with sadness and ended in joy. They began with the setting

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setting sun of one day, and ended with that of the next \*. Hence it was that man become idolatrous, ran every day to consult Aurora, or the rising sun; and that in general the inhabitants of this earth have turned towards that side the gates of their temples, imagining, that as the sun, so the grand judge would come from the oriental part of the heavens.

THE end and the commencement of the periods attended by stars and planets, became, in the same sense, an occasion and subject for similar instructions. The four changes of the moon in each month; the varying of the four seasons in each year, were images too striking, of the instability of the universe, not to be considered as instructive signals.

THEREFORE it was, that every people had four festivals in the month, and four other, more solemn festivals, in the year; during which they occasionally, thro' these solar and lunar changes, reminded

\* The antient and almost universal usage of nations was, to reckon by nights, not by days. The sacred or ecclesiastic day with us begins with the night.

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reminded the assembled people, that all had been changed, and all should hereafter be changed in the tremendous day to come.

THE festivals which had any affinity with the astronomical periods, were festivals of rejoicing; and those having an affinity with their declension, were festivals of mourning and repentance.

THE moon's periodical month, consisting of twenty-eight days, is an obvious conjecture that this is the reason why the lunar festivals have, in all times, been distanced from seven to seven days; and that this is the reason why, from the antient solemnities having been regulated by the lunar number, the universal respect, amongst all nations, for the septenary number, arose. The succession of our festivals could not be founded upon any other event, or any other motive, seeing that the four solemnities of the month are, in regard to the four lunar phases, what the four annual solemnities are to the four solar phases. It would be ridiculous to conclude, that the four festivals have regulated the course of the stars; whereas good sense dictates to us, that the festivals must have been regulated by the stars. Although the Hebrew tradition pretends, that the work of the  
H creation,

30 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

creation, performed in seven days, was the primitive cause of the septenary festivals, yet we read in the first chapter of Genesis, that the sun and moon were created to indicate and regulate the festivals and the days of assembly. How shall we be able to explain this contradiction, unless we be stupid enough to imagine, that the Deity was pleased to interlard his work with astrological affinities. Debasing idea! ---

THE established custom in primitive times, to thus instruct mankind about the destruction and renovation of the world, at the end and the beginning of all the phases, and of all the astronomic periods, was the innocent source of infinite errors, when once the remembrance of the past was diminished, and when the motives of these periodical instructions were misinterpreted and corrupted.

MANKIND, in observing these commemorations to be kept up, and always indicated by the number seven, thought there was some secret virtue contained therein, and some mysterious reference to the origin, existence, and duration of the world.

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SOME imagined it had been created; others that it had been renovated; and many, that it had been judged in seven days. All these different opinions are to be found among the Hebrews, as can be seen in the note hereto annexed\*.

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\* The Hebrew people, in general, have called the seven days of the week, the seven days of the Creation; they have, however, called the seventh day, during which they celebrated their adopted creation by the name of Sabbath, which is also the name of the first month of their solar year: its true Hebrew radix does not signify Rest, but Return and Renovation; therefore this festival of the Creation could be none other but the festival of the Renovation of the world. The Psalms 37 and 92, which were consecrated to the remembrance of the sabbath, are sufficient to discover the error of the Hebrew. The former exhibits nothing to us but a picture of misery and affliction, and makes us hear nothing but pitiable groans, that are not applicable to David, or to the creation, or to the sabbath, according to the manner in which they conceive it, but are aptly so to the destruction of the world, to Osiris, and to Adonis, who were symbols of the world destroyed, and of the sun extinguished. The 92d Psalm, whose title also

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THE remembrance of the renovation of the face of the universe, being extinguished, or covered with obscurity; the remembrance likewise of the ancient world became necessarily extinct, and mankind thought no more but of that which it enjoyed. But, when after a succession of time, the human race had sufficient leisure to reflect upon its origin, and reason about its antiquity, all the sentiments conceived thereupon could be but systematic, and very much divided: there was a greater or less degree of antiquity allowed, in proportion to the greater or less number of ideas that had been preserved of what had passed. This is the cause

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also relates to the sabbath, presents us with a picture of the deluge and of the re-establishment of the earth. The author of the book of Job, in the magnificent description which he gives in the ninth chapter of the works of the creation, alludes to "The defeat of the giants that groan under the waters:"--A like ambiguity is to be seen in the 14th chapter of the book of Wisdom; It is thus (as therein is said) "That in the beginning of the world, when you made the proud giants perish, a vessel was the asylum, and the depositary of the hopes of the universe." It is clear from these different passages, that

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 53

cause of the strange diversity which we find in the chronology of all the ancient nations. It is natural among men to count for nothing what they know not of, whether in nature or in the vast abyss of time. They soon bounded over ages unknown, they dared even to precisely fix the instant of the first existence of the world, and confounded the ancient epoch of its re-establishment, with the still more obscure and unknown epoch of its primitive creation; whence followed, that when they

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that the world created, and the world renovated, are always confounded. Subsequent to these variations, another passage in the fourth book of Esdras, chap. 7, ver. 30, may be easily explained, which has hitherto been inexplicable. The prophet, after having declared, that the horrors of the end of the world were near, threatens sinners, and says to them, that "The world is going to re-enter into the chaos of seven days, as it happened in the ancient judgments." This singular opinion gives us to know, that the seven days of the creation, or renovation of the world, were then looked upon as the seven days of the ancient judgments of God. There is also to be found, in another part of the scripture, "I have praised you seven times a day, on account of the judgments of your justice."

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they would form conjectures, and enter into a scrutinizing detail of this first of all events, in order to place it at the head of the annals of the world, all which imposture suggested, because man could neither then, nor ever will be able to represent to himself the operation of a creating God and Architect of the universe, otherwise than by the medium of gross analogies. This sublime and incomprehensible act was painted with colours, stained by the ideas which were as yet supplied by a darkened and corrupted remembrance of the general disturbance, occasioned by the change of the ancient world. They had no other way of arranging facts and their succession, than by the rules, or rather by the extravagant chimeras of judicial astrology; a most ridiculous science, and offspring of the primitive attention to all the movements of the heavenly bodies, in which the peace and tranquillity of new formed societies were then deemed to be so essentially interested\*.

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\* The follies of astrology were invented prior to the system of the creation by the Hebrews; which is obvious from the analogy observable in the divers operations of the seven days, and the pretended virtues and  
astrological

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 55

To this we are to ascribe the darkness, the chaos, the primitive mixture of elements, and the state of confusion, said to have preceded the birth of the world.

THE absurd chaos had never any existence, but in the heads of mortals that had forgot antiquity. Hence arose all the frivolous, all the ridiculous histories of the diverse combats prior to the origin  
of

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*astrological properties of the seven planets. 1. The day over which the sun presided, light was made. 2. The day of the moon was that in which the firmament and the atmosphere were made; whereon also the division of the waters above from the waters below was marked out, because the moon presides over the atmosphere, and that she is looked upon as an humid and aquatic planet. 3. The day of Mars, as being reputed a carnal, brutal, and gross planet, the day appeared, and was called earth. 4. The day of Mercury; Mercury has been ever held as the ready minister of the gods, as a go-between from heaven to hell, from hell to heaven. These attributes devolved to him from having been anciently the symbolical herald of festivals, and the emblem of the commerce of mortals with gods,*  
by

of things, to wit, of light against darkness, of angels against dæmons, of the good against the evil principle, of Lucifer against God, of the sun against the moon, of the giants against the gods, of Typhon against Osiris, and many more of that sort\*.

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*by the intermediation of worship and prayers; and that, doubtless, is the reason why it is said, that the signals of the festivals and the assemblies (the Sun and the Moon) were placed that day in the heavens. 5. The day of Jupiter, as it is the planet of the air, and abundance multiplied according to astrology, it necessarily followed, that on the fifth day birds were created in the air, and fish in the sea. 6. The creation of man and woman on the day of Venus, needs no explanation. 7. The Deity reposed himself on the day of Saturn, a gloomy and silent planet, that cuts away all with his scythe, and produces nothing according to astrology.*

\* There is a point worth being remarked in the annals of the world, collected by Sanchonaton (whose valuable fragments have been preserved by Eusebius) to wit, that this author makes no mention of the deluge; which drew on him severe reproaches from most of

THE number seven being thus become a number fraught with virtue and mystery, not only the seventh day was respected, but also the seventh week, the seventh month, the seventh year, and the seventh week of months and years. The end of the world was always expected after sabbatical periods. The Manicheans, in imitation of a great many

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*of the christian teachers. But if the account which he gives us of the creation be examined, we shall easily discover that therein is contained nothing more than the account of a real revolution; and the same remark may be applied to the anecdotes of all the pretended ancestors which he gives to mankind. It is therefore no way astonishing that he mentions not the deluge. The author of the Hebrew annals, who gives us the history of a creation, and of a deluge, has been guilty of a very gross error: his creation is nothing but the deluge, his deluge is nothing but the creation. These two events, as in Genesis, are really but one and the same fact doubly employed and considered in the same point of view: the one natural, to which he has given the second place; the other astrological, systematical, or mystic, according as people may please to call it, to which he has given the first. This remark furnishes a satisfactory solution of the causes that produced the different Hebrew and Samaritan chronologies.*

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ancient nations, expected it the seventh day of every week; the Mexicans, at the end of the week of weeks of years; and all the oriental sages at the end of the weeks of hundreds; or of thousands of years. In fine, this number, as well as a great many others (to which a similar virtue was attributed) being by a jumbling mixture of all the primitive ideas, rendered so *outré* and so corrupted, that they were understood as divine and happy by some, but as tremendous and fatal by others. Of this preposterous notion, a crowd of rabbis, cabalists, astrologers, predictors of futurity, with other fanatic and superstitious heads, have made a bad use in all times, to the greatest degree of extravagance; and often at the expence of the tranquillity and happiness of mankind.

To this expectation of the end of the world, which from a sacred dogm was degenerated into one, replete with folly and superstition, I have said that religion added these concerning the descent of the great judge and future life. As these three tenets were inseparable, the errors derived from the abuse thereof were also inseparable: the periodical revolutions of years, of meteors, and all, that ignorant antiquity called the signs in the heavens, instead of being what they had been in past times, the

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 59

the announcers of the instructions to be delivered to mankind, were thenceforward become the heralds of the arrival of victorious kings, of legislators, of predictors of futurity, and other chimerical personages, who were expected instead of the great judge; the original expectation of whom was corrupted and personified. These signs in the heavens were no longer the proclaimers of the last judgment, and of the life to come, but of the fortunes and revolutions of empires, and of the great political changes that were to happen, as were then reported, not only in regard to nations, but even to families.

By this means, the imagination of mankind being fixed upon the stars, supposed civil and religious revolutions to happen upon earth, in consequence of the astronomical ones, which it fancied to have descried in the heavens; nay, impostors went so far, as from revolutions naturally happening on the earth, to suppose the like in heaven; or, when it was their interest, to conjure up such for their own advantage.

FROM imbibed prejudices like these, the human mind has, for a considerable number of ages, been ever found readily disposed to be the dupe, the

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sport, and victim, of all those fanatics and impostors, endowed with cunning enough to conciliate to them the attention of mortals, ever actuated with a vague hope and undetermined expectation.

It will not be improper to mention here, the institution of the primitive religion, a knowledge whereof can throw a great light upon a variety of usages, for the most part obscure and corrupted, which antiquity exhibits to us in her festivals, and solemnities. This religion was peculiarly careful to keep up the remembrance of the calamities befallen to the first of mankind, that is, upon those who had been the unhappy witnesses of the devastation of the universe. To second this intent she obliged them on certain times to lead a wandering life; to cloath themselves with nothing better than skins, nor to make use of any food but wild fruit; also, to abide in groves, woods and caverns.

Hence, in part, must have arisen the Orgies, the Bacchanalia of paganism, and several festivals of the Hebrews, which exteriorly bore so great an affinity therewith. But all the nations had lost sight of what had been the primitive and true motives of them. Some precious remains of those com-

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memorations are, however, as yet to be found among the pagans. There were, in Athens and in Syria, as we read in Plutarch and Lucian, funereal festivals celebrated, even at the time of Sylla, in remembrance of those who had perished in the deluges of Ogyges and Deucalion. If we examine the greatest part of the festivals, the manes, and lemures, among the Greeks and among the Romans, we shall therein trace the original motive, as well as in most of the funereal games and spectacles, kept up through custom, and without the people's well knowing wherefore.

The festivals of the sun, called, in the Peruvian, Memorials \*, were doubtless derived from the same source. The Japanese own that all their festivals formerly, were days of mourning and lamentation; and I would incline to believe, that the Cult in regard to their ancestors, which was established there as well as in China, and in other parts of Asia, sprang entirely from the same cause. The literati of Tonquin, as father Tiffanier tells us, in his narrative of that country, pay an adoration, at every new moon, to the souls of their forefathers, who had perished through hunger in days

\* See Selden's preface of the God of Asia.



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days of yore. This is a sufficient authority to ground my surmise upon. In the island of Samothracia, there was, in the time of Diodorus Siculus\*, annual festivals of this kind, which they then celebrated by going up on the tops of high mountains, to thank the gods for the ancient deliverance from the waters of the deluge. I am satisfied, that the idolatrous worship, which has been paid to so many mountains, was no more than consequences of that grateful acknowledgement which the nations had preserved for the asylums whereupon the wrecks of the human race were saved.

In fine, the commemoration of the revolutions of nature, whether occasioned by water or fire, was the original intention and primitive object of all the festivals of antiquity whatsoever, among whatever people we chuse to fix our eyes upon. If we consider them, henceforwards, in this point of light; and if we compare and conciliate them one with the other, they will no longer appear to us mysterious or obscure; they will unfold to us the true history of the world, which by their means alone hath been preserved. We shall then know, for

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\* *Book v.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 63

for example, to what events ought to be referred the commemorations made by the Egyptians for the misfortune of Osiris; and those made by the Hebrews for the calamities which they said had been suffered by them in Egypt, and in the desert.

THERE will be no difficulty then to ascertain to what events, and to what time is to be referred the frugal manner of living observed at certain times by the Japanese, who, through a devout remembrance of their ancestors, eat nothing but shells. We shall thence know why their theatres at that time represent only cottages and miserable huts. Then there will be no difficulty to bring back all these usages to the same source; whence by the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Sicilians, the Romans, were derived certain festivals of Bacchus and Ceres, wherein was represented the ancient manner of living practised by their forefathers, when (according to them) they led a wandering and a savage life.

IN like manner may we account for our European usages, whether of religion or of the people. Placed in this great and new point of light they will be one day cleared up; which will put an end to that illusion whereby fallacy and ignorance have

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have for so many ages concealed from us their true principles and genuine origin.

I should never conclude on this head, if on the occasion of these primitive institutions I were to undertake giving a detail of all the evils, and all the different errors produced by the general and universal abuse that has been made of them; altho' the several institutions and dogms, which had been the principles thereof, were so reasonable, so just, and so proper in themselves, to procure the happiness of society, by maintaining therein that order and that polity, whereupon such happiness depends. The enumeration of these errors would take up a vast field, and would besides include a crowd of other objects no way relative.

HITHERTO I have only insisted on the capital errors, that are at this day the basis of most of the religions of the world; I judged it incumbent on me to do so, and as much because the political systems which we mean to examine are thence derived, and intimately connected with them; as because man superstitious, and man enslaved are held fast by the same fetters, and bound by the same prejudices.

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SECTION VII.

*The principles of the first civil and political institutions. Mankind chose a Theocratic form of government.*

IT is probable that the unfortunate remains of the nations destroyed for some time after the return of serenity and harmony to the universe, composed no larger a society than that of families stricken with a fear of the judgments of the deity, and their attention was occupied how to find a remedy for the evils they had suffered, as well as to provide for their subsistence. In all likelihood there was no authority at that time known among them but that of fathers, presiding over their progeny; nor any other law but reason; and the common necessities, which are, in similar circumstances, the same as particular ones, could neither be misunderstood, nor neglected.

In these renascent days of society we are not to seek for the different governments that it has since been possessed of upon earth, when grown more adult, and finally arrived, as it were, to a state of maturity; because said governments could

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have been instituted but in consequence of the primitive families encreasing; by their being more and more united, by which means they formed numerous communities; and to them, thus assembled, it was necessary to apply more cogent and more striking ties or motives of union in private families, whereby that unity might be maintained, the value of which they so very well knew; and thus also maintained that spirit of religion, oeconomy, industry and peace, which alone could repair the infinite calamities human nature had suffered. Then were instituted laws civil, oeconomical and domestic, in order to inculcate frugality, to excite to labour, to encourage invention, and especially to quicken the progress of agriculture.

THE nature of the several duties of life was regulated, as well as that of the assistance which men reciprocally owe to each other, to prevent disputes, or to accomodate those which might happen. The times for work and rest were fixed. An authentic form was given to marriage. An invariable plan was laid down for education and manners. A regular order was prescribed for the exterior worship, that man might be constantly reminded of the Godhead. Finally, the seal of public

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public approbation was impressed on all the usages and on all the institutions wherein society could be interested, and no doubt punishments were decreed at the same time for those who should trespass against these general and solemn engagements.

THESE several regulations were in the beginning as simple as the spirit by which they had been dictated; although they were not then so extensive as have since been the codes, and adopted legislations of mankind; they were the better for it, and tended more directly to the true welfare of their species. It was not at all necessary in forming them to have recourse to sublime philosophers, or to profound politicians. Reason, exigence, and real wants, were the only legislators that suggested them. When the several constituent parts were collected, nothing more was done than to write or engrave upon wood or upon stone, all that had been transacted down to those happy times; when the reason of individuals, not being as yet different from that of the public, had flourished the one and only law.

IN order to support these instructions which were to constitute the general happiness of the whole, as they had procured the particular wel-

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fare of families, when they were but as yet domestic laws the people unanimously consenting, applied to the elders of the place, and to the heads of those very families, who ought to be the most interested to watch over the happiness and tranquility of a society in which they were so nearly concerned. They were not however looked upon then as the kings, and sovereign masters of said society; no, it was on account solely of their experience, their wisdom, their age, and the name of father, that they were honoured by all with a profound respect and natural veneration. They were chosen, therefore, to be the ministers and the superintendants of society, but not the independent arbiters.

THE human race was not then ignorant, that there existed a public reason, before which the very ruling ministers are of no more significance in the state than the last citizen. Apprized of his privileges, through the title of being rational and free, man in prescribing civil laws to himself, had never any intention to suffer himself to be enchained by any of his equals; and although he submitted himself a voluntary adherent to the laws, in order to render himself dependant on society wherein he found his subsistence and happiness, he did

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did not mean, by so doing, to acknowledge any other king, or monarch, but God alone. To him then solely did he subject his new legislation and himself.

BUT before we enter into an historical account of this extraordinary anecdote in the political history of the first men, let us, for a moment, turn back in the same path through which we have thus far advanced.

I DID not think it necessary here, to give a detail of all the laws, domestic, œconomical, and civil, which were the first code of mankind assembled in society. This truth we learn from all antiquity. Here she pleads in my behalf, and the history of all the ancient nations, to wit, Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, Persians, Cretans, &c. should make us competent judges how far the first societies were perfect, on the side of their manners, discipline, and polity; and, we may readily conclude, that all we know of them, is still infinitely short of what has been. For, in fact, the times the first known in history of these people, were not, in reality, their first times: the greatest part of these nations became frequented by others, but when the law prohibitory of all external commerce was neglected.

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lected. This law, whose severity must have reigned with vigour during so long a time, proves that at the æra of its institution, society was very populous, which had been productive of so many considerable events, and dissensions so opposite to the ancient union, as that gave occasion to this law, which they found it was necessary to enact, although in itself contrary to the primitive legislation, that breathed nothing but humanity.

WE are, therefore, to esteem these antient details, handed down to us concerning the antient governments; but, as so many vestiges, so many traces, of what they had been in another and elder antiquity, which we are ignorant of; but a means by which we may be capacitated to form some conjecture of, and speak in its behalf, is that admiration and that amazement which are excited in us by its remains alone.

WHATEVER the Greeks have written on the polity of the Egyptians, since they have known it, would be deemed almost fabulous, as would the education of the antient Persians, if the present state of China were not a visible and incontestable proof that such governments have existed. Egypt was no sooner become accessible to the neighbouring

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 71

ing nations, where, for a series of time their original legislation had been corrupted, than they enriched themselves with all that remained thereof among this privileged people. Through a sense of gratitude they unanimously hailed her with the title of Wife; a title she doubtless merited, since it was conferred upon her by her most inveterate enemies\*.

WHAT more peculiarly merits our attention in these first proceedings of the human species, is, that they were all dictated by reason: it was she that became the wealth of mankind, despoiled of every thing. In order to extricate himself from the abyss of misery into which he was plunged, man exerted all his mental powers; being called home, and admonished by his calamitous situation, he demeaned himself as a rational and intelligent being, which constituted his happiness and glory.

SUCH had been the conduct of man in those early times, and such it would have continued ever since, if he had not lost sight of his first motive

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\* *Moses was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians.*

## 72 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

tive to act and his natural guide, I mean his genuine wants and reason.

ALL that is hereafter to follow, will unfold to us his deviations and changes; and, as to render them instructive, it will be of the highest import to always research for their principles; we may even now make one of them the subject of our animadversions.

ALTHOUGH the first written laws which had been composed by mankind; were no more than the picture of their primitive conduct, and the precious collection of all the methods they had until then employed, in order to re-establish society, and render themselves happy. Yet these very laws were the occasion of the first change that was effected in the human mind. Even from that æra the use of reason began to be neglected: these laws were only consulted as the guide of action; an entire confidence was reposed in them; and the full reliance which man had on them, by their no longer requiring of him to employ the interior energy of his reason to regulate his conduct and proceedings, as he had antecedently done, was the cause that this energy was weakened by degrees, and at length was near being entirely defeated.

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## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 73

IT must be owned, that all those laws were excellent, and mankind could not help being both happy and wise by literally following them. But where are the laws that do not imperceptibly degenerate, especially when the excessive respect conceived for them, forbids our confronting them from time to time with the primitive law, which is engraved upon all hearts, in a more unalterable manner than it is upon stone; and is ever to be found there when we re-enter into ourselves in quest of it.

THESE admirable laws were corrupted and warped from their pristine spirit, through the neglect of preserving them pure, and of redressing them when they began to be seduced from the public weal, from reason and good sense. Being now previously cautioned of this source of every error, it is not difficult for us to have a fore-feeling of, and to assuredly take in before-hand, at one view, what course the human race will shape. Man, after having conducted himself by the light of his reason, will give himself up, with an implicit and boundless respect, to the guidance of the laws. He will cease to think for himself. These laws will be altered without his perceiving it, and the rule of his conduct will be afterwards according to

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usages and customs; these waxing obscure, misled man will be filled with prejudices, false traditions, foolish and superstitious opinions, which will at length become the basis and the rule for the general conduct of all the nations. And it is by degrees, such as these, that we shall see them all successively pass from the renovation of society down to this day: we shall see them always growing more and more forgetful of themselves; and we shall observe, that their unhappiness will be in proportion to their straying from their reason, and that they will at last come to that fatal pitch, to no longer look upon her as the flambeau, by excellence, that ought to administer light to laws, customs, usages, opinions, and even to religion.

WE have left man upon the point of impressing the last seal on his legislation, and ready for the representation of power and unity, by taking unto himself the deity for sovereign. Divers sentiments, dictated to him by reason, several religious impressions, with which he was warmly penetrated; and farther still, the credit and weight of a particular superstition, congenial to those early ages, concurred to inspire him with so singular a choice, so extraordinary a project. His wants  
having

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 75

having early made known to him, that he was not a being calculated to live alone upon the earth, he entered into a society with his fellow-mortals, preferring, as we have already seen, the advantages of a necessary and rational engagement, to his natural liberty.

INCREASING society afterwards exacted, that the tacit contract made with her by each individual, at the time of his being incorporated, should receive a more solemn form to become authentic and irrefragable; that the same order and harmony might subsist and reign throughout as before. To this also mankind gave their consent; and the primitive energy of social laws was not altered by this new precaution; the main object thereof being to add a new force to them proportionate to the power and extent of the body corporate, whose motions they were to regulate.

THEN was resumed, in behalf of society, the already begun sacrifice of that liberty, and that natural equality, of which we are all conscious. Superiours and magistrates were acknowledged; and mankind submitted to a civil and political subordination: nay more, a sovereign was sought

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for, from a conviction even then, that a numerous society without a chief, or king, was a body without a head, and even a monster whose unwieldy limbs, when put into motion, could not execute any thing agreeable either to reason or harmony.

To discover this great truth man needed only to turn his eyes upon already formed society. When we see an assembled people, we cannot refrain from asking, who is its first personage or chief. It is an involuntary and truly natural curiosity, annexed to the secret attraction by which we feel ourselves actuated towards *simplicity* and *unity*, which are the characteristics of order and truth. It is a precious inspiration of reason, by whose influence, notwithstanding any inclination we may have for independance, we are taught to submit ourselves, for the sake of our own well-being, and through the love of order,

So far are the members from being offended on beholding the personage who presides over their society, that they feel an agreeable and flattering return on themselves, as they look at him thro' reason's eye; because it is essential to society, and to themselves, who are a part thereof, which they  
respect

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 77

respect in this chief, in this permanent oracle of the public reason, of which he is the mirror, the image, and the august representation.

THE first society that was regulated by the polity of laws, certainly could not contemplate herself without being filled with admiration. One of the first ideas then of thinking and social man was that of having a king. The spectacle of the universe seconded the voice of reason; the human mind was then constantly occupied with the surprising object, and enraptured with the marvellous concert observable in the general system. Seeing that the immutability of heaven, and the felicity of the earth depended on the perpetual accordance of the various movements of the stars, they were the perpetual object of his contemplation. Sometimes he raised his eyes up towards the sun; at others he fixed them on the moon, and the prodigious number of stars with which the firmament is spangled over. But he considered in a more especial manner, that chief, that only, and brilliant luminary, that seems to command the armies of heaven, and to be obeyed by them; therein he flattered himself to have espied the image of a good government, and to have discovered the model of the plan which ought to be followed by societies  
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upon earth, in order to be rendered happy and unchangeable by practically imitating such an harmonious concert.

RELIGION finally crowned all those motives sufficiently cogent in themselves. Mankind saw but one sun in all nature; and acknowledged but one supreme being in the universe, which was God. It was thence concluded, that something was wanted to complete the legislation; wherefore, society was as yet but in an imperfect state; in short, a king was wanted to be the chief, and the father of this great family, to conduct and regulate it, as the sun regulates all nature, and as the Godhead conducts and governs the universe.

SUCH was the advice, the counsel, and the example suggested to man in the infancy of the world by reason, by the contemplation of heaven, and by religion, then not jarring with each other; but man chose to elude rather than to follow them. Whether he really was of opinion that a mortal could not be capable of representing the Deity upon earth (which is true in one sense) or that he feared he should entirely lose his liberty, not reflecting that there were legitimate means of reconciling his safety with that of the throne;

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throne; or whether, finally, superstition prevailed; man, instead of chusing a king amongst his fellows (with whom society might have entered into the same contract, as each individual had done with her before) proclaimed the supreme Being; averse from having on earth any other master, any other monarch, because he was that of heaven.

SOME may be here tempted to think, that the love of independency was the main spring of this conduct; and that man, by declining to give to himself a visible king, in order to acknowledge only an invisible one, was secretly resolved to admit none\*. By such a suspicion we should do very little

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\* The French text is faulty throughout, in the article of punctuation, &c. which proves it to have been printed under the inspection of some person not thoroughly conversant with the Gallic idiom; therefore the meaning is in many places rendered extremely intricate, and we meet in p. 69, l. 11 and 12, with -- mais par  
soupon on rendroit bien p      fice à  
l'homme, &c. whether these chasms were in the original manuscript, or be the printer's fault, we cannot take upon us to say, but thus we have imagined they  
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the justice to man in general, and particularly to man escaped from the ruins of the world. Never was he more rational than at that time, as to all that relates to public order: never was he more inclined to make a sacrifice of his liberty. If by giving himself a king, he had made so singular an application of the instructions which he had received from reason and from universal nature, that was to be imputed to his not having depurated his religion, as he had his civil and domestic polity. He had not purged it of superstition, the child of fear and terrour, that first swallows up religion; then by appearing in her place, and assuming her figure, totally destroys her. Man was, at that time, her wretched dupe. She alone presided at the election of the deity for monarch; and that was the first epoch of the misfortunes of mankind.

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*may be filled up agreeable to the tenor of the text; mais par un tel soupçon on rendroit bien peu de justice à l'homme, &c. which signifies, as in the translation, "by such a suspicion, &c." N. B. All intelligent readers will easily conceive why in some places of the version there is a seeming deviation from the original text; which, let it be here said, once for all, was purposely done, that the sense might appear with a less offensive aspect, and a better grace in English.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 81

THE best method of making known the kind of superstition with which the first of the human race were infected, will be to recall here certain opinions that were in vogue at the beginning of our vulgar æra, much about the time that christianity began. This religion, as it is adulterated and practised in the popish countries (the modern nurseries of superstition) oweth a considerable part of its existence to an ancient and periodic folly, which proceeded from the corruption of the primitive dogms, as we have mentioned, where we treated of the coming of the great judge, of the end of the world, and of the life hereafter.

I say that this folly was periodical, because the people had always assigned the accomplishment of those dogms to the end of the periods; and that in the times we here treat of, certain obscure traditions, ascribing six thousand years duration to the world from its being created, induced people to think, that since they were entered upon the seven thousandth of its existence, the great week

\* was very near being accomplished, and that this

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*\* We even find, in the history of the primitive church, that its chronology gave six thousand years to the*

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last thousand teemed with the coming of the grand Sabbath of Israel, the stated time for the triumph and repose of the just.

BEING struck and prepossessed with this chimerical notion, a people more superstitious than all the others, and that was diffused throughout an extensive pagan empire, fancied that an individual, who had rendered himself remarkable by a singularity of life, was the great judge, and the sublime personage which had been foretold by all the futurity-retailing oracles, and impostors of heathen antiquity, sibylline, and others \*.

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*the duration of the world, and that the expectation of the Messiah was so regulated by this period; that the Christians laboured to confute the Jews by their own annals, and their own traditions. The people of the eastern and western nations, were actuated alike by the same doctrine. Plutarch, in the lives of Marius and Sylla, says, that about the year 82, before the vulgar æra, the predictors of futurity in Tuscany, had already foretold the end of the great year, and the approach of the grand renovation of the world*

\* Every body knows that *7. C.* speaks often in the gospel of the end of the world, of which great truth the pagan world

THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 83

THE wrong application which was made by this extravagant idea, of the dogm concerning the true great judge, failed not to produce errors corresponding therewith, that bore an affinity to the two others, and which, as we have said, were inseparable from the first. The end of the world seemed then to be at hand. The nations were penetrated with the dread of the last judgment. An horrible fanaticism was spread all over the earth: the reign of justice was proclaimed; and in order to preach repentance and the renunciation of all things here below, some among those superstitious pagans really imagined to themselves, that the kingdom of their deity was come, although there was a multitude of circumstances to powerfully evince the contrary. Others imagined to themselves, that the assumed deity, who had only just shewn himself, would soon return to reign a thou-

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*world had got a confused notion, and blended it with their absurdities. When St. Paul attempted to speak of the last judgment before the Areopagus, and before Felix the præfect of the Romans, they treated his doctrine with scorn, and turned their backs upon him, Acts of the Apost. chap. 17 and 24. N. B. It had not yet pleased the Omnipotent to permit their eyes being opened to the rays of truth.*

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land years upon the earth, there to operate the felicity of the just, and to make them heirs of every delicious enjoyment. Hence, no doubt, was suggested to Mahomet the idea of his voluptuous paradise.

THIS last opinion, (which, not unlike to that dreamed of by popish superstition, was called Millennium) being destroyed by time, and by the event (after, however, having produced a-new, in other ages of ignorance, the same follies\*) the apocalyptic minds grew weary of calculating. The marvellous reign was no longer expected, and man become more rational, transferred the event to the end of time, without presuming to fix it. But he was not, for that, less the dupe of what had passed; and though he has since endeavoured to raise, prop up, and plaster in the best manner he could, the ruinous foundation of an abortive superstition, whose chimeras and extravagancies were adopted

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\* I here mean the terrours of the eleventh century, which were but a sequel of the antient. It is well known that the follies then committed were the scandal of Europe, and the triumph of the monks, through which miscreants, pure and unsophisticated christianity had greatly suffered.

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 85

adopted in the days of unenlightened antiquity; he persevered in a ridiculous and mystical idolatry, which from that time, through his forefathers, had been transmitted to him: and in this state are now actually all not rightly informed of the true religion\*.

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\* The first events of popish superstition have always been so palliated and disguised, that it was not a small undertaking to shew them in their genuine light; and the more so, as its abettors had suppressed every thing that made against it; and that they preferred to throw a thick veil of obscurity on the first times, rather than preserve a light that could not be advantageous to it. However, the historians that are extant, and some contemporary philosophical writings, may contribute greatly to give some insight into those times, by detailed, but very important, anecdotes. Tacitus, Suetonius, Porphyrius, Lucian in his Philopater, can give us great assistance on this head. We must also examine what was the spirit of the persecutions, that in the first ages, philosophers, mathematicians, astrologers, Jews, and Christians, were made to undergo; and then collect the several details of the doctrine of the first fathers of the church, relating to the end of the world, their favourite topic, as is to be seen throughout their works; and in their opinions, compiled in the first volume of the  
Historical

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THIS slight sketch of the great picture which will exhibit to us one day the famous sources of superstition, is also a sketch of the first human errors. It was in their time, and then too occasioned by the disasters of the world, that all those absurd opinions took possession of the human mind, and that they therein produced such a multitude of monstrous prejudices, of which it has always been the victim.

If these prejudices appeared to be new in the first age of our vulgar æra, that was through their having been, as it were, whelmed for a long series of time under the enormous lumber of those very errors which they themselves had engendered; wherefore a new panic terrour, like to the ancient, then roused them up, restored to superstition her former complexion, and brought implicit man back  
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*Historical and Polemical Treatise on the End of the World, and the coming of Elias, published at Rotterdam, 1737. After having made these researches we are to try, by the standard of the strictest philosophy, the books of the New Testament, particularly of the evangelists and the apocalypse; for thereby will be demonstrated, in the teeth of all opponents, their just value; and never to be forgotten by the christian world.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 87

to the very point from which he had primitively departed, although he had lost all remembrance of it.

If any apology were to be made for those who let themselves be deceived by ridiculous chimeras; it could only be for the spectators of the revolutions of the earth, who were stunned and affrighted by catastrophes as terrifying as real; whereas, in the second epoch, superstition had no other principles to erect her edifice upon, but false calculations, contemptible predictions, which the very state of nature was repugnant to, and convicted of fallacy and imposture.

YET it was by this very nature, and by the whole universe, that man had been formerly seduced. How could he refrain, on seeing the tremendous phenomena of an universe destroyed, from the recalling to his mind those dogms, sacred and respectable in themselves; of which he could not indeed discover the end to which they precisely tended, although he could not mistake all the signs and all the approaches thereof. His eyes and his reason seemed to give him warning every moment, and to justify his terrour. His wretchedness and misery being consummate, left him no room for,  
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and the comfort administered by religion appeared to him the only anchor of hope; he therefore gave himself up to it without reserve; he waited resignedly for the fatal day; he prepared himself for it; he even desired it, so deplorable was his condition upon earth.

THE arrival of the grand judge, and the reign of the future life, thus became, in the midst of all these grievous circumstances, the only point of view towards which man looked with a religious and impassioned avidity, as the term of all his misfortunes. He had it constantly present in his mind while the place of his abode was agitated by violence and fermentation; and those dogms had taken such deep root, that nature, which doubtless recovered but by degrees, was at last entirely re-inflated, while man continued in a state of expectation.

SUCH was the religious disposition of the human mind, when societies, already multiplied and re-united, betook themselves to give a new turn to their civil administration, and to think of electing a king.

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THEIR thoughts being engrossed by heaven, they forgot, in this critical juncture, that they were as yet upon the earth; wherefore, instead of giving to their government a natural cement, they sought after a supernatural one: and that they might not lose sight of the heavenly kingdom, to which they incessantly aspired, they imagined they might represent it here below, by acknowledging no other monarch but God alone. They must have fancied, that through this sublime speculation they should anticipate their promised glory and happiness; should enjoy heaven upon earth: so be before-hand with too slow-paced futurity, which religion had so often painted to them in the most beautiful colours. This speculation of theirs was, however, the source of all their misfortunes, and of all their errors. Mankind, in consequence of its choice, was very willing to apply the principles of the reign above to the reign here below, and the far greater part of those principles turned out to be false, because they were misplaced. This government being merely a fiction, was under the necessity of being supported by a multitude of suppositions; and these suppositions, in process of time, were taken for truths; whence resulted a crowd of religious and political prejudices, which  
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plunged primitive religion and polity into a frightful abyss.

IT was thus the nations, after having derived from good sense and nature, their domestic, æconomical, and civil laws, subjected them all to a chimera, which they entitled the Reign of the Deity, but which we have called Theocracy\*.

I HAVE avoided entering into a detail of all the differences to be found in the various superstitious opinions of the first ages, concerning the great judge; because superstition being ever devoid of uniform principles, there then must have of course sprung up different sects, different systems of religious worship, and there is one which, in my sense, ought not to be omitted.

THE opinion which we have now exhibited, did not relate to the great judge as arrived, but his kingdom appeared to be so near at hand, that in order to become worthy thereof, it was judged, that

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\* This word signifies the same thing whether derived from the Hebrew or the Greek, The Town, the city of God.

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that society should conduct itself before, as if it was upon the point of appearing. This manner of thinking was not irrational; and nothing disadvantageous to the human kind would have thence resulted, if people had given into it with reserve; with a discreet and moderate zeal; but there then existed another opinion infinitely absurd and irrational, whose consequences were cruel and fatal: to wit, the opinion that the coming and the reign of the great Judge were, in reality, arrived. This induced people to think that his descent here below had been performed in an invisible manner, and that the ruin of the world was the evident effect, and the manifest proof thereof. The evils which had been felt, and the great changes which had been seen throughout all nature, were construed to be the acts of his vengeful judgments; and as the greatest part of the human race then perished, while but a very small number was saved, it was natural for those who gave into the opinions, to conclude, that all those whom the great Judge had exterminated, were found unworthy of dwelling upon the earth which he had renewed: and that those who had the good fortune to survive his formidable judgments, were the elect, the just, who had found grace in his eyes.

IN consequence of such false ideas an absurd application was made of all the dogms. The renovated world was confounded with the future life, that is earth with heaven. People imagined themselves entered into the age of felicity, and complaisantly looked upon themselves as that special portion of chosen creatures to whom the land of the just was promised and given; and over whom afterwards the Deity alone was to reign and preside.

ALTHOUGH the followers of this system agreed in some points with the adherents to the preceding opinion they formed a particular species of men who believed themselves to be nearer to the Divinity than any other mortals, and were always studious to distinguish themselves by a more than human, or a more mystical manner of living: wherein will one day be traced the primitive origin of religious orders known among the Sabeans, Pagans and Jews, long before christianity, which, from imitating, was debased by them. But such a research now would make us stray too far from our subject. I shall only take notice that the opinions of this sect have been the œconomical and political basis of many very ancient nations, who conducted themselves less as a civil, than

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as religious society; which rendered these nations the scourge of all others. For, as they confounded the world renewed, with the reign of the future life promised to the just, they were filled with a spirit of conquest, and instigated by a turbulent and ambitious hope of being possessed one day of the universal monarchy by right of inheritance. It was consequent to this fatal mistake that the Hebrews exterminated the Canaanites, to become masters of their country, as of a land promised by the Deity of their ancestors. Up to the same source will be traced all those pretended oracles, all those obscure promises of the gods, under whose sanction the Romans, fraught with intrepidity and confidence continued their march firmly and assuredly to the empire of the world.

SECTION VIII.

*The remembrance of the antient Theocracies is swallowed up by time; the fables only preserve any traces thereof.*

IN order to fix in antiquity that Theocratic government, to which all the first societies submitted themselves, it would be an act of diffimulation not to confess, that history faileth us in this

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this point; that she neither now can, nor ever will be able to furnish us with direct proofs, and much less with examples. The times wherein Theocracies flourished upon earth are so far back removed into the obscure gloom of the first ages, that we can discover but a very weak remembrance even in remotest antiquity. The monarchs and doctors being men, were interested in extinguishing it entirely; so that the weak vestiges which remained were afterwards swallowed by fables, and confounded with a heap of obscure allegories, and ridiculous traditions; of which history always scorned to take any notice; and they are now confined to the province of mythology through which they have been transmitted to us.

I am, therefore, reduced to research for the traces and residuary impressions of primitive Theocracy in these darksome paths; which will be but of little avail to authenticate these researches in the eyes of the far greater number, who either condemn the mythological times, or do not know them. They will please but a very small number of superiour minds, whose sagacity, seconded by knowledge, is alone capable to seize the whole of all the human errors; to discern the proof of an historical fact, before unknown, in the credit  
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given to an universal error; and then to retrograde from the error to the truth, or to the event from which it took its rise, by a judicious combination of all the different aspects of the said error.

THIS term of universality and uniformity affected by certain opinions in all times, and in all climates, seems to disclose, to a rational mind, a solid, a certain principle, and not the capricious and absurd effects of the imagination of the poets, and other writers of antiquity; purposely calculated in favour of the subject, which is here treated: and is to be found in the constant traditions of the most ancient nations of the world, when they mention the reign of the gods upon the earth; which preceded the reign of the demigods, and that of kings, whereof they have almost distinguished the three successive epochs. Without citing here the Egyptians, Phenicians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, and the inhabitants of ancient Italy, whose mythological Theocracies have disgusted all our chronologists, the Indians, the Japanese, and even the very Americans, have all preserved the remembrance of a time when their country had been honoured by the presence of the gods, who were descended upon earth to fix the happiness of mortals, to civilize and give laws

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laws to them. The fabulous duration of those periods is almost ever regulated by the grand periods, and astronomical numbers. The particular motives for such descents, as given by all the nations, are the misery and calamities the world groaned under. One came, according to the Indians, to support\* the shaken earth that was sinking under the waters; another came to assist the sun against the great dragon that warred against him; a third descended to combat the monsters and giants that spread havoc among the human race; and a fourth, to exterminate the perverted nations.

I will not quote all the wars and victories of the gods, or of the Greeks, or of the Egyptians, over the Pythons, the Typhons, the Titans, and the giants; they are too generally known, as well as this fact: that to celebrate the remembrance of them was the object of all the grand festivals in the pagan world.

Let us now turn our eyes to what climate we please, we there shall find this extraordinary tradition

\* *Relig. Cerem. vol. vi.*

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dition of a Theocratic age, and we may observe, that independently of the uniformity of prejudices that make known any event whatsoever, this singular one is therein marked out as to have been very near the first revolutions of nature, inasmuch as the reign of the gods is therein ornamented and replete with all the literal and allegorical anecdotes of the ruin and the re-establishment of the world. It would be labour in vain, and even a folly to pretend to enter into a detail to justify all the fables that have any affinity with these wonderful reigns, or to contend seriously, or to hunt after authorities to support the long duration given by the nations to the empire of their gods. Let us be contented for the present with the striking whole that thence results, and from its aspect alone form a judgment of the picture in general. For although these annals be fabulous, as to the point of duration, the facts, or wrong application of facts, they cannot be false in the main; because they treat not of an imaginary age, that ought to be retrenched from the history of the world, as hath hitherto been done; but of a real age, and of a real state, which may be very well made to square with the antient state of mankind, according as we have discovered and traced out its progress.

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THE Hebrews seem to shew us, in a more distinct manner, a true historical epoch, and a memorable example of the antient Theocracies; of whose authority I might here avail myself, without the necessity of plunging into the gloom of fabulous ages: but notwithstanding the respect we have for the very antique annals of this people, in philosophical disquisitions of the kind, they are not to be held in a different light from those of other nations.

Josua, Deborah, Barak, Gedeon, Jaïr, Jephthé, Booz, Abedon, Samson, Ruth, Noemi, with all the heroes and heroines of the Jewish Theocracies, have been known among the nations, as their Sun, their Osiris, their Apollo, their Mercury, their Ceres, their Cybele, and their Proserpine, &c.

ALL vestiges of truth to be found in the Jewish annals, or in the mythology of the pagans, are derived from the same source, the history of nature, however it has been abused\*. As the following

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\* The strong resemblance there is between a multitude of facts and personages in the Hebrew annals, and fabulous history, has been felt, known and examined by

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 99

lowing a just medium in all things, is the sure way not to err, let us neither despise the pagan Theocracies, wherein truth is concealed from us, nor let us, on the other hand, have an indiscriminating confidence in the Jewish Theocracy, when we meet any thing marvelously tinctured, and a-kin to the fables of other nations. This, however, is to be observed to the advantage of the Jewish annals, that they have more the true complexion

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*by several of the fathers of the church, commentators, and interpreters; but they have all misunderstood or palliated the origin and source thereof. Their most generally adopted system was to trace the pagan gods in the abuse which they asserted had been made by all the nations, of the books of Moses, and of the history of Judea. Whatever was the motive of these writers for so doing, they could not help being touched with the striking affinity observable between sacred antiquity and the profane. We shall not quote here the sentiments of several learned men in opposition to the system of the fathers; the maintaining of which throughout was not exempt from difficulties; which difficulties, however, about so antient a problem might be philosophically compromised in reasoning thus. If the origin of the gods and heroes of paganism can be derived from no other source*

## 100 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

plexion of history, their facts being better connected, and drawing nearer to us; but, like to others, they mystically contain one antient truth for the basis of all, as, with a little attention, is discernible throughout.

By thus refuting the most direct and most historical proof that seems to present itself in behalf of the subject which I treat, in order to bring it back to the class of those anticipating sentiments, which are excited by an uniform display of the mythology of all nations, it is not meant that

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*source but the abuse of the history of nature, and of the allegorical and symbolical figures of remote antiquity, as hath been clearly demonstrated by the author of the History of Heaven; then, arguing a Pari, a profane disputant would say to a true believer, From what other source can you make the patriarchs and Lawes, among the Hebrews, descend, who wear so strong a resemblance to, and have so close an affinity with these imaginary gods, that the analogy hath always been allowed by Jews and Christians. It is not unnatural to conclude, that two histories, or two fables, that are alike, have one common origin; and this is the general consequence drawn by Mr. Pluche, influenced*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 101

our researches should be confined here, but that a just value should be set upon this fund of Hebrew traditions, whence every advantage derivable can be attained, by considering them in the common point of light, by which means only they can be made to coincide on the general focus; wherefrom, through the concurrence of all fabulous annals, a light truly historical may be reflected; a light which cannot be obtained from them when separately considered, and as I may say, rendered divergent, by a national spirit, and prejudices imbibed.

I shall not here undertake the immense labour that would be requisite to compile for the Hebrews  
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*fluenced by a very extraordinary prejudice; because he has not profited of the luminous ray. "Paganism, says he, did not spring from Judaism, nor Judaism from Paganism: they are both indebted for what they have in common, to one common and only origin." Had this author, Mr. Pluche, been endowed with genius equal to the learning and knowledge displayed throughout his work, the History of Heaven would have been a great performance; but there prevails thro' the whole such a blind and persevering prejudice and such a narrowness of mind, that one would be induced to doubt, whether he has drawn from his own head the excellent materials of which he has made so bad a use.*

an History of Heaven, such as Mr. Pluche has done for the Egyptians; but there is another and not less considerable fund, wherein we may investigate the antient theocratic government, to wit, the religious and political works of nations, which, notwithstanding the corruption and disguising of their primitive motives, may mutually serve as a flambeau for each other, and so dissipate a great part of the darkness which the histories of the first ages of the world labour under.

LET us previously examine what must have been the usages and customs of our ancestors during their theocracy; and if we shall afterwards find those very usages, or the abuses which may have been made thereof among the nations, it will be a certain proof, that originally they were not ignorant of their real sources.

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SECTION IX.

*What have been the theocratic usages? These usages and the abuses sprung from their being corrupted, are discoverable in all nations.*

THE theocratic state having been adopted and esteemed by mankind, as a civil and a political state, one of their first cares was to provide, among themselves, a representation of the house of the monarch deity, and in that house to make choice of a particular part for his residence, and to distinguish it with his throne being placed there; where, doubtless, they assembled to pay their homage to, as well as to receive orders and ask favours from, him: in fine, it was there they offered up their vows and prayers.

THESE institutions were, at first, no more than allegorically ceremonial, but, in process of time, were taken in the literal sense; all the civil usages became religious ones. It was held a duty to have recourse to God in all public and particular affairs. Religion engrossed polity, of which she erected herself the sovereign arbitress, and in proportion as she extended her temporal rights, she became

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became corrupt and of quite another nature. The house of the monarch-deity, and his throne, were by little and little perverted into her temple and her sanctuary. Mankind imagining that the supreme Being was fonder of this place than any other, was soon persuaded that he actually resided there. Their ideas about the Divinity grew narrower every day; instead of considering temples as places of assembling to offer up public prayers, and deserving of every respect on account of its true and only destination, they sought their sovereign, whom they believed to be an inmate there; and as they could not approach him, they soon erected a representative there and adored it.

THE supreme Being, then considered as the King of society, the insignia of authority, and the sceptre of empire, could not be put into the hands of any particular, and were therefore deposited in the house, and on the throne of the celestial monarch, to wit, in the temple, and in the most respectable part of it, called the sanctuary. The sceptre and the other insignia of the royal authority, were, in the first age, no more than a staff and branches, the temples were cots, and the sanctuary a basket or a coffer, as we learn from all antiquity.

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## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 105

IN the commemorative festivals of the early state of mankind, which the Japanese \* yet keep up, they represent on the scene all the rustic appendages of primitive authority; they explain thereby to us particular solemnities and particular mysteries known among the Egyptians and Greeks; among whom the same emblems are discoverable. Every body knows the history of Aaron's rod; it comes from the same origin; being deposited in the sanctuary and in the ark, it was primitively the sceptre of the monarch deity; but, in process of time, became among the Hebrews the distinguishing mark of the supreme magistracy in the family of Levi; because, in the theocratic government, the priests had been its natural officers and ministers, they soon erected themselves into rightful sovereigns, as shall be seen in the sequel.

ANCIENT history has preserved another anecdote that confirms what I have declared relative to the usages, and the progress of the abuses which followed; she informeth us, that the first temples contrived by men to supersede cottages, and even caverns, which before had served in their stead, were for a long time but simple enclosures, wherein no representatives of the divinity were enclosed,

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\* See *Kempfer*.

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although they were crowded with them in the following ages.

IT being judged improper, that the code of civil and religious laws should be entrusted to the hands of any particular magistrate, it was deposited in the sanctuary, and to that sacred place recourse was to have been had to be informed of the laws, and to learn one's duty. Of this usage we have innumerable instances, both in Hebrew and Pagan antiquity. Every temple had a basket, a coffer, and an ark, where the sacred ratifications of authority and legislation were deposited with a religious veneration; which dwindled among most of the nations, into so deplorable a superstition, that things were come to that dire extreme, by confounding the laws with the legislative deity, people no longer dared to look on those instructive insignia of power, without the fear of death and the dread of being exterminated.

IN the festivals among the pagans, called, the legislative festivals, such as the *Palilia*, and the *Theismophoria*, the principal object of the ceremonial was become a tremendous secret, and the people were not at all to be let into the arcana of the mysterious duties they were bounden to observe.

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THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 107

THE most concealed part of the festivals of Iris, of Ceres, and of Cybele, in the mysteries practised by the Smaothracians, and among the Etrusci, had primitively no other object in view but to teach mankind how to live well, in order to come to an happy end; but to instruct them concerning the order and the subject of the festivals, as well as to animate them to labour and industry. But from that time the code of such useful precepts was deposited in the sanctuary, there to be reserved for a small number of the initiated, who after a long probation, were made to promise by most tremendous oaths that they would never reveal any part of them to the vulgar\*: so true it

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\* *The keeping these mysteries a secret was by so much the more criminal, as they had no other object in view but the welfare of mankind. "Those admitted to these initiations (said Socrates) are cheered with pleasing hopes for the hour of their death, and for eternity." "These initiations have been instituted (says Epictetus) to regulate the life of man, and free it from all disorders." "All that is to be learned therein (says Cicero) are no more than the truths necessary for the regulation of our conduct here below." "By mysteries (says he in another place) we have been*

is, that the priesthood, instituted for conducting man in the right path, hath in all times dreaded lest he should come to a knowledge of it, and walk faithfully therein.

FROM the time that the spirit of Theocracy found it absolutely expedient that the deposit of laws, preserved in the sanctuary, should appear to have emanated from the Deity, and that it should be believed he was the legislator as he was the monarch of mankind; it became gradually necessary

*been taught the means of subsisting; and the precepts therein conveyed were instituted to teach mankind to live in peace, and with moderation to one another, and to die in the hope of a better futurity." It is obvious to conclude, from these important truths preserved as mysteries of paganism, that paganism would never have existed, but through the priests, who, in theocratic times, assumed to themselves the despotism both of the polity and of religion; instead of subjecting themselves to the public polity; on the contrary, they looked on their important deposit as their own property, with which, however, they had only been intrusted. We hence may deduce this just remark, that it was then with idolatry as it is with the religious systems now-a-days: the moral part is good, but the historical execrable.*

fary to have recourse to fallacy and imposture, in order to imagine a manner by which those laws had been conveyed upon earth. To that end it was necessary to suppose marvellous and supernatural revelations, and to make them be brought down from the heavens. It was also necessary to suppose their having been pronounced, and even written by the Deity, or by the gods and goddesses. It was necessary too to trace their origin on flaming mountains, in uninhabited deserts, in gloomy caverns and lonesome forests. These very laws the while, were engraved on the heart of man, and the public sense of primitive society was its only source and genuine organ.

By such horrid lies mankind was robbed of the honour of those laws so beautiful, so simple, and whose institution took place at the renovation of society. Thus was the vigour and the dignity of man's reason weakened, by making him erroneously to believe it incapable of conducting him; although it is the special privilege, the chief object of that sublime, and almost divine gift conferred by the Omnipotent on man alone in this world.



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THE supposed necessity of manifestations from above to teach men their duty, is an antient system that has often proved fatal, by producing the greatest evils in society; the discredit into which they made human reason fall among the greatest part of mankind, renders the evils caused by mystic legislators, almost irreparable\*.

IF imposture has always had recourse to investigate the origin of laws in desarts, the reason is apparent, that she might lie with more intrepidity, and less hazard of being refuted. A conduct so open to suspicion, was, however, the less doubted of then, as it coincided with some other prejudices which had also derived their source from the antient impressions caused by the disasters of the world.

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*\* The only means to repair the evils produced by such a doctrine (as often as censurable!) and to render men as wise and happy as their condition here below will allow, is to inspire them with a love, an esteem and respect for their reason, and to make these three sentiments the basis of all education. By such a method the face of the world may one day be changed: and the consequences derivable from this love, this esteem, and this respect, compose the true code of man's conduct, his morals, his religion, and philosophy.*

THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 111

world. As these disasters were ascribed to the descent and presence of the great judge, so it was afterwards believed, that this great judge was so tremendous and formidable, that he could not be manifested without the destruction of the world. Consequent to this opinion he was ever after made to descend behind a veil, amidst obscure and gloomy clouds in remote desarts, although the motive which they feigned for his coming down, was to give laws, and do good to the human race.

FROM this cause in the days of fallacy is derived the ductile imbecility of mankind. Hence was also sprung another opinion, not only of pagan, but even of Jewish antiquity; that the consequence of seeing God was death. The dogm of the apparition of the great judge, as well as that of the end of the world, being both inseparably connected; man was under a necessity of believing his ruin certain, and imminent, when, in imagination, he had seen this formidable being.

As the monarch-deity could not give his mandates to society in a direct manner, a necessity arose of inventing means to come at the knowledge of his will and pleasure; wherefore Theocratists, by an absurd convention, established signs upon earth

## 112 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM

earth and in heaven which were to be revered as the interpreters of the invisible sovereign. The Hebrews, for example, used to go and consult the Urim and the Tummim, which were twelve precious stones, called Sights and Perfections, because they imagined that the different rays which shone from them declared the will of the Supreme. The Egyptians had an oracle to the like purpose\*, which they called Truth. There was one in every nation. Then burst upon the world a crowd of pretendedly inspired folks; of conjurers, fortune-tellers (besides the prophets, the truly inspired); there also appeared sooth-sayers, diviners, and a multitude of revelation-mongers of every sort, to mislead mankind. Wherefore, as in matters of polity, so in articles of religion, man ceased to consult his reason. He imagined a special order, or particular advice from heaven, necessary for the rule of his conduct, enterprizes, and every transaction of life; and as the priests had assumed to themselves the office of intermediate organs between heaven and earth, all the nations dwindled into their slaves, their victims and their dupes.

NOTE

\* *Elian, Varro, and Diadorus, speak of this oracle.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 113

NOTWITHSTANDING all the efforts of imposture to disguise the true origin of laws, the being herself liable, on account of her natural ignorance, to follow the received prejudices at the very time she was inventing new ones; she was not able to entirely efface with her fables, the remaining vestiges of antient truth.

WE have observed, that both the subject and the object of the first laws, and of the first opinions, since the renovation of the world, were to repair the evils suffered by mankind; to provide for its subsistence, and contribute to the multiplication of what had survived the general wreck; to encourage inventions and inventors, and to stamp upon the heart of man the sensations of gratitude, of fear, by frequently painting a-new to him the pristine phenomena of the destruction of the world. Might not a code of the laws, instituted conformable to these views, be called the Code of the World saved; and might not this, perhaps, be the title that is secreted from us by the title of the Mosaic Code, which the Hebrew laws bear? Such a title, in the Egyptian language, Egypt being a flat and maritime country, must have signified, the Code of the Earth saved from the Waters; or, of the Earth saved from the

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Waters: as the code of the laws of Zoroaster, called Zenda-Vesta, might have signified in Persia, and in the mountains of Upper Asia, the Code of the Land saved from Fire. A crowd of authorities, that it would be tedious for me here to enumerate, but which are to be found, even in the Hebrew writings, in their festivals, their usages, and all their traditions, make me enforce these surmizes into an absolute certainty\*.

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\* By means of the particular researches which I have made concerning the new solemnities of the Hebrews, and by comparing them with certain festivals of Athens, Syria, and other nations having an affinity with the deluges of Ogyges, Deucalion, and Prometheus, it can be evidently demonstrated, that Easter, Pentecost, the festival of the tabernacles, and other commemorations took their rise from the miseries of mankind, destroyed and renovated; therefore, the origin here ascribed to the Mosaic code can be asserted to be more than a surmize; which discovery is the solution of all the accounts given by travellers of their having found almost in every country Mosaic institutions. It is not hereby meant that the laws of Moses had ever reached to so many places; but that the usages and the customs of the Hebrews are, for the most part, commemorations of the ancient disasters of the world, which

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 115

IT is from the epithet Mosean or Mosaic, which had been given to the laws, to the usages, and to the hymns of ancient Egypt; and from the epithet Zerdust or Zend, which had been given to the institutes of Upper Asia, that have been fabricated the Muses or Musei\*: the Mosefes, the Zoroasters.

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Zoroasters.

*which have been general and universal, and made every where the same impression on the human mind.*

\* Mr. Pluche, although he has acknowledged the origin of the Muses, or Musei, evasively slides over Moses. The like may be said of Menés, Minos, and Numa, who, from their names signifying legislation, have been styled legislative kings. Hence also are derived the hymns of Orpheus, singing the enemy of the world "thrown upon his back." A great poet was made by personifying the characteristic epithet of said hymns. The Canticles of Apollo, the victorious god, and great musician; the psalms of king David, the great singer, and the only conqueror the Jews ever had, ought both the one and the other to have the same origin. Apollo signifies the destroyer, the conqueror of the enemy, because he had combatted with the serpent Pytho, a monster sprung from the deluge; his canticles celebrated the victory he had obtained over him. David is radically derived from Aved, Avadden, and Aveddach, loss, destruction, and truly signifies the Ex-

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Zoroasters, which were at first but titles of legislation, but afterwards were metamorphosed, either into poets who had sung, as is reported, the origin of the world; or into legislators, some of whom had been saved from water, others from fire.

THE whole plan of the national history of the Hebrews, almost constantly moves upon the dark traces of the natural history of the world: it was after infinite hardships and sufferings, that they received their laws upon mount Sinai, in the midst of nature all convulsed.

Egypt, that land of anguish, wherein they had so long dwelt, was almost entirely exterminated by

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*Exterminator. The psalms resound with the end of the world, and the coming of the great judge. Their title most commonly implies "for the end;" an expression which has been but little understood hitherto, as well as many other obscure passages in the psalms, that, however, will all vanish, the moment we wean our thoughts from David, or the Messiah, to substitute in their stead an allegorical and commemorative personage, commemorative of instruction, concerning what was past, as well as what was to come. Such among the Phenicians was the death and resurrection of Adonis.*

THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 117

by fire, by water, by darkness, by pestilence, by famine, and every apocalyptic scourge. These very Hebrews, before they had penetrated into the wretched country which they called their promised land, had suffered in the Desert during forty years, such excessive misery, that a new generation succeeded, and that all those who had seen their former habitation, did not inherit the new one. They were continually destroyed in a savage and arid land, either by fire, or swallowed up in gulphs, or assaulted by giants, or dragons, or afflicted with hunger and thirst. They were ever wandering, and pouring forth incessant complaints and groans, occasioned by their new plagues and new calamities.

PRAY, is not this the veritable picture of the distressed and antient state of mankind, of the transition from the antient world to the new, which it is very apparent the Hebrews laid hold on to appropriate it to themselves, in order to make particular anecdotes thereof to embellish their own marvellous history,

I shall no longer pursue this interesting subject, but rest satisfied in making this farther remark, that the history of their miseries, and of their fa-  
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mous passage into the land of Promise immediately precedes their historical account of Theocracy amongst them; as the ancient disasters of the world had preceded the Theocracies, which were consequent to them.

WE have now hitherto seen, in part, what have been the moral and historical errors with which theocratic societies were infected, by giving up the deposit of the laws, and of authority, to the priests, as officers of the sanctuary, and ministers of the sovereign great Judge. And errors to the full as absurd and deplorable have been derived from the tributes, which the people thought it a duty to pay them. It is very probable, that in the infancy of society, no other imposts, or tributes, were paid to the supreme Being, except the first fruits of the earth, which they received from his beneficent hand; and that said homage was rather an exterior act of gratitude than a real tribute, which is not wanted by the supreme Disposer of things. But matters were quite altered, when, from an universal Being, he was contracted into the particular sovereign over each associated body. Then (as we have already said) a house, a throne, officers, minister,

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nisters, and, in fine, a revenue sufficient for their support were deemed necessary.

THEN it was that people carried to the temple the tythe of their goods, of the crop of their lands, and of their flocks. From a conviction of their holding every thing from the goodness of their Divine master, a judgment may easily be formed of the zeal with which every one hastened to offer up all that could contribute to heighten the state and magnificence of his monarch; nay, it rose to such a degree, as to impel over-zealots to offer up themselves, their family, and their children. They thought they might, without any dishonour, profess themselves the slaves of that power by whom we were all created free; and thereby man degraded himself into the subject, and the slave of an hypocritical priesthood; but not of the deity. These greedy ministers devoured alone whatever gifts were brought to the temple, and devoutly shared among themselves the visible tythes paid to the invisible sovereign. Through pretext of the kingdom of heaven, they erected themselves into the rulers of the kingdom of the earth; and their avarice being in proportion to the simplicity of the people, new stratagems were daily laid to ensnare their pious generosity.

FOR



quent sacrifices of animals, to join the horrid idea, that the Divinity loves and rejoices in blood. This blasphemous notion being once established, the next blow was to strike the priestly knife into the throats of men, and let loose the purple torrent of that blood, which, according to their hellish doctrine, was the most valuable and the most pleasing in his eyes.

Nothing, it is to be hoped, like this atrocious manner of thinking, can be said to be the basis of the christian religion, when preserved in its purity. What good protestant but detests the horrors practised in Portugal, and all the mystic cruelties of popery? Nay, what says an unenlightened pagan on this head? to wit, Plutarch! \* "Is that a method of adoring the supreme Being? What a dishonour is reflected on the Divinity, by supposing him thirsty of human blood, greedy of slaughter, or even capable of exacting, or being pleased with such sacrifices? If the Typhons and the giants had conquered heaven, could they have established upon earth more abominable sacrifices?" What an instructive reproach is here uttered by one

\* Plutarch on Superstition, p. 169, 171.

one of those men called Pagans, and which would even puzzle the most orthodox christian teachers to explain (if not warranted by the true prophets, the word of the most high and by sacred revelation, doubted of by none but abandoned infidels) why the blood of all mankind, being insufficient to appease the irritated Deity, nothing less than an effusion of divine blood was judged adequate.

LET not any profane wretch dare to assert, that this was a refining on fanaticism, and the horrors above delineated: no; this is a mystery, if not conceivable by our weak senses, as the fathers of the church say, to be trembled at and believed by all the faithful, saying with them, *O profunditas! O altitudo! O impenetrabilitas consiliorum Dei.* "O profundity! O altitude! O impenetrability of the councils of the Deity!"

THE tenths which were but the tribute due to the royalty of the supreme Being were employed to support the priesthood in their luxurious pride. They became their annexed property, *jure divino*, by right divine\*: and whereas under a

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\* During the Theocracy the Tenths belonged to the Deity, as sovereign; but when the Jews changed this

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government entirely religious, entirely mystical, all secret faults, and impleadable foulness \*, were swelled into crimes against their civil law. The priests found it their interest to extend all such sinful and criminal cases to an infinite number, because the mulcts, the expiations, and the victims, which resulted from them, increased the treasure and plentiful provision made for the great judge, that is, for his ministers.

THERE is another article I might expatiate upon, which is the numerous detail of moveables and utensils that were devoted to the monarch-deity; but so singular an inventory would carry us too far from our present purpose. Be it sufficient here

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*this mystic form of government, and elected kings, then the kings received the tenths.*

Book of Kings, chap. vii. ver 15.

\* *The legal ordinances of all the ancient nations, are derived in part from the simplicity of their age, as neither luxury nor magnificence was known among them; the only practicable decorations that could, in those times, be insisted on, was for the people's presenting themselves in a manner suitable before the monarch, that was, with*

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here to premise, that their cattle, their bucklers \*, their arms, and even the entire flocks of black cattle and horses, &c. that had been consecrated to their gods by all antiquity, were, in the primitive reign of theocracy, the equipages and domains appropriated to the invisible monarch, and were particularly employed in certain festivals, during which it was imagined that the deity was descended upon earth.

LET us now proceed to one of the most fatal effects derived from theocratic government.

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*with an extreme cleanness of their persons; because the least foulness was an act of indecency, punishable by the law: and as imagination is ever fertile to create such, so superstition is a zealous assistant to increase the number, especially in the hot climates.*

\* *Rome had her consecrated bucklers, every body knows; but a due attention has never been paid to the golden bucklers in the temple of Jerusalem.*



SECTION X.

*Theocracy produceth idolatry.*

**I**T is so difficult for man, to form to himself the idea of a great, powerful, immense, and, at the same time, invisible Being, without the auxiliary intervention of some striking and sensible ideas and comparisons, that it was found almost unavoidable, in Theocracies, to exhibit a representation of him. The supreme Being was then more frequently brought into action than in our days, because, that independent of his name and quality of the God-head, he was, moreover, king: wherefore, frequent mention was made of him in all the acts relating to polity, or to religion. His edicts and decrees were manifested every where: his laws were obeyed, tribute was paid to him. His officers, his palace, were objects visible to every eye, and even the particular apartment for his abiding was pointed out to them; wherefore they soon gave it an inmate. Some placed therein a common, others a sculptured, stone; some the image of the sun, others that of the moon: other nations exhibited there an ox, a goat, a dog, a cat; and the representative signs of the monarch-deity

deity were set off with all the symbolical attributes of a deity and a king. They were decorated with all the sublime titles belonging to him, whose emblems they were. It was before them that the praises of, and the prayers to, the supreme Being were offered up; that all acts of polity, or of religion, were performed; and, in fine, all the ceremonial of theocracy. Let not the reader think mankind as yet far gone in idolatry, this is only the fatal avenue leading to it.

I REJECT the horrid opinion, that men became idolaters of their own accord, by premeditated design, and that they ever could form a rational system for so doing, and executed it afterwards. Such an opinion is as contrary to philosophy, as it would prove dishonourable to humanity. I still more heartily reject the opinion of Cumberland\*, and of some other authors, who have aimed at proving, that idolatry was established upon earth through hatred of just men, and of the supreme Being. Never was the human race so far abandoned in its most erroneous state, as to have entirely lost all knowledge

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\* An English writer who commented on the Fragments of Sanchoniaton.

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ledge of the existence and unity of the God-head; nor did they make a rapid transition all at once, from the adoration of their Creator to that of the creature. They degenerated into idolatry imperceptibly, and without having intended it; as they afterwards dwindled into slaves; without having harboured any previous desire of sinking into thralldom.

THE primitive religion of man was corrupted, and his love for Unity was gradually overcast with darkness. Ignorance made a slow and imperceptible progress, through the forgetfulness of what was passed; through the too grand apparatus of an exterior worship; through the suppositions necessary to be made for the better supporting a supernatural government; and through the neglect of instructions of the utmost importance. Thus, in a worship and a polity, entirely figurative, these instructions were degenerated, because the sacerdotal order, by which they should be given, was itself in a state of degeneracy; nay, was become almost as ignorant as the people, and certainly more covetous, as they were more immediately interested than the people to see a multiplied increase of the tributes, and of the victims; as also a multiplied increase of the presents to be made

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made to, as well as of the emblems of the monarch-deity. The like happened a long time after, and other ages of ignorance and avarice were productive of a multiplicity of saints: see the popish legends.

WE may, without straining matters, suppose that every nation having rendered its god a visible monarch, more through simplicity than any idolatrous interest, deported themselves, for some time, in the presence of his emblems with a devout and cautious circumspection, because they had meant less the representation of the deity than of the monarch.

THUS in our tribunals of justice, before the magistrates\*, is placed the picture of the sovereign, which calls to mind every instant by the resemblance, and the royal robes, the true sovereign, who, though not visible in person there, is very well known to exist elsewhere, and to abide in such a palace, where he may be approached, if there should intervene any necessity of having recourse to his justice. Such a picture cannot deceive, and is only fixed there for us, as a re-

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\* In France.

lative and commemorative object. Such, doubtless, were the first images of the deity. If our forefathers were notwithstanding led into error thereby; if, through a series of time, they lost sight of their first intentions, the reason is obvious, it was not so easy for them to paint the deity, as it is for us to paint a mortal man.

IN fact, what affinity could there be betwixt the reigning deity and all the different effigies that had been made of it? There could be no other affinity but an imaginary one, and of mere convention\*, fraught with the always adherent consequence

\* Mankind really instituted conventional references: because the deity provides for our subsistence, some chose to represent him by the ox that labours, or the cow that gives milk. As he watches and sees incessantly, others chose a cat, because the eyes of that animal shine in the night: many made choice of a dog, on account of his being the safeguard and faithful superintendant for the family. They who were more enlightened, and from a knowledge that the deity could not be represented by any figure, yet were desirous, through the means of simple objects to elevate their thoughts to him, on certain times made choice of particular trees, particular shrubs, particular

sequence of degrading the deity, or the monarch, from the first cessation of accompanying it with instructive explanation. Hence, the worship and the polity, from simple, which they ought to be, became compounded and allegorical. Hence, the sacerdotal agents saw the necessity of their numbers being encreased, and how much the people should stand in need of their ministry. There was formed at that time a new and capricious science, appropriated to the priesthood, who were still careful to render it more difficult for the common understanding, in order to enhance their own consequence.

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particular useful plants, or even a stone. But the greatest number made choice of the sun and the moon: those who had made their choice of a stone, and other inanimate substances, to remind them of the deity, anointed them with oil: this ceremony, which in after-times, converted into an idolatrous consecration, was originally meant but as a mark to distinguish those objects from all others of the same kind; and to know them readily, because the stains of oil therein were not effaceable. It was, in process of time, imagined, that this manner of anointing communicated a virtue, nor has it since been practised (in the popish kingdoms) but with that ridiculous intent.

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THE more they ought to have been open and sincere before the people, the more the priests became reserved and mysterious. They made religion a secret, and by fancying to make it more revered, through a mysterious obscurity, they extinguished it entirely; for, instead of revealing the divinity to mankind, so sincerely wished for by them, the priests rendered them idolators; and reserved for themselves the meaning and interpretation of all the emblems, of all the allegories, and all the symbolical usages which they took care to multiply without end.

FROM this depraved fountain were derived the different theological and barbarous jargons to either perplex, or explain away what in those days were called sacred writings (something like this may be imputed to the theological doctors of popery) with all those hieroglyphical apparatuses, which were rendered inaccessible to, and incomprehensible by the vulgar. It is since that lamentable æra that the priests have presumptuously looked upon as their special domain and unalienable property the deposit of the religion of mankind; and pretended to hold by a divine right the public ministry of it, with which they had only been entrusted by their fellow-citizens.

MANKIND

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MANKIND being seduced by low and imperceptible degrees from the true knowledge of God, and of his sovereign, gave headlong into every absurd system. For, if all the nations had, at least, agreed to adopt for their sign of the reigning Deity, the same object, and the same symbol; the unity of worship, although degenerated, would have been preserved the same all over the earth: but as we have already observed, some made choice of one sign, or emblem; others of a different one, whether under the figure of the sun, of the moon, of a horse, of an ox, &c. The Supreme Being was adored every where, though in a different manner, as to the exterior, by which he was rendered a perceivable object.

EVERY nation accustomed itself to revere the emblem it had chosen as the truest and most sacred symbol of the divinity. Each of them afterwards beheld therein the true deity and the only monarch; and the emblems being different in all nations, how could they have imagined that they had all but the same deity; and that he was everywhere the same\*.

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\* *All the pagan philosophers knew this great truth, and by it they explained to the christians of the primitive*

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THE unity of the nations being broken off, the then universal religion was extinguished, and a general fanaticism slid into its place, that in each country erected its particular standard. Each people looked upon its God, and its king, as the only true, and believed themselves alone possessed of the true religion of their forefathers. Each nation believed itself to be the sole truly religious, and the special favourite of the Supreme Being: and hence no other vestige of the ancient right remained but a fatal impression that egged on each

*tive church, why such a strange variety was to be observed in their different worships. Their Christian antagonists looked upon such a solution as a newly invented device of the pagans, to palliate their worship of daemons. They may now be judged of by this work, and by the words of Plutarch, p. 377 and 378; "As the sun, the moon, the heavens, the earth, the sea, are common to all men, but under different names according to the difference of nations and languages; thus, although there be but one only Deity, and one providence that governs the universe, and hath under him different subaltern ministers; yet to this deity, which is the same, different names are given, and a different homage is paid, according to the laws and customs of each country.*

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each people to aspire to the universal monarchy; because it was really due to the Supreme Being, revered by each people as their monarch, under different forms and names. In the language of the priests, that particular God whose ministers they were, was by them declared to be the jealous enemy of all the neighbouring gods; and ere long all the neighbouring nations were held as strangers. They made their people separate themselves from all others, and to forbid an entrance on their frontiers. Thus men at last became, by their birth, by their situation, and by their religion, the declared enemies of each other. From this dire source the world was overflowed with all those blood-shedding and priest-begotten animosities, which since that accursed epoch have spread devastation through the universe, under the sacred pretext of religion.

AN object well worthy of our attention here presents itself, to wit; so simple was idolatry in its origin, that it might have readily been set aside or prevented, by the least instruction from the sacerdotal tribe, had they been well disposed to promote the welfare of mankind. It is true, indeed, they were ignorant and idolatrous themselves, but why did not they, who pretended they never

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never had been so, the sublime prophets among the Hebrews, so conversant in futurity, why did not they, I say, caution the people of the neighbouring nations, and the very Israelites, who had been in a perpetual state of idolatry. Instead of continually bounding forwards into futurity, would it not have been more useful to have carried back the flambeau of enquiry upon what had passed before their time, without exhausting themselves in ridiculous invectives against the false divinities of the nations; and which, by so doing, they treated as if they were real beings? why, with the least instruction (which would have sufficed) did they not annihilate them. The deity of these assumedly inspired ones, whom they always exhibit as actuated with implacable wrath, incessantly crying aloud for vengeance, for ever threatening to punish the nations, and to break their idols, could not be the true deity, if it was more agreeable to him to exterminate than to instruct.

In this origin of idolatry, we discover how early were sown the fatal seeds of religious wars, and of what ancient date the spirit of intolerance is. It is therefore a false and groundless charge against christianity, to ascribe to her the engendering of that furious monster. It would not be a difficult matter

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matter to prove, that almost all the wars (whether those of Judaism or Paganism) were occasioned by religious motives.

JUVENAL assigns the same origin as I do, when he makes mention in the fifteenth satire, of the superstition, and civil wars between two nations of Egypt, who, he says, had an implacable hatred for the gods of their neighbours, each being persuaded, there was no other deity but that whom they worshipped.

*Inde furor vulgo quod numina vicinorum  
Odit uterque locus, cum solos credat habentes  
Esse deos, quos ipse colit.*

IMITATED.

“ Such zealous fury rag’d in ev’ry breast,  
“ To hate their neighbours prov’d religion’s test;  
“ To hold their temples and their rites abhor’d:  
“ Ungodding ev’ry god but those whom they  
“ ador’d.”

It would be now a very curious and instructive research to enter into a scrutiny both of the antiquity and of the religion of all nations, in order to examine therein the singular expediencies, and

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far-fetched pretexts that were made use of to bring about a coalition between the ancient dogms of the great judge, and the last judgment, and of the life hereafter. These interesting dogms, although corrupted, were never totally extinguished.

THE better to unite the invisibility of the supreme Being, which sound reason never objected to, with his visible emblem, all such stupid and senseless idols were kept sequestered in the sanctuary, which to approach was rendered not only difficult but terrifying to the vulgar. The very name of the monarch-deity was kept a secret, and the imposition was soon carried to such a pitch, as to make the people believe that who should dare to pronounce it must die.

To form some kind of agreement between the ceremonial and the ancient expectation of the great judge's coming at the end of time, which expectation, indeed, was become degenerate into one regulated by the astronomical and astrological periods, a necessity arose of imagining invisible descents of the great judge into the sanctuary at the end of years, and other periodical and sabbatical revolutions. The emblems were carried out of their temples, to be processionably exhibited to the people,

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people, once in a year, or once in a century, according to the different usages; and those emblems or exhibitions were made under the mystic cover of a veil, sometimes of an artificial darkness, sometimes in the midst of terrour-striking attributes, to infuse a greater awe. Hence, to some, these solemn days were days of terrour; to others, they were days of consolation and rejoicing; and for the aggregate of the people, they were days of a most extravagant superstition\*.

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\* *At the renovation of each civil year, the Jews have always imagined, and imagine still, that the great judge then pronounces judgment in heaven upon all mortals, and this they assign as a reason for all the austerities preached by them at that time. Relig. Cerem. vol. iii.*

*Many people are actuated by the same chimera, and in consequence have periodical repentances and indulgences administered to them from the deity, by the agency of their priests. The Japanese call a certain month in their year, The Month of the invisible Arrival of the Gods. In the Christian year there is a month called Advent, which is the same thing and like that of Japan; whose first motive was to prepare one's self for the judgement of the end of the year, for the arrival of the great judge, and for the future renovation. The Papists have*

To establish an accordance of the immateriality of the supreme Being with the symbolical grossness, in which the priests pretended to make him reside constantly, or occasionally, at certain times, recourse was had to metamorphoses, metempsychoses, incarnations, (that is, the assuming of human flesh, as Jupiter, &c. used to do for their various excursions upon earth). Recourse was also

have their Lent in the spring, which custom is taken from the Romans, who made their civil year to begin in March. Their purifications and expiations are performed in the month of February.

At Trichinapaly the deity Brama descends once each year into the pagod. Some theologists of that country pretend that he dies and comes to life every year. Rel. Cerem. vol. vi.

At Jaghinat, a town in that country, the deity goes forth from his temple once a year; and the people flock thither from the extremest part of India. The idol, placed upon a huge triumphal car, is carried through the city; and crusheth under its carriage wheels all zealots whose bigotted frenzy instigates them to undergo such a murderous self-oblation; but extremely happy, in their sense, is the person so lucky as to suffer death in that manner on that day, because it is a day of remission, during which the gates of future life are thrown open. Relig. Cerem. vol. vi. The

also had to mystical alliances. (as absurd as impious) of a deity with gross matter, with animals, with men and women. Thus by meaning to soar to the supernatural heights of this religion they found themselves obliged to sink into the lowest absurdities.

IGNORANCE

The Camis, Japanese divinities, of a second class, quit neither their temples nor their shrines, but once in an age, and then there is a jubilee all over the country. Rel. Cerem. vol. vi.

Lucian informs us, that even in his time, commemorations of the deluge were celebrated in the temple of the goddess of Syria, from whose sanctuary she was carried forth once a year, accompanied by all the gods, to pay a visit to her favourite fish, in a lake. Jupiter spoke first, but the goddess, apprehensive lest her fish should die on that day, were he to see Jupiter, prevailed on the king of the deities, by soothing and entreaty, to turn back. All the ceremonies began with alarms and terrour. Most violent acts of penitential devotion were perpetrated. The zealots tore themselves in the most cruel manner: but the re-appearance of Jupiter brought back joy and pleasure; the day was concluded with feasting and exultation. It is obvious, that this was an absurd allegory of the apparition of the great judge at the end of time.



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IGNORANCE soon confounded those religious usages, with all the commemorative ones, which constituted a part of the religion; and whereas the representations of the primitive state of mankind, also quite symbolical, were regulated by the same periods, that regulated the theocratic ceremonial, and all things relative to the said commemoration; new errors, and new fables were fabricated in consequence. All the different symbols of those commemorations of the history of nature, were insensibly changed into illustrious personages, to whom were ascribed great adventures, chequered with good and evil fortune, with greatness and misery; because the anecdotes of the ruin, and re-establishment of the world blooming with a new complexion, were necessarily become their legends. Mankind so far interested themselves in behalf of those personalized emblems, that they soon confounded them with the emblems of the great judge, which thereby were lost in the crowd: and now these, now those appearing and disappearing at the same time, induced people to forget there was any difference between them, and to think that they all meant the same object; and therefore invested them all with the Deity-ship.

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In consequence of these new mistakes the life of the monarch-deity was ornamented with all the historical details of the commemorative festivals. The object of adoration was the sun extinguished and revived. The world destroyed and renewed was publicly worshipped under the names of Osiris, Atys, Adonis, Bacchus, &c. it being then generally imagined that those gods had formerly descended upon earth, to do good to the human race, to civilize and to give them laws; that they had undergone great hardships during their human life; that they had been crushed by powerful enemies, but that after an inflicted cruel death, they manifested themselves in a glorious resurrection. Thus, by degrees, foolish and credulous antiquity plunged from error to error, preparing a new fangled idolatry for the ages to succeed: for the usages whence these absurdities sprang, had primitively in view to form institutions premonitory of what was to come, as well as commemorations to remind people of what had passed: wherefore, it became a received notion, that in those false histories in this disfigured worship were exhibited the future events, the hardships, and the greatness of those chimerical personages that usurped in the minds of the

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the people the place of the antient great judge, who had been formerly expected.

A new Osiris, a new Adonis, were expected and destined to undergo the same vicissitudes of evil and of good, as they who formerly bore those names had experienced. Every nation had its particular expectancy, and was ready at the first alarming call from heaven, to run into any new fanaticism, and still greater extravagancy of mistaken religion.

THE Romans, notwithstanding their so much boasted republican spirit, were, in Cicero's time, in expectation of a king foretold by the Sybils, as is to be found in the book of divination, written by this great philosophical orator. The calamities of the republic were to be the fore-runners of his coming, and universal monarchy the consequence. This anecdote of the Roman history has never been sufficiently attended to, and people are in general ignorant how instrumental it was to all the great events at that period of time transacted in this famous republic.

AT one time a conqueror was expected by the Hebrews; at another a being undefinably happy and unhappy. They are still in expectation of him,

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him, accompanied with an Eliah and an Enoch, who, as well as he, are but great judges personified.

THE oracle of Delphos, as we read in Plutarch \*, was the depositary of an antient and secret prophecy, upon the future birth of a son of Apollo, who would bring along with him the reign of justice. All the Greek and Egyptian pagans had a number of oracles, which they comprehended not, but that are, to us, the same universal chimaera; she was parent of that folly inciting so many kings and princes affecting to be deemed the sons of Jupiter. Nor have other nations given less into those strange visions: the Persians expect Ali at the end of time; the Chinese expect Phelo; the Japanese Peyrum, and Combadoxi; the natives of Siam expect Summona-Codom; the Indians of the Mogul's empire expect a deity in the form of a horse. All the American nations expected the coming of the children of the sun from the east, which might not improperly be called the pole of mankind's hope. The Mexicans in particular expected to be re-visited by one of their antient kings from the east, after he should have completed his

U. . . . . tour

\* The life of Lysander.

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tour of the world. In fine, there is not a people which has not been actuated by some expectancy of this sort, nor could the meaning thereof be comprehended, but that they are reciprocally explained, the one by the other; and that by the concurrence of different anecdotes therewith annexed, they discover their having all primitively had for motive the expectation of the great judge, of the last judgments, and of a future life at the end of time; whose symbols were corrupted and personalized in a very remote antiquity, and under different names, in every climate.

It is, moreover, from a consequence of this error confounding the allegorical symbols of the history of nature, with the representation of the monarch deity, that the history of all the gods, of all the ancient kings, and of the legislators, resemble each other by so many particular features, which, notwithstanding the diversity of names, they all mean but the monarch deity, whose legends are adorned with the anecdotes of nature, expressed according to the corrupt sense given of the antient monuments and commemorations become intelligible. These anecdotes have been the mould wherein all antiquity hath cast, as one may say, almost all her gods, her kings, her legislators,  
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her heroes, and her great men; therefore Macrobius brings them all back to the sun, but others to Jupiter. The learned Huet views them all in Moses, without excepting one. Several commentators have descried them all in Abraham. Saturn, Mercury, Bacchus, Apollo, have been made out Noah, Cham, Jacob, and David. In fine, all the pagan deities have been descried in the Hebrew patriarchs, and all the Hebrew patriarchs are in a like manner discernible in those pagan deities; an amazing chaos wherein all the learned have bewildered themselves, and which is deducible from no other origin but the variety of names, according to the languages, and according to the attribute of the ancient, and one only symbol of the theocratic king, that, self-endowed as it were, with a prolific faculty, hath in so copious a manner peopled the annals of all the various nations.

WHEN idolatry is considered in this point of light, it will scarcely appear to be idolatry. The unity of errors throughout, discovereth to us everywhere, as we advance in our research, the unity of a primitive truth, rendered obscure but through the variety of names and titles conferred thereon.

## SECTION XI.

*Political abuses of the theocratic government.*

**T**HE deplorable state into which the primitive religion of mankind was sunk, through the fatal consequences of the theocratic apparatus, may enable us to form a judgment of all the irregularities with which polity and civil administration must have been also disgraced. Theocracy, by making man idolatrous, made him also a slave, a barbarian, and a savage. However great and sublime a government may appear, whose leading point of view is heaven, which it pretends to copy after as its model, can, notwithstanding, be productive but of bad effects here below; and political edifices erected thereupon, in conformity to such a speculation, must inevitably have fallen to pieces, and have been the cause of very great evils.

AMONG the many false dogms, that we have already seen in part, and under which theocracy had whelmed the human mind, there started up two far more repugnant to the welfare of society, although they had been opposed to each other in a very singular manner.

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THE imaginary picture of the happiness enjoyed in the celestial kingdom, gave rise to the false ideas concerning liberty, equality, and independence. On the other hand, the aspect of a monarch-deity, so great, so immense, made man almost drop into nothingness, induced him to despair, and voluntarily to set himself at nought. Through these two extremes, the spirit which should effectuate the welfare of society was equally lost: on one part it was proposed to make man more than he can, or ought to be, upon earth; and, on the other, he was made to degrade himself below the rank which nature had assigned to humanity. Thus, true man was no longer to be seen, and in his form appeared the savage biped, or the unresisting slave.

THE design of the first men was doubtless to render themselves happy by this sublime perspective of the heavenly kingdom; and there is some reason to think, that they succeeded in part for a certain time, because that fortunate æra hath ever since been celebrated by them as the golden age, the reign of justice. All the poets have emulously exhausted themselves in singing the praises of that primitive felicity. "Every body was free in Israel," saith also the scripture, where mention is made

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made of the Judaic theocracy, "Every body did as he pleased, and led a life of independence \*."

If such marvellous times (wherein we can, however, desire the seeds of all the abuses subsequent to them) have really existed, it could be only during the dawn of that mystic age, when mankind, as yet deeply affected with the calamities it had suffered, was actuated with all the fervour of morality and of religion, as well as with the heroism of theocracy. But this state of felicity, and the reign of justice, were but transitory, because said fervour and heroism, which alone could keep up the supernatural tendency of such a government, are but a momentary virtue, mere fits of religion, which on our earth are never of long duration.

If the celestial theocracy above is to be a constant state of justice, liberty, and rectitude, the same is not to be expected of any earthly theocracy, because under it the people cannot avoid making a bad use of their liberty; and where those who command find it almost as inevitable to make a bad use of the power said to be derived from heaven.

\* *Fulges xvii, 6.*

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ven. It is therefore, probable, that this government was annihilated by those two extremes; by the one all the ancient empires of the West changed their liberty into a state of buccaneering, and deviated into a vagrant and absolutely savage life; by the other, all the ancient empires of the East suffered themselves to be enslaved by tyrants.

THE pictures which the ancients have transmitted to us of the golden age, of the simplicity, of the independence in which people then lived, have always appeared to me to have so great an affinity with the state of the Americans, that I cannot but be easily brought to think, that the fall of the theocratic government was the epoch of that kind of life which has been adhered to, during so many ages, by all the inhabitants of that extensive country: nor do I think that the theocratic government was, in its origin, so brutal and savage; but I represent it to myself to have been too unstable to have caused the Americans (who appear to have been always more simple than all the other inhabitants of the earth) to fall into the enormities just now mentioned, by rendering themselves free, independent, and savage. I am besides inclined to conjecture, that their manner of living is merely accidental, and is deducible more from their

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their prejudices, than from that state of nature which I look upon as a chimerical notion.

THE great number of traditions, and of theocratic works, which are to be found among the most barbarous nations, concerning this religion, is in my sense a strong index of the origin of their singular manner of living, and is at the same time an almost irrefragable proof, that not one of those nations is in its primitive and natural state, but as hath happened in all the other parts of the world, so they too formerly lived under this mystical government; whence slavery, or a spirit of buccaneering, must have issued, according as the genius of the people might have concurred with the nature of their climates to impress more sensibly the effects of their antient theocracy.

LET us now, for the second time, glance our eyes on the bulk of christianity, which has in part revived it. What must have become of all those zealots in the primitive church, if places of retirement had not been built for them in the midst of societies, during those times of frenzy, when the expectation of the heavenly kingdom made them renounce every thing upon earth; and, when tired of being men, they would fain be angels.

What

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What is become of so many thousand hermits, who lived then like mere savages in the desarts of the Thebais? Who knows if there exist not now in the desarts of Africa some of their descendents that feed upon human flesh.

THERE is a town of Oxiringia\*, much celebrated, because solely occupied by religious folks, within and without; there were above ten thousand monks, besides twenty thousand virgins, without counting those scattered on the neighbouring mountains, and they all amounted to more than forty thousand. Now, if we were to suppose, that from this prodigious quantity, one out of every hundred disgusted with their state; would they not have furnished a sufficient number of men and women to have peopled, for eighteen hundred years past, all Africa with Barbarians.

ALL attempts, here below, to be more than man, soon make humanity to disappear. The religious communities disseminated afterwards thro' all the different regions of the Roman empire, might furnish us with a picture quite contrary to that

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\* Ecclesiast. Hist. vol. v. p. 25.

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that, if we were inclined to enter into an examination of them. We should there find man, infligated by the same false principles, make a tame sacrifice of his liberty and his will; and thereby lay the foundation of cloyster-slavery, and monkish despotism. But it is sufficient to have hinted this two-fold abuse, and its principle. We must now continue our research in a more ample field, to come at a knowledge of all the evils produced by Theocracy, and by those governments that, like her, have affected to imitate the kingdom of heaven.

FROM the history of the East and the character of the Orientals, we should be led to think, that in these climates Theocracy has been less corrupted by the buccaneering spirit of the people, than by the tyranny of the ministers. The symbols, the coffers, the arks, the idols with which they represented the great judge, were nothing. But the officers deemed necessary for their attendance were men, and not celestial Beings, incapable of abusing an administration that gave them all power. Although the deity was declared the only king of the people, yet, as there was neither pact nor convention between man and the deity, Theocracy from its institution, and by its very nature,

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nature, was a despotic government, of which the great judge was the invisible sultan, and the priests, the vizirs, and the ministers; in plain English, they were the real despots.

OF all the political vices in Theocracy, this was the greatest, the most fatal and that which prepared the way to oriental despotism, and the horrible servitude which has been the dire consequence. The reader must now be sensible that I could never have conducted him to this fatal epoch, if before I entered upon the subject of this kind of government, I had not begun by informing him of the moral and religious errors sprung from Theocracy; and if I had not unfolded to him what had been the causes thereof by displaying to him the close-linked series of the long chain of human errors.

ALTHOUGH Theocracy was of herself, and from her birth a veritable despotism, it is, however, not improbable, that the first ages knew not the abuses that were made to flow from it, in after-times. This we may the readier believe, inasmuch as new establishments are commonly supported by zeal; and a remembrance of it still remained, which was held dear among all the

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nations; and also, that the visible ministers were at first and continued for some time worthy of their invisible master. But seeing that in the midst of the servitude which now prevails, and has for so many ages prevailed throughout the East, mankind is there universally tractable and tame, it must be alledged as a proof that the ministers there must have made a bad use of their power, before the people made a bad use of their liberty.

In acknowledgment for the good services rendered by priests at first, mankind must have grown by degrees accustomed to recognize in them a divine and supreme power. The wisdom with which their first ordinances were fraught; and the utility resulting from the counsels which they gave at first, must have habituated society to pay them obeisance; and every member thereof must, without any reluctance, have submitted to their oracles and their revelations. Thus, by little and little, an extreme confidence must have produced extreme credulity. Society being prepossessed, that in the priests it was God who spoke; that in them it was an immutable sovereign who willed and commanded, must have looked upon itself as in duty bound not to resist those pretended organs of

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of the deity; even when they ceased doing good, and their actions were evil.

MANKIND were thus let down by degrees to so irrational a plight, as to unknow their state, their nature, and their dignity; nay, they were so far plunged in misery as to no longer dare to raise their eyes towards heaven; and much less upon their tyrants. A blind fanaticism reduced them to the condition of slaves, and they were at length made to believe it their duty to honour their deity and monarch, by degrading, and as it were, annihilating themselves before him.

SUCH, no doubt, was the progress of that voluntary, slavish subjection, by which human nature hath been disgraced.

ALL the now sentiments, and present dispositions of the oriental nations, in regard to their sovereigns, are founded upon those wretched prejudices. They are made to believe, that the diadem is, by divine right, invested with the power of doing good and evil, and that those born to wear it are to think nothing impossible in the execution of their will and pleasure. When any of these infatuated people suffer pain, or are rendered unhappy



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happy by the capricious ferocity of a barbarous superiour, they passively yield themselves to the views of an inscrutable providence; and in a thousand devout and mystical interpretations, they hunt for a solution of the unjust and cruel proceedings to which they daily fall the resigned victims\*.

THE theocratic priesthood become despotic under the protection of those sacred prejudices which the nations were made to revere, failed not to fill the world with tyrants. The priests alone were the sovereigns of the earth, and encouraged by non-resistance, they arbitrarily disposed of the property, of the honours, and of the lives of mankind. Although we are robbed, through time, of an exact history of the theocratic sway, where indeed a thick veil is thrown over the flagitious life indulged by its ministers, we may discover some features of it in the Jewish theocracy, where it exposes to our view

\* *The Turks are bred up in a notion, that their Sultan may, without committing a sin, put fourteen persons to death every day. They believe, that when their sovereign orders any of his subjects to suffer death, he only follows the special inspirations of providence, which to resist would be criminal.*

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view the abominable conduct of the Hebrew priests, towards the end of this government.

THEN they no longer administered justice to the people: they led a life of rapine and plunder: they carried off by force, and devoured all the victims which were brought to be offered up to the monarch-deity, whom they used but as a borrowed name. Their lust being equal to their gluttony, they lay, as the bible tells us, with the women that came to watch at the entrance of the tabernacle. This last anecdote, over which the scripture glides so lightly, without entering into any detail of the consequences, in an accurate history of the priesthood, would appear to have been productive of more than any other in all the nations, and even among the Hebrews themselves, which they leave either palliated, or concealed from us, under the veil of fabulous history.

\* The priesthood was arrived at such a pitch of barefaced impiety, and unblushing insolence as to cover even their debaucheries under the cloak of the divinity. It is to the priesthood the world is indebted for that new race of mortals who knew no other fire but the deity, but heaven, but the sun, and the other gods; and no other mothers but

but the unhappy victims, or culpable associates of sacerdotal concupiscence. It was then the nations beheld the Demi-gods and heroes make their appearance upon earth. It was in consequence of their illustrious birth, and exploits by them achieved, that mankind were influenced to change their antient form and government, and to make a transition from the reign of the gods, whom they never could see, to that of their pretended sons, whom they saw living and acting among them: a most extraordinary event! Thus sacerdotal lust by giving masters to mankind, brought about the revolution, which put an end to the celestial reign, and gave its beginning to that of the Demi-gods, which reign all serious historians hitherto imagined should have been retrenched from the annals of the world.

S E C-

SECTION XII.

*Theocracy beget Despotism.*

THE people being harrassed under the intolerable yoke imposed upon them by the ministers of the theocratic king, and tormented by the plundering tribes, which the disorderly state of the polity had spawned forth in all the nations, finally resolved to secure themselves from the assaults of so many enemies, by making a reformation in their government; and the wisest step they thought they could take was to return to the primitive unity, and put into the hands of one all the authority, which, until then, had been usurped by the sacerdotal families.

THIS transition, from the theocratic to the other form of government which succeeded to it, might have been effected in the several nations of the world, at different periods of time; and the events which made it take place may have been accompanied with different modifications and circumstances. We might be induced to surmise that even from that very epoch the antient theocracies suggested the ideas of forming a republican government, were it not that through the sad experience

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perience of the evils suffered under the administration of many, it seems very probable, that no society at that time made choice of the republican system; therefore, I do not think, that to the revolution above alluded to, the epoch of the government can ever be ascribed.

ALTHOUGH the people were disgusted with an administration of the priesthood during the theocracy; they, however, did not lose sight of that antient chimera. They always retained a pious tendency towards it, and did not renounce it even at their taking to them a king; but imagined that in so doing they only made a reformation in the too numerous organs of the monarch-deity, whom they still continued to look upon as their true and only king. The various nations of the earth took each to itself a king, for no other intent, but that he should be the organ, the image, and the representation of the invisible monarch; in whom then, as until that time they always had done, they supposed the supreme power resided. This opinion is confirmed by the pompous title of, *Image of the Divinity*, which the kings of the earth took care should be preserved to them. We shall see hereafter what this title was originally.

FILLED

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FILLED with such pre-conceptions in the preference of a government by one, we may readily conclude, that the nations were as yet far from harbouring any ideas of republicanism; and this is the reason why, through remote antiquity, we meet in historians with no other government but the monarchical; a popular state had as yet no existence even in idea. This is the case to-day throughout all the oriental regions; where the people cannot be made to comprehend what our European republics are, and which they look upon as monstrous societies. This prejudice is derived from no other source but the antient theocratic ideas, which have never been obliterated in that part of the world.

WE may hence deduce a reason why, in certain countries, the chief priest of the theocracy may have been enabled to become himself its despot, by depressing the inferior orders that were dependent upon him. This surmise might be confirmed by the several states of antient and modern Asia, wherein the civil is also the ecclesiastic sovereign. Nevertheless, the union of these two powers may have been effected by another cause, as for instance, by a notion of this truth, that a king being the first of the state, ought necessarily

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to be the first priest, as he is the first general, the first magistrate; in a word, the first of all the different orders which compose society; whence it may have happened that newly-instituted kings were at the same time declared the heads of the religious worship, although they were not of a sacerdotal family.

MANKIND always leaning towards unity and simplicity, was in all times sensible of the dangers attendant on many-headed power, in government. This truth, however, should not hinder us from owning that in many states the revolution constitutive of the civil authority in one person, left to the priests the disposal of things sacred, and of all articles concerning religion; we have striking instances preserved in the histories of Japan, and of several other nations; but such a conduct became for those states a source of dissension, and dispute between the two powers, they both producing title against title for their reigning by right divine.

THEY who principally attracted the attention of most of the nations, to be by them constituted their visible masters, were, in all likelihood (as we have above insinuated) those very demi-gods, and heroes,

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heroes, sons of the ancient theocratic kings, that is, of the priesthood.

THE concurrence of the traditions of the most remote antiquity, all which make their epochs succeed to that of the gods, sheds such an historical light on those mythological times, as good eyes must own the force of here. The rays emanated from the Divinity, which the people fancied they beheld in such wonderful personages, must have infused a profound veneration for them: on the other hand, in order to support this supposed dignity of their birth, those demi-gods made it their study here to be serviceable; and as by their birth we learn into what a grievous state polity and religion were fallen, in their days; they took care not to let slip any occasion of acquiring glory, and gaining the esteem and affection of mankind, by waging war against tyrants, by exterminating public robbers, and by ridding the earth of all the monsters with which it was infected.

PROFANE mythology confirms, in a particular manner, the gradation of these events, because it was out of those demi-gods, and those heroes, that she fabricated those champions destructive of robbers and giants, and those incomparably brave per-

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personages, who, like the romantic adventures we read of in the antiquities of the Gauls, ran about the world for the love of mankind, in order to re-establish every where good order and society.

A MORE revered mythology, notwithstanding all the mystic veils with which it is hung over, has not been able to hinder us entirely from having a peep at those antient truths. Several of those heroes and judges, who during the Judaic theocracy rose up and exerted themselves, from time to time, in order to extricate the people from their state of servitude, into which their bad government made them fall every moment, were all the children of barren women, said to be miraculously impregnated, after having invoked the Lord before the ark, or before the sanctuary.

BESIDES many others that might be cited, such for instance was Sampson, whose mother \* was rendered pregnant by the words of a man of God; and Samuel, who was made an inheritor of vital light, in consequence of the consolation administered to the wife of Eclana, by the chief priest Heli \*. Acts so indecent cannot be related with  
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\* *Judg. c. xiii.*

† *Kings, c. i.*

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more decency than they are in the bible: but he must be blind indeed, who does not through the whole perceive all the knack of mystery, not to say an iniquitous one.

THE epoch of those kings, who in the pagan annals are made to succeed to the reign of the demi-gods, and of whom a third epoch is made, distinguishable from the second, as the second has been distinguished from the first, to wit, from that of the gods, is not, as I opine, to be looked upon as absolutely distinct, and dissimilar under the reign of the demi-gods and kings. They were both men, esteemed as representatives of the Divinity; whereas, during the reign of the gods, the representatives were nothing better than stones, statues, with divers other brute and inanimate objects, which served to call to mind the invisible monarch, whose ministers were the priests.

BUT in order to elucidate the distinction made in the annals between these two last epochs, it may be asserted, that several generations were descended from those demi-gods, whose reign was extended all over the earth, under the title of, the Race of Gods, which they had inherited from their first origin; and that in process of time, these  
divine

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divine races becoming extinct, their places were filled by other kings of less elevated birth, that is, meer mortals, without any heavenly mixture.

BE that as it may, it is, however, apparent, that these two epochs have been often confounded, and never had but a vague and undetermined discrimination, because the times whereby mythology is distinguished from history, are very vague and very uncertain. It is the uncertainty which mankind has laboured under in regard to the justly determining such limitations, that, in all probability, hath intruded into the number of the kings of China, of Egypt, of Greece, of Italy, as well as of many other nations, and even of the Jews, a crowd of personages, whose fabulous history seems to make them belong to the mythology of the gods and demi-gods.

THE government of the monarch-deity, and the revolution which happened in the theocratic administration, is covered over with a profound darkness amongst all the nations, except the Hebrews alone, in consequence of their having been enriched with the spoils of Egypt, where we can discover many traces of their change, of the causes by which it was produced, and of its consequences in regard to the world in general.

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WHEN Samuel was become old \*, his two sons, the one called Joel, the Strong God, the other, Noah, the Father God, were guilty of many excesses, and governed Israel in so tyrannical a manner, that the people being provoked to an insurrection, the elders assembled, and sent a deputation to Samuel, to lay before him their heavy complaints, and to demand of him, in the name of the people, a king that might govern them, might judge them, and march at the head of their armies. Samuel thought it incumbent upon him to represent to them, that, by such a measure, they would be plunged into a more cruel thralldom: "The king whom ye demand, (said he) will carry off your children to make them his menial officers and eunuchs. He will load you with heavy burdens: he will oblige you to cultivate his fields, to gather in his harvest, to fabricate arms for him, to work at making utensils, and to procure him all the superfluities of life. The king ye demand will seize upon your fields, your olive trees, and your vines, to satisfy his own avarice, and that of his ministers. Your flocks will be his, all you possess will be his, and yourselves will be henceforwards his slaves."

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\* *Kings, chap. vii.*

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SUCH was Samuel's celebrated reply upon so memorable an occasion, and upon which so many comments have been since made. Flattery and meanness have therein found an ample space to pay their court to tyranny. Superstition therein contemplated a subject worthy of her mystical reveries; but the spirit of Theocracy, by which it had been dictated, was unknown to all. Samuel, in delivering his answer, did not attend to the vast difference there was between the new government the people were desirous of having, and that which it wanted to quit.

As the former shape of government, swayed by the orders of the monarch deity, had been a reign during which it was imagined that there existed nothing intermediate between God and the people, that the monarch was all, and the subject was nothing; so Samuel, full of those deceitful principles, spoke to the people allusively thereto, applying to the man-monarch whom they wanted, all the ideas annexed to the power and supreme authority of the monarch-deity. Even the very people paid no attention thereto, and without being scared at the odious picture which Samuel had exhibited to them, of the chief they wanted, "No matter (the people cried) we must have a king to march

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march before us, and whom we may see combating at the head of our armies."

IN order to unfold the motives of this extraordinary conduct of Samuel and his people, and prevent the reader's being imbibed with ideas, that there had been nations, which voluntarily, and of their own free choice, submitted themselves to slavery, it is necessary to recall here what I have advanced in the preceding part of this work, that mankind, by rejecting the ministry of the priesthood, did not for that renounce the plan of theocratic government, in which the monarch-deity was represented by symbols. The people only changed the symbol, and instead of the several mute or inanimate figures, consulted in that time, and of which the priesthood made so great an abuse, by making them speak according to their own interest, it was deemed more expedient to have an active and living symbol, who, personally endowed with the organs of speech, might make known, in a shorter and more direct manner, the orders of the monarch-deity.

THEREFORE the first election of kings, was not, strictly speaking, an election, but a reform in the theocracy; and in the image of the divinity.

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The first man on whom the people conferred the honour of being the image, they considered as nothing : their imagination and thoughts were always fixed upon the supreme and invisible monarch ; and mankind being so fascinated with their old prejudices, never dreamed of forming a particular treaty, or of proposing relative conditions to one of their late equals, elevated by this revolution into the master of society.

THE people did not then foresee, that by thus taking a mortal to represent the Divinity, without submitting him to the public reason, that is, to the general sense, and to the common laws of society, it was giving themselves a tyrant. And they did not reflect, that although such a mortal was looked upon as the emblem of the deity, that was no reason why the supreme Being should be confounded with its frail representative.

So many absurd mistakes, ever caused by superstition, and a being forgetful of reason, have, as may be already perceived, been the source of a thousand evils.

IN the preceding theocracies, the nations were already become idolatrous, because they treated the deity

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deity as a man ; we shall soon see them dwindle into slavery in this new theocracy, because they treated man as a deity.

SOCIETY having thus resolved to behold their monarch represented amongst them by a mortal, the greatest part was guided by no other precaution, but to make choice of the tallest and the handsomest man. Saul was taller by the head than all Israel \* assembled at Mafpha. The Scythians and Indians, antient authors say †, made choice for their king, of that man whose figure was the tallest and the most elegant. Thus have most nations of the world continued to act for a long time. They had a greater regard for the qualities of the body, than of the mind, because all that was wanted in those first elections, was to behold the Divinity under an appearance correspondent with the idea which they had formed thereof ; and, as for the conducting of government, the peoples reliance was much less on the representative, than upon the invisible monarch. Kings, those haughty images of the Divinity, were,

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\* 1 Kings, chap. x.

† *Diodor. Sic. --- Strabo. --- and 2 Curt.*



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were, according to their true origin, nothing more in the eyes and sense of the people, than what had been, before them, the stones, idols, oxen, coffers, esteemed to have been, in a like manner, the residence and symbols of the monarch-deity.

THE Hebrews had no sooner taken unto them a king, than they neglected their mysterious ark, which before, during the theocracy, had always been carried at the head of Israel, as the triumphal car and the residence of the monarch-deity so often called, *the god of battle*. The taking of the ark by the Philistines must have proved a grating circumstance to the Israelites, who before that disgraceful accident, had thought it to be invincible. So shameful an event must, no doubt, have greatly contributed to make them desirous of having an active and living symbol to be at the head of their armies: because, ever since they had one of this sort, the other was rendered useless and never marched forth again. It is very probable, the like happened every where, and all the nations imagined, with a like simplicity, that the monarch-deity revealed his will to his living symbols, as he had formerly revealed them to the mute and inanimate symbols of the theocracy that had preceded. Mankind was not altogether sunk into

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into such an abject state of imbecility, as to believe, that a common mortal could be invested with the grand privilege; wherefore, as means had been formerly imagined of conferring such a virtue on the ancient symbols, the same were now practised in regard to the new. The same ceremonial of consecration was made use of, and kings were anointed, because stones had been anointed before them. Through this expediency the new and the old symbols were put upon an equal footing, and every thing seemed to be in right order. The human symbols, become capable of inspiration, was likewise changed in the opinion of the people, and greatly enhanced thereby.

SAUL was no sooner consecrated (as the Bible tells us) than he was seized with the spirit of the Deity and prophesied. All the ceremonial of consecrating a king is derived from no other source but from this absurd and idolatrous one. This communication of the spirit from above with the monarch below, is even now amongst all the nations one of the points essential to a royal inauguration, changing the elected subject into a new man, or making him to believe that he is no longer the same man. A custom somewhat analogous

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logous to this prevails even among the savages \* of America, to wit, their priests blow up into the nostrils of a new chief a mystical smoke, saying to them, "Receive the spirit of courage."

By this enumeration of so many extravagancies heaped one upon another, it is now actually more than proved, that into this new kind of government which they had adopted, mankind introduced their antient chimeras of the heavenly reign, which had produced the antecedent theocracies. Being seduced by the strength of their imagination, and corrupted by the prejudices transmitted to them from their ancestors, mankind continued in an oblivion of being upon earth, and of having a reason that ought to be esteemed as the constant guide, and the first counsellor in all things, so by giving themselves up without reserve, to an absurd and criminal superstition, they blindly subjected themselves to tyrants, as they had before to priests. They obstinately persevered in the foolish notion, that both the one and the other, the old and the new symbols, governed the world but by virtue of inspirations and revelations from heaven.

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\* See *Laffiteau*.

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THE first election of kings could not have been carried on in theocratic societies, without exciting therein great commotion and tumult, as well as dissension between the priests, who looked upon themselves as dethroned by such an attempt, the people's chusing a new master. It was the business of the priesthood to make the cause of the monarchy highly interested therein; and that the election of a king, in regard to him, or rather the priesthood, was a rebellion and an idolatry. What an inexhaustible source of pretexts to torment mankind withal.

It is hence evident, that the sacerdotal order was the chief opponent to the forming of new empires; and, from the period of time alluded to here, even down to our days: the two supreme dignities have been always seen in opposition to each other, ever actuated by a reciprocal antipathy. They have been struggling and contesting with each other for the primacy, alternately prescribing to each other ideal boundaries and limitations, upon which both have alternately encroached, according as abetted and encouraged by the nations as yet undetermined, some through superstition, others through the progress which knowledge had made amongst them.

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It would, no doubt, prove very interesting, to compile a history, which, it is to be hoped, will be one day executed, wherein the progress of these two rival powers may be displayed, accompanied with apposite remarks on their mutual losses and advantages, which keep a due proportion with the gradual improvements of the nations where they happened, especially in our climate; whence, by a special energy of the soil, the Asiatic superstitions, which had been waisted thither, have been gradually driven back, to make room for the re-appearance of reason and her peaceful sway.

THE antient symbols of stone and metal, which an habitual respect suffered to subsist, although they should have been destroyed from the moment kings were substituted in their place, were left under the direction of the priests, whose principal occupation then became to avail themselves of such symbols, in the best manner they could, and endeavour to lure to them, by a religious worship, the people that were so powerfully attracted from them towards another object.

In the beginning of royalty, this diversion must have been considerable; because, during ten years, the ark of Alliance was lodged in a barn, and, as it

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it were, forsaken by the people of Israel; but, at length, the antient veneration was revived; the irregularities of the sovereigns diminished the peoples affection for the throne. Mankind had recourse to altars and oracles; they restored to the priesthood almost their entire primitive authority. The priests domineered over the kings themselves. The symbols of stone issued their commands to the animated symbols; the constitution of the state was rendered twofold and uncertain\*.

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\* A thousand proofs might be alledged that the Jewish government was always a very capricious one; for, when under the judges, as well as under the kings, they often looked up to God, as their only true monarch. They had, moreover, a crowd of prophets and inspired folks, that pushed forwards boldly to dictate to their kings the edicts of the deity, and arrogantly to prescribe to them the conduct they should follow, as well in peace as in war. There is a passage worth being remarked, of a prophet, who announced to the Jews their going to be subjected to Sesac, king of Egypt. "Thus, said he to them, ye will know the difference there is between my yoke and that of the kings of the earth." *Distantiam servitutis meæ, & servitutis regni terrarum.* This menace, however, was made under the reign of the kings of Juda, and

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formation, which the priests imagined they had effected in their antient government, contributed only to bring on a junction between the civil and the sacred theocracy; that is, to render mankind most unhappy, by doubling their chains, and multiplying their tyrants with their prejudices.

WE have, in the preceding part of this work, displayed the spirit of the administration of the priesthood; therefore we think it not improper to give a sketch of the conduct followed by kings seated at the head of society.

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*and of the princes of the house of David. Paral. c. xii.*

*There must have been a private political system (of which we are ignorant) in the conduct of the Hebrew princes, for acting as they did, in regard to the idols. It is not at all improbable, that their intent was, by raising so many idols, to divide the religion of the people, and so to diminish the authority of the priests. Hence arose the schism, or the separation of the kings of Israel, who declined having an alliance with Jerusalem, where the temple was the strong hold of the priesthood, and where the priests were always sure they should get the better of the civil power.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 181

A MORTAL being, when become so great as to be revered as the representative of the Divinity, and rendered so powerful, as to act, will, and command as sovereignly as what was typified, soon sunk under a weight he was unequal to; and that was never intended for his weak shoulders to carry. The illusion he was thrown into by his dignity, blinded him from seeing what there was in it really great and really true; the rays of the supreme Being, with which his diadem were adorned, dazzled him to such a degree, that he no longer could see the human species or himself. No longer mankind was led by the voice of public reason; it beheld in him not a common mortal, but a living idol, inspired by heaven. The very sentiment alone of his dignity, that should have dictated to him equity, mildness, and moderation, was what, thro' his erroneous conception of things, impelled him to all the contrary vices. A man, so situated, should often enter into himself; but every thing around, on the contrary, called him constantly abroad, and detained him in perpetual avocations from himself. In fact, how could one so elevated retain a proper feeling, and a due knowledge of himself. He was decorated with all the titles due to the supreme Being. They had been conferred also before him upon an Adonis, an Osiris, and up-  
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on the other emblems of the Divinity. All the ceremonial due to the monarch-deity, was performed to the monarch man. He was adored equal to that Being, of which, in his turn, he was become the representative. He was, like unto him, held as infallible. All the universe was indebted to him, he owed nothing to the universe. His mandates, his will, his capricious whim, were sublimed into edicts from heaven. His cruelty, his ferocity, were respected as judgments from above, in which society was humbly to acquiesce. In fine, this living emblem of the Divinity, exceeded, in every point, the frightful picture given by Samuel of the future conduct of kings.

SUCH has been the system of government followed by all the sovereigns of Asia, ever since we have had any historical knowledge of them.

THE antient prejudices, from which Despotism sprang, subsisting there still, perpetuate it. The people of these regions, seem always to say, as the Israelites did, "No matter, we will have kings;" that is, living symbols and gods, whom we may hear and see at the head of our army.

ALL

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 183

ALL the disasters caused upon this earth by such a government, are too well known, to need our entering here into a long detail thereof. Every sagacious reader, may call them to mind, and recognize therein a long chain of events and errors, whence have been derived all the false principles, by which mankind hath always been conducted and governed.

IN order to keep heaven in view, men plunged themselves into profound abysses; and, by a continued reliance on a chimerical revelation, they lost the use of their reason. Religion and government degenerated into the monsters that gave birth to idolatry and Despotism, whose affinity is so closely cemented, that, in reality, they are but one and the same thing.

THESE are the bitter fruits of the sublime ideas derived from theocracy; such are the numberless calamities which will be produced to the end of time by administrations civil or religious, that may hereafter affect the reign of heaven upon earth\*.

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\* Although the monarchies now established in Europe be entire strangers to the spirit of this chimera, should

BUT that we may set in a clear light all those astonishing discoveries, and establish those great truths which had not been hitherto as much as surmized, let us take a review of the empires, and reflect upon the ceremonial and principal usages of despotic sovereigns, we shall trace therein all the antient customs, and all the actuating principles of the antient theocracies, which will be tantamount to an impression of the seal of evidence in behalf of these new annals of the human race.

*Should we, however, descry some tenets that seem to tend towards despotism, they only happen from this cause, that amongst the political bodies contained in each, there exists one, as yet, merely theocratical, which hath already been, now is, and will necessarily hereafter be the scourge or the perverter of those very monarchies, if it be not compelled one day to change both its nature and principles.*

S E C.

SECTION XIII.

*The theocratic usages are preserved in civil despotism.*

THE oriental sovereigns put us in mind of the great judge whom the people had chosen for their monarch, either thro' their invisibility, or thro' the custom they were bred up in, never to shew themselves to their subjects, but on certain hours, days, and other regulated periods.

THE emperor of the Mogul-territory \* shews himself twice a day at a window that looks towards the East. This imperial appearance is made night and morning. The grandees take care to be at those hours in the area before the palace, where they lie prostrate as long as the prince remains visible; and the people which run together in crowds, to see their monarch, are so accustomed to these regular visits, that, notwithstanding their sovereign's despotism, an insurrection would be the consequence, as we are informed by travellers, if he were to omit this solemn practice.

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\* See the General History of Voyages, in 12mo, vol. 37.

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AND the like custom was observed in Japan \*, in the time when the sovereign pontif of that country enjoyed as yet the entire possession of the theocratic power, from which the temporal authority hath been since divorced. This great pontif is called *Dairi*; says he is the son of heaven, and pretends to be descended in a direct line from the race of gods, who had formerly reigned in Japan, as had been reported of every other nation. At the time when the *Dairi* were solely vested with the double authority, he is said to have been under a like obligation to that above-mentioned, of shewing himself every morning, and of appearing seated on his throne before the assembled people. Every person observed him with attention, strictly watching each gesture, and his minutest movements; whence prognostications were formed, whether the day should be lucky, or the reverse. According to the season of the year, and the circumstance of the time, his several movements were deemed as so many foretellers, either of a plentiful, or a barren year, of peace, or of war. The sharp-sighted of those days would pretend to descry therein plagues, conflagrations, and earthquakes;

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\* *Relig. Cerem. vol. 6.*

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quakes; as if this pontif had been another Jupiter; from the moving of whose brows a convulsion of the universe was to be feared.

TRAVELLERS saw nothing but objects of ridicule in all those customs: but for my part, I therein recognize the antient nations under the subjection of theocracy, assembling before the emblem of the monarch-deity, to offer up their homage night and morning. I also therein recognize the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, who hailed the deities at the return of each Aurora. I therein finally recognize the Magi, and all the antient worshippers of fire, whose practice it was to salute the rising sun, and consult him upon the fortune of the day, and all future events.

THE anxiety with which the antient nations were wont to go and consult the rising sun, as one of the prophets reproaches it to the Israelites, among whom also said custom prevailed, was a consequence of the dogms of the end of the world, and of the arrival of the great judge, which struck many with a fear lest the sun which had set the evening before should not rise the next morning; and made others eager to see the marvellous day of the great judge blaze forth with the rising sun.

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THE inhabitants of certain islands \* keep up to this day the ancient custom of adoration at the dawn of day, and at the setting of the sun. If during their orisons this luminous body is overcast with clouds and fogs, it is to them a sign of his being irritated. They return to their houses in sadness, there to appease their idols; they then revive the remembrance of that period; when the sun having had (as is reported among them) a violent quarrel with the moon; infinite disturbances and dreadful commotions were caused in the heavens, on the earth, and in the sea: which is a new proof that the worship of the sun in those islands, and in other parts of the world, is one of the ancient abuses sprung from the usages established to commemorate the revolutions of nature.

AMONG the Hebrews, who so often gave themselves up to idolatry, every week was a period, of which both the beginning and the end was to be observed by ceremonies pretty near resembling to, and not a little analogous with those practised in all the other nations. The fire was extinguished in their houses, and relumed on each seventh

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\* Celebes, in the Indian ocean.

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 189

seventh day. It was extinguished and relumed at Rome, in the month of March; that is, at the renovation of the civil years; and the like was observed among the Mexicans at the renovation of the weeks of years.

ALL the worshippers of the sun likewise practised these periodical extinctions of the sacred fire which were no more than a custom relative to the expectation of the end of the world, and of the extinction of the sun, at the end of the periods. These different usages are sufficient evidences that amongst the adorers of fire, this element had been primitively but the symbol of the life of the world.

ON every seventh day it was a custom among the Hebrews to open \* the eastern gate of the temple, and to sing on that day, *Attollite portas, & introibit rex gloriæ* †, which proves, that they also expected the great judge at each septenary rotation of days to come from the side of the east, and that these words, which are now applied by papists, to the Messiah, not without some degree of impropriety, as well as the opening of the temple,

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\* Ezekiel, xlvi, 1.

† Psalm xxiii.



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ple, were relative only to the universal chimera that had been adopted by almost every nation.

As the Hebrews probably imagined, that their deity came down on that day to reside in his sanctuary, in a more especial manner than usual on the others, their prince then attended, to pay his adoration to him on the threshold of the eastern gate, and the people, in crowds, kept without; all entrance to the temple being forbid. The same ceremony was also observed at the return of every full moon\*. It is now unnecessary to point out the affinity between this ceremony, and that practised in the Mogul's country, and in Japan.

THE despots of Ethiopia make their public appearances less frequently. They go out of their palace but four times in the year, and the exhibition of them to the public is behind a veil. Thus they appear on all great days, and thus they pronounce their edicts or deliver oracles.

THE Ethiopians, like to all the other nations of the world, had not always made choice of a man

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\* *Ezekiel*, xlv. 1.

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 191

man to represent the supreme Being. Plutarch informs us of a people in those regions that conferred the royal dignity on a dog, adored him as a deity, and appointed men to act as his officers and ministers. Strabo tells us, there was a time when the only kings in that part of the world, were the priests; which tradition will help more to prove their antiquity, than the wisdom of such nations, but indeed giveth us a satisfactory sketch of the various progress of the theocratic sway. The same author unfoldeth also to us what were the consequences; when he relates in another part of his work, that in his time Ethiopia was governed by kings, whom their subjects adored as gods; that they never appeared in public, in order to keep up the people's veneration.

ALL the antient historians have transmitted to us similar accounts respectively of the kings of Assyria, of Babylon, of Persia, of Media. Death was the consequence of appearing before any of those princes. The beautiful Hester had like to pay dear for presenting herself before Ahasuerus of her own accord: because the king, no more than the deity, could be seen without incurring the pain of death. Therefore it was, that at certain times only, those antient despots went forth from their  
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inaccessible palaces, to be seen by the people, whose duty it was to lie prostrate before, and pay adoration to them\*.

THUS, four times a year, the Apachalites, the inhabitants of Florida, and worshippers of the sun, go in pilgrimage to mount Olagmi, to pay adoration to him; at his arrival to each of the four seasons. This worship amongst them was founded on the remembrance of the disasters † that had happened to the world. Their report is, that the sun having formerly suspended his course, the waters of the great lake Themis overflowed, and covered all the mountains except mount Olagmi, which the sun spared on account of his temple situated thereupon; and, that they, in memorial of said grand event, as well as to remind them of their ancestors, who had taken refuge there, resorted four times a year to that place, to give public testimony of their never-ending acknowledgement to the sun. It is customary, on that day, to give their

\* The reader may consult the Grecian history on the ceremonies observed at the courts of the Persian and Assyrian monarchs.

† Relig. Cerem. vol. 7.

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their liberty to six birds\*; an allegorical usage, alluding to the ancient deliverance. The festival is concluded with a procession of boughs, with sports, feasting, and dances. And in a kindred manner Lucian tells us, that once a year, in the temple of the goddess of Syria, a man ascended to the top of an high tower, whereon he remained seven days, without eating, drinking, or sleeping, as a commemorative act for the safety found on the high places, and of mankind's wretched situation after the deluge.

THESE appearances in public by the monarchs, these visitations, and pilgrimages regulated each year, by the four seasons, had all one common origin, and have been usages practised in almost every age. In Europe, the popish countries are very observant of their *quatre temps*, accompanied with fastings and processions; yet, the ignorance is general; that they are derived from the *Bacchanalia* of the four seasons; by which in remote antiquity were only meant festivals of mourning

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\* When the French monarchs enter into the church of Notre Dame, in Paris, several birds are there restored to their liberty, which had been brought thither for that purpose in cages.

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and sorrow, which had been established as commemorative of the end of the antient world; which the end of each season recalled to their remembrance. The term *Bacchanalia*, which signifies *Lamentation*\*, is a proof irrefragable.

THE four grand annual festivals of almost all the nations of the world, and the four Lents, adhered to by certain christian sects, have a glaring origin, which all the world knows; and have also an obscure one, which may be traced upwards to the primitive institutions of the renovated earth.

IN the kingdom of Siam †, the sovereign goes out of his seraglio but once a year, and then not in the intent of shewing himself to his people, but of their fleeing away from him; wherever he appears, thence every person must fly with all possible speed, or throw themselves prostrate on the earth, in order not to see him. This terrible prince is substituted to his subjects instead of the antient mysterious coffers, and the arks, the pretended residence of the divinity.

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\* *History of heaven*, vol. 1.  
*Cerem.* vol. 6.

† *Relig.*

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IN the Greek and Egyptian festivals of Isis and Ceres, and those of the Gauls in the harvest time, as well as of the Hebrews, these coffers, portative shrines, or arks, were carried in a processional triumph, on certain occasions. According to the established usage in some places the people were to flee from them, hide themselves, or turn their eyes another way; in other places, even to touch them was followed by immediate extermination.

THE monarch of Siam considered as to his origin, appears to be no more than the substitute of the tremendous coffer, and the symbolical godhead of the theocracy; but this matter will be set before us in a still clearer light, when we know that the people are kept in ignorance of their sovereign's name, which is concealed as a mystery from them; and if any of them should chance to learn it, they are penally forbid to utter it\*.

BEHOLD then at last travestied in Siam the formidable Jehovah and Ve-jovis † of the Hebrews, and of the Romans, those cruel, jealous and vindictive divinities, to which those nations ever

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\* *Relig. Cerem.* vol. 6. † *Cicer. de nat. deor.*

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penetrated with fear at the very thought of them, offered up victims and incense, in order to deprecate their wrathful godships from doing them any injury; nor would they dare to pronounce their divine names, they being looked on as capable of replunging nature into its primitive chaos.

AT Jerufalem, as well as at Siam, the palace of the monarch-deity, that is, the sanctuary, was opened but once a year, and the tremendous Jehovah was rendered accessible but at the renovation of the civil year. It was on that celebrated day, called, the *day of expiation*, and which the priest looked upon as big with danger for himself. On that day the devotees played a thousand foolish pranks explicable only by the expectation of the end of the world. Then the pontif entered into the Holy of Holies! There all trembling with the fear of immediate death, in consequence, he let escape from his quivering lips, and in a low voice, that no body might hear him, the tremendous name of the god of terrour, whom the people had chosen to be their monarch.

IN resemblance thereto the chief priest of Minerva went into her temple but once a year. We are informed by Lucan of an usage somewhat similar

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 197

milar, and the same kind of terrour observed in a consecrated forest in the neighbourhood of Marfeilles.

It is proper to observe here, that this horrid doctrine, whose purport seems to be the transformation of kings into demons, and to keep their names unknown, still prevails in the greatest part of Asia. For there are never to be seen, as is the custom in Europe, the names of their monarchs prefixed to public ordinances or other edicts. These despotic words are the only made use of \*.

“A mandate issued from the mouth of him, whom the universe ought to obey.” This pride, however absurd and ridiculous, must be of very ancient date, since its origin is derived from theocracy, and has been probably the cause why the Grecian writers were so unacquainted with the eastern monarchs.

THE oracle of Delphos, in the earliest time he is mentioned by the Greeks, made Apollo speak but once a year, and that on the day in which this monarch was born, and in the spring. The Japanese are in a like notion, that once a year the

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\* *Kempfer.*

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the gods descend upon earth in an invifible manner, and refide during a month in the palace to infpire and inftruct him. The voyage which ufed to be made annually by all the divinities of Afia into Ethiopia, to commemorate the war of the Typhons and the giants, is famous in the hiftory of religion.

THE laft month of our (the chriitian) year is called *the month of the advent*, that is, *the month of the arrival*; and the renewal of the folar courfe, in which we celebrate the birth of the meffiah of the Jews, and of the ftar of Jacob. The Romans celebrated, in the fame time of the year, the birth of the invifible Mytras \*. The three mafles laid by each prieft, in popifh countries, on Chriftmas-night, feem to have fome affinity with the three altars on which the Romans facrifice in the night of the fecular games, at the commencement of each century.

THE univerfality of thefe images, notwithstanding the diverfity of motives alledged by the people of different nations and different religions, is an irrefifible proof that all thefe manifeftations of the

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\* *The Sun.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 199

the gods, of kings and of oracles, in the beginning or at the end of years, had originally nothing elfe in view but the dogms of the defcent of the great judge, and of the laft judgment at the end of the periods. Hence we can eafily conceive that univerfality of error with which the world was overflowed.

## SECTION XIV.

*The fequel of the fame fubject.*

THE king of Arrakan fhews himfelf, as Gautier Schouten informs us, but once in five years, at the full moon of the laft month of the folar year; and then the natives only are permitted to look on him. By all we have hitherto feen, the kings are under an obligation of making fuch public appearances. In this country it is the king that obliges his fubjects to flock to the capital \*, from all parts of the kingdom, there to recognize their monarch. It is amazing to fee the prodigious multitudes that come together on that occafion. In a like manner the Hebrews crowded

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\* See *Hift. of Voyag. vol. 1. p. 42.*

## 200 THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM.

crowded to their yearly paschal, which they were under a necessity of celebrating at Jerusalem. The magnificence with which the king of Arrakan appears before his people, is unequalled; the apparatus of the pomp, and of the prince's procession exceed the power of description. The travellers have all omitted in their narratives to enter into an explanation of the most instructive part, since they have not unfolded to us the meaning of the general disposition of the festival, and of all the symbolical and allegorical objects exhibited on the occasion: very probably it escaped their attention, they not being properly qualified to make such a discovery, and to which they could get no insight from the people, who are, perhaps, in the grossest ignorance as to this matter; which, indeed, is the case in all the nations, with respect to their usages derived from antiquity. How be it, these real festival days are spent in spectacles, sports, dancing, and musical concerts. These are no days of terrour, as in other nations, they are days of glee and pleasure, as were the days during the Saturnalia, celebrated by the Romans, at the recommencement both of their solar\* and their civil year †. We shall see in another place what are

\* *In December.*† *In March.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 201

are the motives why the same ceremony is an object of terrour in one place, and of rejoicing in another.

THESE periods of five years were not unknown to the antients. It was at the expiration of that term the Romans practised their general expiations, and lustrations; whence the name of *Lustris*, or the epithet of *Lustral*, was given to every fifth year. This was the term too when the enumeration of all the citizens was made: each person paid on that day a small tax, and there remains no room to doubt, from a thorough view of the usages of these festivals, that this tax was of a like nature with that paid every year by the Jews\*, a kind of redemption-fees, through virtue of which they believed they ransomed their devoted heads from the wrath of divine justice, and from being a prey to the infernal powers at the end of all the periods; most people then living in an imaginary dread of such a menace.

THE Olympic games, of so remote antiquity among the Greeks, that they know not the true epoch thereof, were celebrated by them every fourth year; which period, in its origin, was probably a sabbatic week of forty-nine months, as hath al-

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\* *The half-shekel, a Jewish coin.*

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ready been suggested by Noel le Comte, in his mythology. The Greeks had, besides their Isthmian games, celebrated every five years; the Pythian every seven; and the Nemean, at first every three, and afterwards every five years. On these public occasions there was always a prodigious concourse of people in the towns consecrated for the solemnization of those great days; for which the people prepared themselves by different expiatory ceremonies. All hostilities then ceased, that the people, united in harmony, might celebrate, without interruption, the grand exploits of the gods: the Titans crushed; the defeat of the serpent Pytho, and a great number of other allegorical anecdotes; all which were commemorative of the eventful throes suffered by nature, at the time of the destruction, and re-establishment of the world. Whoever takes his departure from this point of view, needs no key to lay open to him all the religious antiquities of Greece, on which curious subject there have been already compiled so many fruitless commentaries.

THE Hebrews also, every three years, practised certain usages, that could be derived from no other source. They had an alms-giving, an extraordinary tithe to pay, to be distributed to the Levites,

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vites, to the poor, to the orphans; and, in recompence for such good actions, they prayed the Lord would bless the people, and the land which he had given unto them\*.

THE unanimity of all the nations to celebrate the commencement and the expiration of the periods, by usages all relative to the antient revolutions of the world, leadeth us here naturally to say something on the jubilees of the Hebrews, in order to trace them upwards to their true source, which has been concealed so many centuries in the profoundest obscurity, and even from themselves. This new proof of their errors must open our eyes upon a multitude of others peculiar to themselves, but in all which mankind is greatly interested.

THE principal source of the errors of this nation, was their having forgot the language of their forefathers. The most part of its fables and mistakes arise from the wrong interpretation of names, and of particularities that were in their primitive tradition; and what many will, no doubt, be surprized to learn is, that all the authors of certain

D d 2 consecrated

\* See Deuteron. chap. vi.

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consecrated writings, were ignorant of the Hebrew tongue. But, to soften this paradox, I must add, that these authors were ignorant of the Hebrew tongue in the same manner that we (the modern French) are ignorant of that of our forefathers, the Gauls; from which, however, it is in part derived. The Hebrews deceived themselves in the very same manner as we should be deceived in words made use of by the Gauls with French ones for the same reason of their having some consonance therewith. Another source of the mistakes of the Hebrews, in regard to their language, is to be ascribed to their having been often a wandering people and transplanted into foreign nations, whence, as appears by their history, their primitive Hebrew was altered and corrupted by a mixture with all sorts of idioms; and thro' such continued deviations, they at last explained a Chaldaic word by an Hebrew one, and a Hebrew word by one either Persian or Egyptian; and, in fine, Egyptian words were rendered by Hebrew, Persian, or Chaldaic words. For example, the word Schabat, which can mean nothing else but Renovation, hath, in all their festivals and usages, produced a multitude of gross mistakes, by their interpreting it Repose; which erroneous sense led them quite astray from, and made them overlook the

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 205

the meaning of their traditions, and the primitive intention of their laws, and of their festivals, all which bore this name.

BUT here let us confine ourselves to the jubilees celebrated every seven years, because this solemnity was also called the festival of the Schabat of the earth; they imagined (when they had forgot the true signification of this title) that they perceived the meaning of it in the usages annexed to these jubilees; then this expression was to signify Repose, because, in the jubilee-year, the Hebrews let their lands lie uncultivated, did neither sow their fields, nor prune their vines, nor their olives; they gathered no fruit, they got in no harvest, made no vintage, nor collected any quantity of whatever the earth might have spontaneously produced. It is certain, that such usages were very capable of imposing on them, as was the state of inaction prescribed to them every seventh day. The pretext of an excuseable plea does not free them from an impeachment of error, no more than their legislators and their priests, and they have consequently led all mankind astray.

THE interpreters, who have hitherto undertaken to explain so strange a law, that by enjoining a  
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dereliction of cultivating their lands, must prove so very prejudicial to the community, could make nothing more of it than an inexplicable enigma. Mr. Prideaux was forced to own, that all those jubilees and sabbatical weeks, are so far from illustrating any passage in scripture, that they appear a heavy yoke, and very galling to the Israelites, on account of the frequent punishments they incurred, for their almost constant neglect of observing them, notwithstanding their excessive superstition otherwise.

THE Hebrew people, in regard to this article, never entirely relied on the promises of their deity, who had said to them, "Do not fear to die of hunger in the seventh year, for I will shower my blessings upon the sixth, that it may produce as many fruits of the earth as any other three." But the fear of famine proved more cogent than such fine promises, or severe menaces: the Israelites would till their land, bring their harvest home, and make their vintage: but, when they were afterwards stricken with great calamities, they recalled to mind this remarkable disobedience, and the distrust of their forefathers, they failed not to attribute all their misfortunes to the neglect of celebrating the jubilees; as in like manner the Romans

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mans attributed the disasters fallen on their republic to a neglect of celebrating the secular games. If we could have recourse but to the Hebrews alone for an elucidation of their own usages, vain would be our hope to obtain it. They know not themselves what was the particular object of each festival; they were also ignorant of the general object of their religion and worship, as appears by their telling us, that the jubilee was a law of Moses, made to grant repose to the world. This assertion proves their ignorance; since we can educe from their very scripture, that the distinction of the seventh years, and the usages thereto annexed, was of a much older date than Moses: for instance, Jacob, who hired himself to Laban, from seven to seven years, in order to marry his daughter, is a full demonstration that this jubiliary usage had been diffused throughout the eastern regions above two hundred and sixty years before their legislator, and the laws in the Leviticus.

To make up for whatever the Hebrews may be in default upon this article, although they have been ridiculously cried up by some as the first doctors of the world, the Americans, who are so much despised, will give us a rational account of the institution of the jubilee, and particularly of the

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the total dereliction that was to be made of all earthly things on sabbatic days.

THOSE who have travelled in, or written the history of America, are unanimous in their information, that the Mexicans expected the end of the world at the end of every age. Their age consisted of fifty years, that is, it formed the great sabbatic week of the weeks of years; and their year consisted of eighteen months, each month of twenty-one days, at the end of which five were added to complete the solar year.

IN consequence of this extraordinary expectation which the Mexicans entertained of the end of the world; the last, the expiring day of the age, was a day of affliction, mourning, and repentance. They extinguished the sacred fire in the temples, and the domestic fire in their houses. When they had broken and destroyed all their moveables and utensils, as things now become useless and superfluous, some spent the night in prayers, others in continual alarms, a prey to desolation, expecting that every hour should be nature's last. The terrour encreased in proportion as the night advanced. But hope soon succeeded, encreasing in proportion as the obscurity began to diminish.

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nish. They dared, by degrees, to ascend to the tops of their houses, with an eagerness as yet dashed with anxiety. All eyes were directed towards the East. Scrupulous observations were made upon the least perceptible advances of the returning dawn:---the general emulation then was who should prove to have the best eyes. No sooner was the return of the sun declared, by the first darting rays of the morn, than by an universal shout joy and festivity were proclaimed to all. The people ran to the temple to relume the sacred fire, and with hymns and canticles to thank the Deity for having prorogued anew the duration of their empire, and having granted another age to the world. I purposely omit entering into a detail of the festival subsequent to this great renovation: what has been already said is sufficient to explain the usages practised among the Hebrews in their jubilees; for which end we need only consider, at present, the whimsical custom of the Mexicans breaking their utensils, &c. on this occasion, as the consequence and abuse of an extravagant institution, whose object originally was to make a sacrifice to God of all their property, and to shew him how resignedly they detached themselves from every thing here below, and with what submission they were ready to obey whatever he should ordain,

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at the end of the periods relative to the fate of the universe.

By means of this essential discovery, we can account for all the follies of certain nations, when alarmed with eclipses, for their making such a frightful noise with their pots, cauldrons, and other family utensils, which they broke \* in a like manner, as I have read in several narratives by voyagers, because the sudden obscurity brought on  
by

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\* *The modern Jews, even now retain an usage, to wit, two days at least before Easter, which begins their sacred year, to renew their utensils. This usage, however, is not universal among them, no more than the custom of breaking their moveables at the time of an eclipse, was universal among the antients. To a spirit of saving and œconomy, we are, doubtless, to attribute whatever deviations have happened from this usage: the nations contented themselves in making a great noise with their utensils; &c. during an eclipse; and the Hebrews, at Easter, are satisfied in having them cleansed and purified. Something like this custom is practised by us in France; we do not, indeed, break our moveables at the renovation of the paschal year, but it is customary to purchase some new articles of domestic furniture, or new cloths in that season.*

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by the eclipse, revived in them the remembrance of the antient darkness; they imagined they saw it returning, and thinking the end of the world very near, they judged they should no longer stand in need of any thing.

WHEN all these usages are considered in one point of view, it will be as easy a matter to literally explain all the sabbatic customs of the Israelites.

IN the first place, the title of jubilee, which signifies, Horn of the Ram, that is, Trumpet, was always given to the great periods of the Hebrews; because to proclaim the commencement thereof to the people, seven priests sounded the trumpet, on the tenth of the month Tirci, to proclaim the day of expiation, in which their souls were to be afflicted. After which the high-priest entered the sanctuary, there to pronounce the terrifying word Jehovah. According to the sense of the Jews now existing, the trumpet is a sign of judgment, and consequently all our apocalypics never fail applying this fatal instrument to the mouth of the destroying angels; wherefore the very name of the festival unfolds to us the terrors

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with which the high-priest, as well as the people, were penetrated on that dreadful day.

IN the second place, that time is called the Sabbath of the Earth, that is, the Renovation of the Earth; because the idea of the end of the world is ever attended with the idea of its renovation, whether natural or supernatural. Moreover, the jubiliary time began always with the civil year. But it ought not to be a matter of surprize, if that time should have the same name which was formerly given among the Hebrews, to the first month of the solar year, called in the same sense Schabat; for the like reason that we call this month January, from an antient Latin word, signifying, "that opens, and renews the year." The Hebrew word might afford matter for an ample dissertation, which would be here too long. This remark will suffice for the present, that the words Jubilei \*, and Sabbath †, given to the same time, and the same usage, are constant proofs, that by the renovations were meant the proclaiming of judgment and the great judge.

THEREFORE

\* Trumpet.

† Numb. xxvvi. 4.

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THEREFORE, when the antient commemorative laws, or rather those derived from them, stretched the usage, as are in point the Mexican and the Hebrew laws, of forbidding mankind to cultivate their lands in the seventh year; they ordered them to live upon what the earth should spontaneously produce, or upon whatever chance should offer to them each day: which was done as a warning to them, that the end of the world was near, and that they must soon renounce every thing. And this is the time, said they, in which the supreme Being is to judge you; you must make a practice of mercy that year; you must forgive the debts your brethren owe to ye, that the great judge may forgive you yours. You must detach yourselves from all possessions here below; renounce all property, and give liberty to your slaves. All bargains, all contracts, all acquisitions, which you shall have made unto that day, will be null, because it is the year of remission, and the dissolution of all things \*.

IF,

\* This custom has proved very fatal to the history of the world; we shall find in the sequel, that this precept was the cause of that oblivion, into which are long since fallen all the antient periods of an hundred years, of

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IF, however, it should please the Lord to grant us another period, all that shall have been antecedently done is to be reputed \* as forgotten, and as not to have happened: "The sold slave is to remain free; the property acquired is to return to its former possessor; every man to his family: and you are never to think yourself empowered to dispose of land for ever, because the earth belongs to the Lord, who can take it from us when he shall please so to do, as he did from our forefathers."

It is with such a simplicity that the Mexicans would have explained to the Hebrews, those ancient usages which they so little understood, and that our popish pretended organs of the mystic spirit know as little of. Sacred writ, of which they make up a pious fillet to bind their eyes with, should sometimes operate a contrary effect, and open them, if in the midst of the various fallacies

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*of a thousand, &c. It followed also, that all the past was to be deemed as forgotten, and not to have happened. Thus, through a spirit of religion, as far as the thing was practicable, the remembrance of all things was to be obliterated.*

\* Levitic. xxv. 23.

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and truths therein contained, man was not always more inclined towards falsehood than truth.

THE fourth book of Esdras, chap. 16, confirms, in a singular manner, an elucidation of what we have quoted from the Mexicans: this prophet, as he announces to mankind that the end of the world is near, cries aloud, "Let him who sells act like him who runs away; he that acquires like him who loses; he that trades, like him that is out of the reach of gain; he that builds an house, like him that is not to dwell therein; he that sows, like him that is not to reap the harvest; he that cultivates his vine, like him who is not to make the vintage: in fine, let him who marries act as if he were never to have children: and all this, says the enthusiast, is expedient, because they who shall work, shall work in vain."

THIS application of all the usages of the jubilees, to the approximation of the end of the world, proves, without doubt, that the Hebrews have not always mistaken the true sense of these usages. "The end draws near (saith also Ezekiel, chap. 7.) this end is ready to fall upon the four quarters of the world, the day of havock among mankind, and not of the glory of the mountains: he that sells

fills will not re-enter into the possession of what he sells:” and why? because it will be the last of all the periods, as may be concluded from this extravagant and sublime chapter of Ezekiel.

THERE is reason to be astonished, that, in consequence of such presages, the Jews and Christians have never known the true institution of the jubilees; but it proceeds from the reason I have just now given, to wit, that superstition is ever blind to truth. We may, however, conclude from this ignorance, of which the first features are drawn in the p-----h, that all the errors and follies of the Hebrews date from very remote antiquity, since the compilation itself is very antient.

THIS history of the jubilees hath made us to digress from our despots; but as these festivals were relative to the periodic manifestation of this same great judge, whom all the oriental monarchs have affected to represent; by thus joining the description of the civil usages with that of the religious, we shall see better the continued and uninterrupted series of all human errors.

S E C-

S E C T I O N X V.

*The theocratic usages are kept up in all ecclesiastic Despotism.*

THE ceremonial, and all the usages which we have seen in the courts of Asiatic despots, are to be also found in practice among those nations, who suffer themselves to be ruled over by sovereign pontifs. The over-bearing pride of ecclesiastic monarchs hath far exceeded that of temporal kings, over whom, in every place, they have always affected to domineer, through the vain presumption that their function and character raise them a great deal nearer to the state of the antient theocratic king; and besides the invisibility which they affect all over Asia, they lay pretensions also to immortality.

THE great-Lama, who is called in most of the oriental regions the Universal Priest, never dies, in the opinion of the people; and to keep them in this credulous notion, every kind of imposition and artifice is made use of to fill adroitly his place when he dies, agreeably to their letting him be but seldom seen, and that with difficulty. Were these

F f impostors

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impostors to place behind a veil a block of marble, it would prove equally a true theocratic king. Its duration would be longer than that of all the Lamas ever known in this world. It would render them as much service, do them less harm, and would spare them the expence of a great number of lies.

IMMORTALITY is likewise one of the privileges of the great Kutuktu, or Katouka of the Calmucks \*. This title, which is equally difficult for him to fulfil as all the other attributes of the supreme Being, eternizeth in this country the imposture of the priests, who, to perpetuate their weak divinity, or rather their idol, persuade the people that the great pontif grows old with the moon, and is renovated with her. It is also by this means that the antient and modern Adonises were eternized, by making them die and be new-born every year; in regulating their birth and resurrection by the course of the sun, as the renovations of the grand Katouka are regulated by the course of the moon.

THE sacerdotal supremacy is purchased at a dearer rate by the Chitomé †, high priest of Abyffinia. There,

\* *Relig. Cerem. vol. vi.* † *Relat. of Ethiop. by Labat.*

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There, probably, the people are not at all ignorant of his being but meer man, and that consequently he must undergo the final law that is common to all. They do not allow immortality to their pontif, but only to the sacerdotal supremacy, which ought never to grow old, or be subject to infirmity or caducity. Wherefore, on account of the intimate connection subsisting between the person of the high priest and his function the sacerdotal supremacy; it is held necessary, in that country, to prevent the Chitomé from growing old, lest the state should suffer through the old age of the person. For, in the sense of his subjects, it would be the greatest of misfortunes, and the world must perish if their high priest were to become decrepit, and yield to a natural death. By so fatal a catastrophe the sacerdotal supremacy would be debased, dishonoured, and annihilated. But, to prevent so great a disaster, when the Chitomé falls sick they knock him in the head; when he grows too old they strangle him: and a pontif full of vigour, who is no doubt always kept in readiness, is immediately substituted successor to him. They do not allow time enough for him to fall sick and disgrace the sacerdotal supremacy, which they mean to keep eternal by this barbarous usage.

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I CANNOT take upon me to say, whether there is a conclave summoned in this country for the election of their chief pontifs, or whether there are as many candidates, or as much intrigue made use of, as when a conclave is assembled at Rome. Travellers have left us in the dark as to this point. Be that as it may, we know for certain the Chitomé of Abyssinia to be an Egyptian Apis. Even so the consecrated ox, the ancient theocratic king of Memphis, could not die naturally without bringing great calamities upon Egypt; because such a decease must, no doubt, reflect an indelible dishonour on the eternity of the monarch-deity, whose representative he was. His inspectors did not knock him in the head in so cruel a manner as the Chitomé we have just mentioned; no, when they perceived he was drawing towards his end, they respectfully drowned him in the Nile: the solemnity was performed with great devotion, after which they sought for a successor to fill his place.

THE Mexicans \* had also a kind of Apis, or living Adonis, whose fate was as cruel; a man to be

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\* *Relig. Cerem. vol. vi.*

## THE ORIGIN OF DESPOTISM. 221

be replaced every year. Adoration was paid to him throughout the year; he wanted for nothing, all honour was rendered to him, and every kind of good living served up to him: but the year come about they cut his weazon, after having given him nine days previous notice, by thus warning him; "Lord, your pleasures are to be at an end in nine days."

CRUELTY hath always been the consequence of idolatry and Despotism: these two monsters are descended from one common origin.

MODERN Europe, like Abyssinia, does not allow immortality to their sovereign pontifs; but the sacerdotal supremacy known there (as the papacy at Rome) pretends to be immortal, divine, and independent of all societies, and of all the powers upon earth. For, having lost all remembrance of the primitive origin of such theocratic chimeras, popery founds them upon the second epoch, when a panic terrour of the end of the world, and hopes of the kingdom of heaven, revived them; and filling the minds of the easily to be imposed on, with a vertiginous phrenzy, made them see in many objects, nay, in poor and wretched individuals of human structure, the great judge: and such they deified



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deified as who should be the great Being to bring down the celestial reign upon earth. It is since this epoch of confusion to mankind, that the sacerdotal supremacy thinks itself immortal, and pretends to prove a continued and uninterrupted succession of spiritual princes for eighteen centuries, and which, it is self-complaisant enough to think, will last until the end of time. I shall not here point out the end this immortality must tend to; but this I know, that we cannot trace it to its first principle, which is lost to us, being removed so far back into the ages of darkness and ignorance: for the first popes are equally fabulous as the first monarchs of Egypt and China; and this pretended immortality of the romish sacerdotal supremacy, having likewise begun in obscurity, will necessarily vanish hereafter, from the too powerful light of improving ages.

POPERY having, in fact, but revived an antient chimera, of which herself was the dupe, she hath ever since laboured to re-establish the antient theocracy upon earth, and hath indeed removed the evils and the errors, which were the annexed consequences of their false principles. From these antient sources is derived the cruel dogm of the future universality of their papal monarchy. It is

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is in quality of successors and representatives of this false great judge, adored now in a like manner as Adonis and Ofiris were; that mortals, while upon this earth, have dared to lay a claim to infallibility and independence, and that the sacerdotal supremacy hath always aspired to Despotism, directly or indirectly, by corrupting that form of government, whose constitution was the most averse from it.

THE past and present history of the church, are proofs of these sad truths; of the origin of our evils, and of the prejudices they are derived from. If we had leisure to examine the religious and political ceremonial of the election, and the life of a pope, we should therein discover, as so many new proofs of what we have advanced, all the features of the antient theocratic king, and a number of usages besides that have no other origin but the ridiculous and idolatrous abuse, which had been made in the most remote antiquity, of the sacred dogms of the descent, of the great judge, and of the arrival of the future world. I would desire no better proof of it than the indulgences, and jubilees dispensed by the popes at the time of their accession; as if the first year of their pontificat was that of the renovation of the world, and open-  
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ed to us the entrance into a future life. This, however, is intended by the opening of the holy gate, on which occasion is sung, "Open the gate of justice, the just will enter therein: behold the day of the Lord;" which, by the eye of enlightened posterity, is to be looked on as the day of fools and idolaters.

SECTION XVI.

*All Despots would fain give laws to nature.*

**I**T is not enough to take a view of kings in the theocratic ceremonial, whose drift is to raise them above mankind, which is to be treated by them as a vile herd of slaves. Let us take a review of them issuing their mandates, even to nature, and acting throughout the part of the deity, whose emblems they were designed to be.

ANCIENT history presents us with several instances of monarchs, who, thinking themselves animated with a soul superiour to that of other men, were so extravagant as to fancy they might make the elements obey them. The acts of pride we have hitherto animadverted upon, were but particular fallies of the folly of certain princes, but not

not a conduct either authorized by, or received into the plan of antient governments. However, if we gather the particular features scattered thro' antiquity, in order to confront them with those to be found in modern history, as well as with those which travellers relate to us, we shall be enabled to pronounce, if our moral historians have seen as far into these antient follies as they ought.

WERE we to have recourse to the annals of the Hebrews, we should find therein many instances of the haughty power exercised by the despots of Nineve, of Persia, of Babylon, and of Egypt, who looked upon themselves as the ruling principle of all things, and as masters of all the lands, of all the seas, of all the rivers: in fine, as the supreme deities over all the deities of the universe. But the implacable rancour which the Hebrews bore to these princes, the sport of whose power they had been, as a feather is of the wind, should make one cautious of believing their reproaches, were they not supported by the evidence of other nations.

EVERY body knows the anecdote of the famous passage into Greece, by Xerxes, and the haughty letter which that Persian despot wrote to mount Athos, commanding it to let his army pass, and

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menacing in case of a non-compliance to have it thrown into the sea. This phrenetic monarch ordered the Hellespont to be enchained for having caused the shipwreck of his fleets; and when three hundred lashes were given to the culprit sea, he made this mad apostrophe to it; "It is thus, wretched element, that thy master punishes thee\*."

THE author who has transmitted these follies to us, which are almost incredible, imputes an action of the same extravagant cast to the great Cyrus. A horse of his, dedicated to the sun, being drowned in passing a river, the irritated conqueror issued an immediate order to his troops to cut it into three hundred and sixty different channels, in order, by dividing, to annihilate the course of its sacrilegious waters.

AN antient king of Egypt †, said by some the successor of Sesostris, to punish the overflowing Nile for the frightful devastations thereby caused, shot an arrow into it.

IN the kingdom of Siam ‡, the monarchs commanded the elements, the wicked genii, and the

\* Herod. lib. i. † Diod. lib. i. Herod. lib. i. § Relig. Cerem. vol. vi.

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the dæmons, forbidding to spoil the fruits of the earth; and, like the above hinted king of Egypt, ordered the overflowing rivers to return into their beds, and cease doing mischief.

THE writers who have given us descriptions of Africa \*, relate similar anecdotes of the monarchs in that quarter of the world; where, for the most part, they are deities in full power. The inhabitants of Totoka, those of Agag, and several others bordering on Monomotapa, and even the natives of that extensive empire, address themselves to their monarch, to be relieved by them in their wants. They have recourse to him for rain, in times of famine and pestilence; and, in fine, apply to him for a number of other supernatural succours, through a mistaken notion of his divinityship.

IN the kingdom of Loango †, the king is invested with the disposal of time. One of the great festivals in that country is, when the people go to and implore him for rain, and favourable weather

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\* Relig. Cerem. vol. vii. † Idem.---Relat. of Ethiopia, by Labat, vol. ii.

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for all the seasons of the year. The king takes his bow, shoots an arrow up in the air, and the people go off contented.

THE Guigues are also in the belief, that the disposal of good or bad weather is in the power of their prince; wherefore they have recourse to him on all pressing occasions, and he is sure to be loaded with presents when the sky wears a lowering aspect.

AMONG other nations of Africa \*, where a greater confidence is reposed in the priests than is elsewhere in monarchs, supplication is made to those impostors for rain; for dry, for gloomy, or serene weather. On such occasions the priests dress themselves in a most extravagant manner: all bedizened with symbolical attributes and figures, they ascend to a high place, there to strike the air and shoot their arrows towards the sky. They are not then destitute of the cunning practised in other places, to defer such ceremonies; when rain is prayed for, till they see an appearance of clouds, that they may not expose themselves; by which

\* *Relat. of Ethiopia by Labat.*

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which finesse, travellers inform us, they for the most part succeed, and the people as constantly cry out a miracle. They have a well known pretext ready to screen themselves, should it not rain, to wit, that the sins of the people have turned the clouds another way.

NOR hath America preserved to us in a less number than Asia and Africa have, remarkable vestiges of the antient theocracies; nay, she exhibits them to us in a more precise point of view than is done by all the other nations already mentioned: because, in consequence of the examples which they present to us, we might be induced to think that these usages had their general principle in the pride and vanity of the several princes; whereas, America informs us, that they fundamentally belonged to the constitution and government of those nations. The new world figures in a second time to our assistance in this work, to instruct the inhabitants of the old.

ONE of the most remarkable strokes in the history and the government of the Mexicans, was, doubtless, the solemn oath made by the emperor on the day of his being consecrated, or his inauguration. He promised and swore, that during his reign

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reign the rain should duly fall upon the earth; that neither the rivers nor the floods should do any damage to the country by their inundations; that the fruits of the earth should grow in abundance; that the empire should not be afflicted with sterility; and, that mankind should not be visited either from heaven, or from the sun, with any malignant influences. A most extraordinary compact, and upon which, in all likelihood, it is that Justus Lipsius, and travellers, have been so idly merry; but which, notwithstanding, clears up to us all the usages we find in the oriental antiquities. Such an oath must unavoidably have been used in governments that primitively had theocracy for their basis and first principle: and hereby the antient kings of Asia, who have been so reviled, have shewed to us by the very excesses which they committed, the vices of the administration with which they had been invested. It was an immense weight put upon the shoulders of a man, when substituted in the place of mute and inanimate symbols. He was made the image and the organ of the divinity. In a like manner it was incumbent on him to command heaven and earth; to guarantee mortals from all the natural calamities which he could neither cause nor prevent; and to be the

source

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source of all the benefits which it was not in his power to bestow.

IN fine, it sprang from the imbecility of nations, begot on superstition, that he was to act as the god and as those idols, with whom they confounded him. Whereas, when he was put at the head of society, nothing more should have been required of him than to deport himself as a man, and never to forget he was, both by his nature and weakness, only the equal of those who were voluntarily subjected to him, under the common protection of the laws and religion.

MANKIND, by demanding too much from their sovereigns, obtained nothing; and Despotism became an unlimited authority, because unlimited things were demanded from the person invested therewith: whence the impossibility arose in which he found himself of granting the supernatural advantages required of him, left him no other means of manifesting his power, than that of committing the wildest extravagancies, and most outrageous acts of violence.

THIS entire chapter furnisheth us with farther proofs, that Despotism was ever an idolatry equally absurd and criminal.

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SECTION XVII.

*Remains of the theocratic usages in the courts of Europe.*

HOWEVER averse our climate is in its nature, from all such monstrous usages, that dishonour and enslave all the other nations of the earth, there yet remain some slight traces among us; and hence, for example, is derived the ancient privilege, even now arrogated by some princes in Europe, of being able to cure certain maladies by their touch. What foundation has the credulous superstition of those who have recourse to royal quackery? it is derived from that idolatrous custom, which we have observed among all the other nations, of having recourse to their kings for relief, in all natural calamities, as the sovereigns of nature, and the dispensers of good and evil, which are dealt out by the hand of providence. The king of Persia boasts also of this mysterious gift: and some Roman emperors, debauched by the bad example of the oriental despots, affected also to be possessed of the same virtue. It is nothing more than an Asiatic privilege, first introduced into the nations of our continent by

by antient barbarity; and that the progressive knowledge of the present age ought to exterminate. Our kings (in France) stand no longer in need of this shallow artifice to make themselves beloved, respected, and even adored; for as they can do no more good than what is possible to their power, it is highly reprehensible to ask from them what is impossible thereto: and as humanity is in general their characteristic, such indiscreet applications can produce no other result but to affect the tenderness of their royal and parental hearts.

THERE are several other court-myseries, which are derived without the peoples knowing that they are from the primitive errors; but it must be owned, that such usages are become, or are in themselves, inconsequent; and are kept up by a kind of prescriptive respect for custom, and in which superstition has not any share. It is not my design to enumerate them here, because all who are conversant with court ceremonials relative to monarchs, may recognize several traces thereof throughout this work.

THERE is scarce a sovereign in Europe, who, without knowing it, does not affect to keep up the oriental and periodic appearances. Our first kings

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in France imitated them chiefly on the great festival days of Easter and Christmas. The Grands Couverts \* now at court, it is probable are derived from the same source. The palaces of our kings being open and accessible at all times, do not in that resemble the impenetrable seraglios of the East: however, there is an easier admission at certain times than at others. The anniversary of the king's festival is a passport for the meanest of the people to be let into every part of the king's residence. Where the king travels every gate is flung open before him, and the grandees are all attentive, at that time, to raise their barriers in person, and lay open the avenues to their palaces and castles.

THERE are many such usages to be seen in Asia, and others quite the reverse, although both the one and the other are sprung from the same source. Every place is opened when the grand mogul goes abroad; and the grandees of his empire are bound to make him a present every time he passes by their dwelling. In Persia, sometimes every gate is shut; and was so formerly in China, when the despot

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\* By this is meant the French kings dining or supping in public to be seen.

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went abroad. The usage in the mogul's country and in Europe, by what we see here, are infinitely more humane than those in Persia and in China. It is this difference, as well as some others which we have already hit upon, in the antient theocratic ceremonial, that we are actually going to consider, the better to explain the oddities and contrarieties thence resulting.

## SECTION XVIII.

*The sources of the varieties and contrarieties observable in the different despotic governments.*

IN order to know from what principles and what source are derived the varieties of custom we have seen in the different courts of Asia, it is necessary to have recourse to the primitive dispositions of mankind, and to consider the different points of view in which the great judge may have been contemplated by the antient nations, with regard to his coming and his reign. They must have contemplated him under two principal aspects, and opposite one to the other, to wit, under one happy, and the other disastrous. The happy aspect was so called because this great event was the herald of the reign of peace and felicity, whereof such

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beautiful pictures had been made. The disastrous aspect was so called because the great judge was at the same time the herald of the end of the world, and its terrifying consequences. The expectation of him was to the just a fountain of pleasure and consolation; but for the wicked it was a perpetual object of fear and terror. The former beheld in the supreme Being a good father and a good king; the latter saw in him an inexorable judge and merciless destroyer.

THE divinity being considered under these two aspects, so were his symbols and images, because they were to represent him in every thing, and to instruct mankind concerning all the great truths it was their interest to know.

BUT when mankind, in a series of time, made a misuse of the first mute and inanimate symbols, that served to shew them the monarch-deity, under his two aspects, and that therefrom they fabricated a mob of deities and particular powers; the pagan world was quite over-run with two orders of godships, of which the one were reputed the friends of mankind; and the others were called the dæmons, and the wicked genii, they were adored through fear, because no body  
dared

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dared to pronounce their names. And that was the real origin of this obscure family of unknown gods, with which the mythology of almost every nation swarms.

THE Magi and the Persians, who did not give so precipitately into the absurd polytheism of the people of the west, ran into another error by the speculations which they instituted on the two different aspects of the antient judge.

BUT, as the theologists in remote time, like those in our days, were only capable of rendering still more perplexed what they did not comprehend; and that the good and evil which they perceived in the physical and moral part of the universe, puzzled them in a strange manner: they forged the Divinity, considered under his two primitive attributes, into two different principles, and hostile to each other, which they imagined to be always at war, and producing alternately good and evil, order and irregularity; that seeming to them to be the basis of this general harmony, observable in the universe, should, nevertheless, have brought those doctors back to more simple principles.

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THE dogms of religion being thus altered and corrupted, by the misuse made of the symbols she used to employ, and by the meditations of theologians, who crowded their imaginations with phantoms, and chimerical powers: the same abuse, and the same errors, necessarily slid into the civil and political governments, when a choice was made of man to represent the monarch-deity, whom they whelmed under his attributes. But the consequence of such abuses were more real evils, and much more fatal. There is no contemplating a mortal as the sovereign master of good and evil, without arming his hand with thunder, and without giving life to the imaginary and invisible objects spawned by superstitious terrour; so, after existence was granted to dæmons, tyrants started into being.

It cannot be denied, that these living symbols were equally laden with the attributes of equity, of goodness, and of love, &c. and though at one time they were to represent the Divinity, under his most terrifying aspect; yet, at others, they were to shew him under the milder aspect of his virtues and perfections. But, independent of the impossibility in which they were to act up to this latter part, we must not think so unfavourably of the  
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common sense of those nations, even in their errors, as to be induced to believe, that the tacit sentiment they must always have entertained of the imperfection of all those different symbols of the Divinity, caused their being rather inclined to tremble before brute or animated idols, than to have in them that entire confidence which is always the harbinger of affection.

It can therefrom be asserted, that idolatry and Despotism had both the one and the other, fear and terrour, for their chief principle and first foundation. The conduct of princes raised afterwards to a higher degree those sentiments of dread and humiliation, whose first seeds had been implanted in the constitution, both of the state and the religion.

BECAUSE sovereign masters were free to act as they pleased, like to the deity; the kings assumed, as the sons of Samuel had done, the names of Abiach and of Joël, that is, of the Father-God, and of the Strong-God; and of the tremendous; they saw not only their throne, but their heads, and their titles, decorated with all the attributes of the supreme Being. Their pride and vanity were much more taken with those that re-  
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presented an invifible power, and a will not to be changed. In fhort, their paffions and their weak- nefs warped them to find it a much more eafy task to counterfeit the great judge under his moft terrible afpect. Amongft all the motives which they might have made choice of, for the conducting both of themfelves and mankind, they preferred fear to love.

WE are now able to dive into the caufes of the diverfities, or rather contrarieties, which we have feen in the ceremonials of the Afatic courts. They derive their origin from the oppofite attributes of the antient monarch-deity, whom the fovereign princes were obliged to represent, but amongft which thefe princes neither could nor would main- tain a juft balance. And that is the reafon why almoft all the defpots that kept themfelves conceal- ed, made their names a fecret, never appeared but to excite terrour, and fpread difmay abroad. It was neceffary, almoft every where, to fly away from a view of their afpect, and to fhut the doors, as if the exterminating angels were at hand.

THESE deplorable abufes can be traced up to the moft remote antiquity, and perhaps even to the theocratic times.

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THE priefts among the Scythians, that ancient people of Upper Affa, never fhewed their deity but under the form of a lance, or a fword: and fomething not unlike was practifed in regard to the Jehovah of the Hebrews. According to their doctors and foretellers of futurity, he was nothing more than a fevere, cruel, pitilefs, jealous, and vindictive monarch, whom they efcutcheoned with all the titles and apparatus of terrour; wherefore, Judaism then was, and now is, no more than a religion of fervitude \*. The fpirit of fear and  
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\* The title of the God of Battle, which the god of the Hebrews fo often gives himfelf, made me, for a long time, fufpect him to be no more than the god of the Scythians, to wit, pitilefs Mars. The truth of my conjecture has been fince proved by an extraordinary tradition.

Hifticus of Miletum, an antient hiftorian of the Phoenician antiquities, relates, that, after the deluge, the priefts, who had taken refuge in the mountains, brought back with them to the fenate the facred worfhip of the god Enyalius. Now Enyalius, and Enys, are the Greek names of Mars and Bellona. Moreover, Mars occupies the third rank in the genealogy of the firft feven patriarchs: it is obvious then, that Enyalius is

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Despotism, we find in the theocracy of the Hebrews, which, as the most antient, and the only that we can have a distinct knowledge of, in the history of all the nations, may lead us to conjecture, that the theocracy and Despotism thence derived might have been really established with the intent of governing societies by terrour; and that legislators might have been compelled thereto by the indocility which they had observed in the minds and hearts of mankind. The theocracy of the Hebrews, that appears to have been established upon this principle, seems to be favourable to such surmises, and even to realize them, by a striking example, which, in the eyes of many people, will be of great weight and significance.

BUT it will appear the reverse to all judicious eyes, that have already descried the false and the marvellous with which the Hebrew annals are disgraced: wherein the theocracy of the Hebrews has never existed such as history describes it to us; or,  
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*is the same as Mars: his name in Hebrew signifies Mortal Thing, therefore he is the same as Enyalios, which the Greeks have compounded from Enos and Ly-lus, a Phœnician expression, which signifies in one word, The Death-Dealing God.*

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if it has subsisted in that style, it could have been but in times very posteriour to the primitive.

WE ought, therefore, avoid the mistake of imagining the Hebrew to have been the only, and much less the first of all the theocracies; she has been but a late, and very unfaithful copy thereof. Nay, perhaps, considering the many fables she is surcharged with besides, she is nothing more than a collection of false traditions; in regard to the antient, which superstition has compiled, and which ignorance has painted with the same features, and the like characteristic colours that gave their complexion to all the neighbouring despotisms, when she undertook to sketch a description of them. To be convinced of this, there needs only to examine, with some attention, the plan and spirit of this theocracy, as well as the true and false history of all the antecedent events related in the Bible. It will then appear that government was established among the Hebrews only with an intent of separating them from all the foreign and idolatrous nations.

It is remarkable, that the first theocratic commandment given upon mount Sinai, forbid worshipping the idols of the gods, which is a glaring  
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proof that the ignorance and profanation of the name had been spread over the whole earth for many ages; and we read in the first books of Moses a great number of names, and of festivals that have an affinity with mythology and idolatry.

LET us now form a judgment, from these remarks, how much the history of the world is confounded in certain consecrated writings, seeing that they make theocracy younger than idolatry, although the latter, as we have hitherto observed, was the fatal consequence and daughter of the former. We must not, therefore, expect to find in these books the original spirit of theocracy, nor be astonished that the Hebrews have erred concerning it; and that they have exhibited their monarch-deity to us as terrible as were the despots of Assyria, of Persia, and of Babylon, whose governments were all become theocratic tyrannies, whose invisible prince had been personalized for a long series of time.

HAVING now shewn the futility and nothingness of the historical basis upon which this suspicion against the antient character of mankind might have been supported; I think it incumbent

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on me to evince how far such a suspicion would be unjust in itself and injurious to mankind in general; because, if the above-mentioned atrociousness and hardness of the human heart have not only formerly existed, but now are actually displayed in several nations, it is not therefrom that we are to derive an adequate idea of the genius of the primitive inhabitants of the earth, and much less of that possessed by the elder spectators of the disasters of the world, who are the only persons that ought to be the objects of our animadversions here. These mortals being rendered by their sufferings and their misery religious, moderate, industrious and compassionate, they needed not to be ruled with a sceptre of iron; all they wanted was a paternal government, one friendly to the human race; and, no doubt, it was such a one they instituted; because, in many regions, despotism dares yet to assume the name; inasmuch as the remembrance of the first times hath been always dear to all the nations, and that the traces thereof, which are preserved in the history of the legislation of those first ages are their greatest encomium.

MANKIND was, indeed, imprudent and superstitious in imagining that the civil institutions ought

ought to be submitted to the monarch-deity. But this erroneous speculation is a proof how upright their intentions were; how pacific, how simple, and how quiet their character. If they have changed in a series of time, it is through suffering the punishment, not of their wickedness, but of their superstition; the inevitable consequence of their unhappy choice, which, by producing tyrants, produced insensibly an alteration in the minds and the hearts of the people, that hardened in proportion to the hardness of government. They grew habitually obstinate under the weight of the burdens which they were made to carry; they became callous, insensible and brutified in a manner, by the excessive miseries they endured in their state of slavery.

THUS it was that the abuses sprung from theocratic sway, and the rigour of despotism perverted the primitive character of mankind; almost changed their nature, and in many places forced them to repel violence by violence, to escape from being totally crushed.

THE antient and modern inhabitants of the continent of Asia, who have so often exhibited to us the spectacle of great revolutions, that happened

peried in the persons of their despots, are notwithstanding, and have always been, by their character and climate, a mild and pacific people. Such hath always been the mildness, the good faith, and the excess of religion in that too unfortunate part of the world; that, after having been an hundred times the dupes and victims of adored impostors, who ought to have been strangled, they never had recourse to a government more permanent and more moderate, by putting the throne, the monarch, and the subjects under the protection of one common law, that might defend and support them reciprocally.

WHAT a horrid government must that be, whose cruelty and rigour are perpetuated through the mildness and natural submission of the subjects! How big with falsehood, to say no more, must that notion be, that would incline us to surmise, that despotism could have been the result of a rational legislation, accommodated to the true character of man, and calculated for the welfare of the human species! Our hearts would rise up against, and flatly contradict it. Experience and history would give it the lie.

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IF there be a country in the world where despotism seems to wear a milder and more winning aspect, so far as to weaken, in some sort, and efface the pre-conceived horrors against it, China must be the place. There this form of government has throve so successfully, that it is difficult to imagine, if any other (as it has done) could have kept up the immortality of the empire; which is esteemed the most prudent, as it is the most antient of all empires now subsisting. So extraordinary an exception merits a particular enquiry concerning China, and that we thither pursue the common enemy of mankind, in order to attack him, if possible, upon his first throne, and in the very centre of his glory.

## SECTION XIX.

*On the despotism of China.*

IF the laws of China had been dictated by despotism, they would have proved its greatest panegyric; but in this empire, as well as every where else, they were prior to it: the sovereigns there have been the production of society and the laws. The same chain of events, which we have hitherto followed in all the nations, produced like-

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likewise, in this country, the mixture of good and evil which must have been the necessary consequences of the first institutions, and the first prejudices of mankind.

THE article by which the Chinese are distinguished from all other nations, and that hath sometimes proved a counterpoise to those evils, which the original prejudices excited in the empire; is the unlimited respect which they have at all times had for the primitive institutions of their ancestors; and the consummate veneration which they have preserved for the antient civil and political laws, that had been formed after no other model, but the œconomical, domestic, and moral laws, observed by the first families of the renovated world.

WE are not, however, to look upon the Chinese (on account of this extraordinary privilege) as a particular species of men: no; for if they have been more wise, and more happy, than so many other nations, that had also been originally possessed of those inestimable laws, but who had lost them for such a long series of time: they were indebted for so extraordinary an advantage to the situation of their empire; for, being sequestered in a manner to the end of the world, they were

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encompassed on one side by an immense sea, on the other by mountains inaccessible, and unknown to the rest of mankind; nay, with which themselves were not acquainted. Therefore, for a long succession of years, no event through inroads from abroad could have caused any alteration in the primitive œconomy of this empire: wherefore the laws had the time necessary for producing all the good they are capable of. The long experience of their utility, and their excellence, having been engraved on the hearts of the people, is the only cause whereby the primitive spirit of mankind is preserved, and continues, even now, the national spirit of this wonderful empire.

WITHOUT this lucky concurrence, the constitution of China must, in all likelihood, have undergone the same fate which the rest of the world has, because, like them, she had interwoven with her constitution the inherent vice, which was common to all, and the fatal seed of that Despotism, and of that servitude, which by degrees were necessarily established among them, and which, throughout the nations, have often occasioned dreadful revolutions.

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THE fables and the idolatrous worship of the Chinese, are certain monuments of the reign of chimeras and of theocratic prejudices. The ceremonial of the emperors, as well as the peoples conduct, and manner of thinking relative thereto, are striking proofs that mortal man hath been raised in China, to the antient throne of the monarch-deity, in the very same manner which we have traced out in all the other nations, and that there, as every where else, the sovereigns were enthroned for the sole intent of representing the supreme Master of heaven, and of holding in their hands the balance of good and evil, which the deity alone knew to dispence properly and justly.

THEN far from being dazzled to an almost implicit blindness, by the accounts which we read of this famous people, we on the contrary ought to be made sensible, through all those usages, that in China the good and bad impressions of her primitive constitution are equally preserved.

THE emperor of China is stiled, Son of the Sun. None speak to him but on their knees; there have been times when he never shewed himself; in others, he only appeared at a window at certain times; and when he went out of his palace

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lace all the gates were shut. He is decorated like the Osiris of Egypt, with all the titles and attributes of the Divinity. He is the sovereign of the religion, and of the polity. He has, at all times, enjoyed a power, and an authority, unrestrained by any human law, although excellent ones might have been instituted in regard to him.

Thus we find, in this country, the strangest mixture of wisdom and folly. If we were inclined to run over its annals, we should therein read of kings, whose utmost glory was to be called the Fathers and Pastors of their people, whom they looked upon as their children. We should also see the people rendered thus happy, call those good kings by the name of father \*. We should sometimes too meet with kings, who, become the shame and scourge of humanity, strike horror and despair through all ranks, and force the people, departing from the natural mildness of their genius, to betake themselves to the atrocious resolution of exterminating the family of a tyrant, or of calling in other barbarians to their succour, that they might assign over to them their liberty and their revenge.

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\* *Mem. of Le Comte, vol. iii.*

IN such cruel vicissitudes, which have so often made this empire change masters, the vices of its constitution were in a continual struggle with its virtues: the energy of the natural laws was ever prevalent, and took the lead in the beginning of the dynasties: and such was their excellence, that even the new conquerors cheerfully submitted to, and admired them. But, in process of time, the hidden vice began to shew itself, gathering strength insensibly, till at last it excited new combustions in the state.

WE must not then expect to find, at any other time but at the beginning of each of the dynasties, or when heaven had made a present to the empire of some prince pre-eminent for his personal virtues, the model of a perfect government: but, that no error may hence arise, be it remembered, that the Chinese government was for that time no longer a Despotism.

FROM seeing some virtuous emperors, whose power was extreme, prefer the title of father and preserver of their people, to the epithets terrible and tremendous, it appears, that if these monarchs were not limited and restrained by laws, they, however, restrained themselves by reason and morality:



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rality: so that the government of China, despotic by its nature, and theocratic by its principle, that is, but little calculated for this earth, drew nearer to man and to humanity, and proportioned itself thereto, as one may say, by the good sense and prudence of those respectable monarchs. In such glorious intervals, when monarchs were capable of suspending a too great excess of power, and of prescribing new and unusual limits to it, through such princes Despotism became monarchial in its exercise, and thereby constituted the happiness and safety of the people.

FOR, in effect, what kind of Despotism is that which tolerates to exist within its precincts the antiently established bodies of magistrates and literati, who have often dared, and with success, under good sovereigns, to make remonstrances to them, although despots; to give instructive lessons concerning government; to declare to them, with as much truth as boldness, that the obligation they are under to moderate their power, and to make no bad use thereof, establisheth instead of overturning it; and that the salutary constraint which they ought to impose on their passions, does not render their condition upon earth worse than that  
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of the imperial Sovereign of heaven, who allows himself no power but that of doing good.

A GOVERNMENT in the full glory of such shining circumstances, was not, as yet, absolutely a monarchy; nor was it a Despotism:---What was it then? One of the primitive theocracies, which erroneous principles had not as yet caused to degenerate: it was a precious image of those times in remote antiquity, celebrated under the title of the Golden Age, when reason swayed, as yet being the first and only law for the guidance of mankind.

THIS proves Le Comte not to be entirely wrong, where he tells us, that from a view of the antient laws of China, it would seem to us as if God himself had been the Legislator who dictated them: and no wonder, because they had been established in those theocratic times, when God was held to be actually the king of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof as the just and the elect, over whom he was immediately to reign.

THESE amazing instances, collected from the history of China, do not lead us back to Despotism; but, instead thereof, to the elevated and sublime

sublime speculation of the primitive people, whose intention was to model themselves upon the government of heaven, in order to be happy upon earth. By recalling it to our memory, they at the same time give us a knowledge of all the danger, and all the illusion, with which it teemed. For it was in consequence of this fatal supposition, that all the nations gave themselves up, without any reserve, to the capricious sway of an individual, from a mistaken belief, that in so doing they gave themselves up to the all-wise providence of the sovereign Emperor both of heaven and earth.

THESE detached anecdotes, which we admire in the Chinese history, cannot be a counterbalance to the cry of nations, and the experience of all times, which jointly rise up against the theocratic system, and against all arbitrary administrations, which are thence derived. I hear this universal cry of nature inform the Chinese (who have not been always so wise and so happy as is imagined) that all those convulsions which have so often shook their empire, were derived from no other source but the supernatural tendency in the speculations of their forefathers; and it was the prime cause of there having been in China, as well as in other places, such monsters in a human form as  
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Sardanapalus, a Nero, &c. who, under the name of the deity, and the protection of theocratic prejudices, sported with the sufferings of mankind. It also informs them, that those very revolutions which had been occasioned by the antient chimeras, destroyed in their country, as they have done in all others, the true monuments of the history of the world, to substitute in their room collections of lies and fabulous annals\*.

THIS universal cry of nature, informs them likewise, that it was their antient suppositions, and  
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\* *Antiquity makes mention of several princes who had been actuated with the foolish and cruel ambition of destroying the monuments of all the reigns, and of all the times which had preceded them, in order to pass, in the opinion of posterity, for the first of mankind, and for the source and origin of all societies. Those pestilential monsters have even envied the revolutions of nature, their afflictive power, and very probably endeavoured to counterfeit them. The ideas and prejudices with which the antients were imbued, in regard to astronomical and astrological periods of the duration of the world, must have contributed to the folly of those princes. It was imagined, that in a period which was successive to another, the world was no longer the same: and as religion*

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the misuse of the figurative ceremonial, which made them stray into idolatry, the sister and inseparable companion of Despotism: that, in fine, it is the false principles of theocracy, as well in polity as in religion, that have caused all the different catastrophes happened there since the renovation

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religion then admonished them, that they ought to renew themselves, as she yet admonisheth us, it was believed that every thing ought to be renewed and changed, even to their memory; for then, as at the jubilee of the Hebrews, all the past was deemed forgotten, and as not to have happened. The antient manner of reckoning the years was left off, and a new one substituted, which made them to neglect the antient ages, and prior epochs; and that, no doubt, has been the original cause of the different chronological epochs and æras, that have perplexed so much the history of the world, and of which, perhaps, there is retained but the smallest part in our histories. But, independently of these prejudices, and their natural effects, it has, moreover, been the folly of conquerors to renew these epochs. The pastor-kings endeavoured to erase, in Egypt, the remembrance of past ages. The Babylonians and the Chinese have had princes guilty of the like extravagance; and who, for the same intent, sentenced a considerable quantity of books to be burnt, the loss of which is to be forever

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vation of the world, which is the date of that extensive empire.

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ever deplored. And there is reason to believe, that it is to the consequence of such frenzies we are indebted for the Jewish annals. This nation held all the others in such contempt, that we may readily conclude their priests, after their transmigration, comprised in the best manner they could, the annals of the nation, in which they endeavoured to absorb all antiquity, and to confine to themselves the origin of all the nations. But that which already discovers their foolish vanity, and cannot fail hereafter to confound them, is, that they have compiled anew these annals with more superstition than genius: they have, in part, made use of none other but the primitive materials, which, indeed, they have misplaced and disfigured in point of truth, but not so far as to render it impossible to discover their primitive form and place. The annals of the Hebrews, of the Egyptians, of the Chinese, &c. present to my view new buildings erected by unskilful and imposing architects, who, in making use of the materials of elder edifices, which they had destroyed, did not efface the primitive relievos thereof so far, but that fragments of the first building are discoverable in the foundation of the second.

HAVING now examined the constitution of China, and acquired a knowledge of the character of this people, so passionately fond of their customs, good or bad, which had been transmitted to them from their ancestors, we can the better extend our view to futurity, in order to foresee what is like hereafter to befall this famous empire, from such an attached zeal, which deserves the epithet of machinal rather than that of rational. All the remains of her antient institutions, which China now possesses, will necessarily be lost; they will disappear in the future revolutions; as what she hath already lost of them vanished in former ones: and finally, as she acquires nothing new, she will always be on the losing side, and the alterations which she has to undergo will be still to worse, while those effectuated every where else will be still to better.

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SECTION XX.

*Conclusion of Despotism.*

THE many sources and the several causes of Despotism ought now to be as well known as the evils which it has produced. This form of government, however illustrious its origin may have been, has never, from its rise, appeared other but a pernicious monster, and will always be the scourge of mankind, which it renders vile, degrades and dishonours.

THEOCRACY looked upon men as just; despotism as wicked. Both the one and the other government, by supposing principles in the extreme, and not at all adapted to this world, brought forth at the same time the shame and miseries of mankind; then came idolatry, and invaded the throne which had been raised to the monarchy; then unlimited slavery crept into the place of that precious liberty which the human race had meant to preserve through supernatural means.

By hoping to make the reign and the state of the just in heaven descend upon earth, mankind was

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was plunged into all the horrors and all the despair appendaged to the reign of hell.

INSTEAD of looking upon kings as the representatives of public reason and the epitomized image of the society over which they preside, mankind would fain consider them as the representatives of the Deity, who cannot have any such upon earth without being disgraced thereby; because all such images deceive us, through a crowd of prejudices, which spring from that kind of superstition.

IT is then finally demonstrated, that despotism is a kind of government, as contrary to religion as to good sense and right reason. Thus it is to be defined in a few words. Despotism is a pagan theocracy.

I say that Despotism is a pagan theocracy; it might, doubtless, be sufficient to say, that it is a theocracy; for, what kind of theocracy can there be in the world but what is pagan and idolatrous?

IDOLATRY consists not only in revering a statue, an animal, or a man, as the representative of the Deity.

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Deity. In order to convey a true notion, this would be the most adequate definition of idolatry, to wit; *it is a worship or a polity, supposing that to be divine which is not divine*: wherefore, it is not only idolatrous, to believe that the words of a man, and the oracles said to have been uttered by marble and brass, are the words and decrees of the deity; it is also idolatrous to prefer mystic and theocratic speculations to reason and good sense; it is idolatrous to believe, that all legislation is immediately derived from the very God, and dictated to his ministers from above. It is idolatrous to acknowledge a divine and ineffaceable character in the theocratic ministers. It is idolatrous to apply for the guidance of man's conduct here below, laws that are adapted only to heavenly Beings. It is idolatrous to sacrifice the peace, tranquility and reason of the public to all the trumpery of soothsayers, fortune-tellers, magicians, oracle-retailers, manifestations, or whatever pompous titles other well known impositions may be decorated withal. It is idolatrous to confound heaven with earth, to fain be independent of the public reason, to misknow one's self, and to pretend to be more than man. It is idolatrous to renounce being entitled a citizen of the world, the subject of one's natural sovereign, in order to tyrannize over the human

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human race in the name of the deity; or to live in a recluse manner, either despising or forgetting the rest of mankind.

IN fine, since it cannot be denied, Theocracy, the parent of all errors, as well as Despotism, both religious and civil, which are sprung from it, and every government and administration either derived from, or bearing any resemblance to it, are all idolatrous, as absurd in themselves, as they are criminal in regard to the Deity, and pernicious to all societies.

SECTION XXI.

*How Despotism declined in Europe. Republics succeeded. The false principles of this new form of government.*

HAVING made a due investigation of all the circumstances attendant on the rise, progress, and duration of Despotism, the curious may desire to be informed by what means it was overthrown in several regions of the world, and which was the first people that, indignant to bear its galling yoke any longer, had recourse to make choice of a new and milder form of government.

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They may also desire that we should unfold the nature of the so chosen government; and it being generally known, that the successive thereto were the Republican and the Monarchical, it may be expected from me that I at least should enter into a detail of their founders views, and delineate the characteristic features of these two new legislations. Desires and questions of this nature, being so intimately connected with the present subject, I shall endeavour to satisfy them in the best manner I can.

Now we shall have an opportunity of seeing, that amongst the various nations, all doomed to the like slavery, some individuals began to be actuated by a proper sense of the privileges belonging to their nature, as well as by the influence of the climate in which they lived.

The history of the world, so far back as we can look upon its information to be authenticated, teacheth us, that Europe was the first to take the lead; for, having been so long harassed by the tyrannical government of her kings in ancient times, she overturned the thrones which had been established in Greece and Italy, and, endeavouring to restore to mankind the honour and liberty, of which they had been so long deprived, founded

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the republican government through all her provinces, as the most capable of rendering mankind free and happy. These new means were big with new errors, which we must trace up to their fountain-head.

We have already observed, that after the extinction of ecclesiastical theocracy; all the nations avoided a many-headed form of government, from a religious principle, and a long imbibed prejudice, that mankind ought to be governed upon earth by one only will, as the universal system is by the supreme Being. The bad consequences derived from this great principle, were its necessarily producing greater evils in each society, and spreading devastation every where. The Europeans were the first disgusted at such oppressive measures; because, among mankind, they had the quickest sense thereof. We must not, however, for that reason, think them freed from all the prejudices which the fertile womb of remote antiquity had hereditarily poured out on this world; and that they had no share in the new form of government, which was adopted in consequence of this political revolution: so far from it, the primitive theocratic speculations were revived; and, by influencing the new measures entered upon, and the projects of liberty suggested on all hands, these an-  
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ient chimeras became again the source of all the vices, and all the disorders inherent to the republican constitutions of Greece and Italy.

THE regal government, and its necessity, were so strongly impressed upon the minds of the Europeans, and so closely interwoven with their religion, that even those among them, who were actuated by the greatest hatred and horreur of royalty, thought it prudent to preserve its shadow, although they had destroyed its reality. Therefore the Athenians and the Romans made over to the priesthood that title, but devoid of any power; hence the origin of the King of the Augurs, and the King of the Sacrifices; by which finesse, they fancied they fulfilled the remaining religious prejudices, relative to the necessity of a king's presence in society; but even here we can easily discover, that all this was dictated by the theocratic spirit; because, at the very same time, the Athenians erected a statue to Jupiter-King, intimating, that, for the future, they would have no other but him.

WHAT then has been effected by the republicans? nothing more than the re-establishment of primitive theocracy, as well as of all the other pre-

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judices thereon dependant, that ever tended to enforce a familiarity of the government and condition of mankind upon earth, to the government and condition of the inhabitants of heaven. It was they inspired all the new laws then instituted for securing the liberty, equality, and happiness of each subject; and it happened, that the very prejudices, which had been big with all the disasters known in the times of ancient theocracy, became also the fertile parents of all the discords and perpetual commotions, wherewith republics are agitated; that, from their not having fixed, but only illusive points of light to go by, and false principles for the regulation of their conduct, they were never able to attain the state of tranquillity, for which they so strenuously endeavoured. From a false imagination, that an equality amongst the members of society, preventable by a thousand physical and moral causes, and only practicable in heaven, was essential to liberty; all the members of a republic being rendered equal, were become so many kings, so many legislators.

In order to maintain such vain-glorious chimeras, every republican state has had recourse to forcible, violent, and supernatural means; to wit, the division of lands, the abolition of debts, the  
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community of possessions, the numbering and valuing of the legislative voices, a multitude of laws concerning luxury, frugality, commerce, &c. which kept them for ever employed, and for ever divided. The republics boasted their being free, and yet were always in search of liberty. Tranquillity was the harbour they all set out for, but could never make it. They said all their members were equal, though, in fact, there was no equality among them.

In fine, all these republican governments, because they had ever in view, an enjoyment of the utmost advantages that can be ascribed to theocracy, and the heavenly reign, were perpetually tossed about like those vessels that sail on stormy seas in quest of imaginary realms; and, having been for a long time beleaguered by frightful tempests, are at last wrecked upon rocks, or dashed to pieces on the inaccessible shore of some desert island. In a like manner the republican system was ever in quest of a fabulous country; and, flying from Despotism, met it every where. Such was the bad constitution of those governments, meaning to effectuate the equality and liberty of the people, and was derived from that very Despotism, so much the object of their professed abhorrence; and, in  
trying



trying times, was often their last resource, and chief support. Rome, to save herself, was under the cogent necessity of forgetting her republicanism, and of submitting to a sovereign authority under the different titles of Decemvirs, Censors, and Dictators.

I SHALL not mention here the other theocratic principles, concerning the unity of the reign of the monarch-deity, which, having been transferred into the republican system, excited therein a thirst of conquest, through a spirit of religion, to the great annoyance of all other societies.

THERE needs no more to be thoroughly convinced, that a republican government is neither calculated for our globe, nor adapted to the character of man; nor capable of constituting his happiness here below, than to reflect on its inconstancy, perpetual divisions, short duration, and the narrow limits of its territories, wherein it is always necessarily confined for the preservation of its constitution. Through the means of this last precaution become so indispensibly essential to it, there appeared less unity among mankind than ever was known before. The inequality and jealousy of republics, in regard to each other, caused the

the effusion of as much, nay, of more, human blood, than the most cruel Despotism ever shed. The great societies devoured the small ones; and, in their turn, the great societies devoured each other, and finally themselves.

WE ought, however, to interest ourselves for republicanism, and plead in its behalf, through the extraordinary merits it has exhibited to us, in so many surprizing examples of fortitude, courage, and other virtues, whereupon the immortality of its reputation is founded. But, that we may not be seduced, and imposed upon by such splendid instances, it will be sufficient to make an enquiry into the causes of her virtues, as we have into the causes of her vices.

THE theocratic principles, which we have traced out in republican systems, were above the force of human nature, and therefore must have raised man above himself. It lasted but for a time, because mankind, then acting through an excess of fervour and zeal, were not able to continue constant in a state which is not natural to their condition upon earth; and prodigies have but a transitory duration here below: because, they are not a part of the common course of nature. It was, therefore,

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therefore, necessary, that the republicans should soar above themselves, for a certain time, because the point of view whereon they had fixed their eyes, was supernatural. It was necessary for them to be virtuous during a certain time, because their ambitious form of government would ridiculously ape the government of heaven, which is the residence of virtue. But, after all, they were necessitated to relapse into humanity, for which end they had been created.

It is this very supernatural tendency, which we admire in the republics of old, and which we seem to regret, that was, in all probability, the source of the transitory happiness enjoyed during the primitive theocracies, which mankind has dignified with the appellation of the golden age, and the reign of justice: it was this same supernatural tendency, which, in process of time, so far animated the primitive church, as to make it in our days to be so often mentioned with enthusiasm.

ALTHO' the speculative objects of these three forms of government may appear different to us, yet they have been fundamentally the same; wherefore all three must necessarily have produced prodigies of virtue: but the same supernatural spirit, which  
excited

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excited and fired them in their pursuit, was the cause of the shortness of the practice; and why? whatever is supernatural is not suited to our earth.

THIS leadeth us to an apposite reflection here, to wit, that the popish superstition was mistaken when she called the heroic virtues of the ancients false virtues, and human virtues; if they were false that proceeded from a quite contrary cause, from their being more than human:---and what causeth the misfortune and despondency of many now-a-days, is, that most of the virtues proposed to the bulk of mankind, in all parts of the world, by enthusiast preachers of all religions; and in the Christian, by raving, popish missionaries, are of this sort.

VIRTUE, that necessarily actuating principle of republican governments, is an agent so disproportionate to the business of this world, that in the republics of Greece and Italy it proves an error.

THIS sublime virtue, which produces equality in heaven, causes upon earth that inequality which all endeavour to avoid. Rome and Athens have furnished us with proofs, that appear strange and inconceivable, because we never make a proper estimate

imate of man. The most eminent personages, the most virtuous citizens; in fine, all the worthies who had conferred the greatest obligations on these republics, were thence banished, or went into voluntary exile. Their merits were offensive to the hidden and jealous workings of human nature: their superiour virtues rendered them a kind of state criminals against the prevailing and established spirit of equality amongst the people.

SECTION XXII.

*On monarchical government.*

**T**HE abuse of Despotism, the dangers annexed to republics, and the erroneous tendency of these two governments, derived from theocracy, would, of themselves, suggest to us the opinion which we ought to form of the third, though reason alone were not to dictate it. That government where the monarch's throne is founded upon the laws of society, over which he reigns, is doubtless the wisest and the happiest of all.

ALL the principles of such a government spring from the very nature of man, and of the planet which he inhabits: it is fitted to this world as a republic

republic and a theocracy are for heaven; and as Despotism is for hell. Honour and reason, that gave it birth, and direct its course, are the true actuating principles of man, in the same manner as that sublime virtue (of which republics have displayed to us but a few transitory rays) is the constantly actuating principle of the inhabitants of heaven; as fear in despotic states is the only actuating principle of the damned.

MONARCHS alone possess the true means of making mankind enjoy all the happiness possible, all the liberty possible, and every other real advantage that can possibly be enjoyed upon this earth: for, like to other antient forms of government, it never sought after chimerical ones, which cannot be constantly made use of, but at all times may be abused.

THE monarchical form of government ought to be esteemed as the master-piece of human reason; and the port whither man, tossed about on the stormy ocean of life, in quest of an imaginary happiness, should have steered, in order to attain one adapted to him; not so sublime indeed as that he had in view, but more solid and more real in this world.

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IN the monarchical form of government he sees kings who neither affect any attributes of the divinity, nor forget that they are men. There he can love, honour, and respect them, without adoring and fearing them as gods or dæmons. There kings subscribe to the social and fundamental laws of society, by whose energy their thrones are immovably fixed, and their subjects rendered happy: there men obey without reluctance or murmuring, those salutary laws to which they are indebted for such prudent sovereigns, and for all the honourable and rational advantages which distinguish man from the Asiatic slave, and the savage of America.

WHEREAS our ancestors were under the guidance of found reason, and were deeply penetrated with a just sentiment of the dignity of human nature, when they agreed to submit themselves to kings, they proceeded to no extravagant choice between a god and a dæmon: no; they made choice of a mortal like unto themselves, whom the public reason supports by fixed and permanent laws, by which he himself is the first bound, because he is a man, and the first among men. This moderate form of government, which is so congruous to humanity, does not require that its kings should act as gods; it

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it does not require from the people a rigid virtue, of which few are capable; or a slavish submission, which would either disgust or must degrade them. It sets a just value upon men, and leaves them in the free enjoyment of their sentiments concerning their civil and their natural state. It cherishes in each individual that sentiment of the dignity of his nature, called Honour. And if men be actuated by passions, because they are men, and as such ought to have them; the state knows how to contain them within proper bounds, and to convert them to a general good. What an admirable constitution! how worthy of all our respect, and all our love! Every society must therein behold, and be sensible of a situation by so much the more lasting, and the more happy, as not established either upon false principles, on chimerical means and motives, or upon superstitious and mystical ideas, but upon reason, nature, and the true characteristic of things here below.

I do not intend now to enter into a detail of the differences from each other, observable in the present monarchies of Europe. They are all, more or less, founded upon true principles; one thinks she enjoyeth a perfect constitution, though still infected with the errors of the antient monarchies.

Another

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Another wastes herself in complaints, although, perhaps, happier and nearer to perfection than she is aware of.

WE are not to despair of the possibility of seeing hereafter perfect monarchies, wherein nothing will be wanted that is thought essential to this form of government. Its principles being humane and natural, will point out all the laws that ought to be truly her's; and from these laws being as humane and natural as their principles, we may easily foresee that time and the progress of reason will necessarily lead thereto. The same cannot be said of the two other forms of government. The perfection of a republic, or of a theocracy, is a chimera; the perfection of despotism is an horror; and when not so, is no longer despotism.

THE present monarchies may as yet have some faults, but it is not my business to point them out. I am but a subject, and the happiness which I enjoy under the laws and my prince, require that I should be nothing more. It is the progress of knowledge influencing kings and the public reason, that is, to communicate to them the final instructions upon whatever may be defective in regard

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regard to the true interest of society: and to this progress of knowledge which commands, in an invisible manner, all beings in nature endowed with thought, is reserved the future right of being the legislator of mankind, and of diffusing imperceptibly without any forcible effort, new light over the political, as it constantly sheds over the learned world.

## O B S E R V A T I O N S

*On the Spirit of LAWS.*

I Should think I had omitted the most interesting of the observations I had to make, if, after having traced up to their source, and then followed the progress of the different governments which now subsist, or have heretofore subsisted in the world, I were not to conclude with animadverting on, and admiring the genius of the great author of that work; who (unacquainted with the particular origin of these governments, about which very like he never made any enquiry) has begun his work where I end mine, and notwithstanding hath assigned to each its actuating principle, and the laws thence derived.

WE

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WE have observed that theocracies and republics took heaven itself for the model of their administration. "It is virtue, says M. de Montesquieu, that ought to be the actuating principle of a republican government."

WE have observed that the sole intent of despotism was to represent the great exterminating judge in corrupted theocracy. "It is fear, faith again M. de Montesquieu, that is the actuating principle of despotism."

"It is honour, says this legislator of our times, that must be the actuating principle of monarchy." We have, in fact, acknowledged, that it is the only rational form of government fitted to this globe, which leaving man in a just sentiment concerning his state and his existence, is to be maintained and preserved by honour, which is nothing more than that sense which we all have of the dignity of our nature.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been advanced by passion, ignorance, and superstition, against the principles of the sublime author of the *Spirit of Laws*, they are in themselves as true as his sagacity in discovering them was immense. But such is the

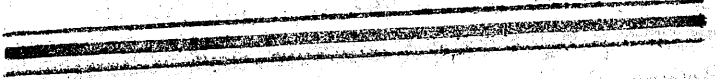
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the privilege of superiour genius, that it alone is capable of coming at a great whole, of which it sees but a part, the total being yet unknown to its almost godlike penetration.

WOULD he were now alive, that most extraordinary man, not only of our time, but even of all past ages, still to instruct us, and to re-enter upon this work as a property, of which he would make a more advantageous use, than inferior abilities have permitted me; and now, to his ever to be honoured memory, this theologico-political Essay is dedicated, as a tribute of the most sincere, and the most unfeigned gratitude.

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