they had no objection occasionally to join with each other in the worſhip of their reſpective tutelary deities. Nay, it was thought impiety in foreigners, while they ſojourned in a ſtrange country, not to ſacrifice to the gods of the place. Thus Sophocles makes Antigone ſay to her father, that a ſtranger ſhould both venerate and abhor thoſe things which are venerated and abhorred in the city where he reſides ; and another author @@\*, who, though comparatively late, drew much of his information from ancient writings, which are now lost, aſſures us, that this complaiſance proceeded from the belief that the “ ſeveral parts of the world were from the beginning diſtributed to ſeveral powers, of which each had his peculiar allotment and reſidence.”

From this notion of local divinities, whoſe power or par­tial fondneſs was confined to one people, the Israelites, at their exodus from Egypt, appear not to have been free @@(Z). Hence it is, that when the true God first tells them, by their leader Moſes@@\*, that if they would obey his voice in­deed and keep his covenant, then they ſhould be a pecu­liar treasure to him above all people : to prevent them from ſupposing that he ſhared the earth with the idols of the heathen, and had from partial fondneſs choſen them for his *portion,* he immediately adds, for all the earth is mine. By this addition he gave them plainly to underſtand that they were choſen to be his peculiar treaſure for ſome purpoſe of general importance ; and the very firſt ar­ticle of the covenant which they were to keep was, that they ſhould have no other gods but him. So inveterate, however, was the principle which led to an intercommunity of the objects of worſhip, that they could not have kept this article of the covenant but in a ſtate of ſeparation from the reſt of mankind @@\*; and that ſeparation could neither have been effected nor continued without the viſible provi­dence of the Almighty watching over them as, his peculiar treaſure. This we learn from Moſes himſelf, who, when interceding for the people after their idolatrous worſhip of the golden calf, and intreating that the preſence of God would ſtill accompany them, adds theſe words @@\*: “ For wherein ſhall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight ? Is it not in that thou goest with us ? So ſhall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.” Upon this ſeparation every thing depended ; and therefore to render it the more ſecure, Jehovah, who in compliance with their prejudices had already aſſumed the appellation of their tutelary God, was graciously pleaſed to become likewise their supreme Magiſtrate, making them a “ king­dom of prieſts and a holy nation,” and delivering to them a digeſt as well of their civil as of their religious laws,

The Almighty thus becoming their King, the govern­ment of the Iſraelites was properly a theocracy, in which the two ſocieties, civil and religious, were of courte incor­porated. They had indeed after their ſettlement in the Promiſed Land, at first, temporary *judges* occaſionally raiſed up ; and afterwards permanent magiſtrates called *kings,* to lead their armies in war, and to give vigour to the adminiſtration of justice in peace: but neither thoſe judges nor thoſe kings could abrogate a ſingle law of the original code, or make the ſmalleſt addition to it but by the ſpirit of pro­phecy. They cannot therefore be considered as ſupreme magiſtrates, by whatever title they may have been known ; for they were to go out and come in at the word of the prieſts, who were to aſk counſel for them of the Lord, and with whom they were even aſſociated in all judicial proceed­ings, as well of a civil as of a spiritual nature@@\*. Under any other than a theocratic government the Hebrews could not have been kept ſeparate from the nations around them ; or if they could, that ſeparation would not have anſwered the great purpoſe for which it was eſtabliſhed. “ The peo­ple, on their leaving Egypt, were sunk into the loweſt prac­tices of idolatry. To recover them by the diſcipline of a ſeparation, it was neceſſary that the idea of God and his attributes ſhould be impreſſed upon them in the moſt s*ensible* manner. But this could not be commodiouſly done under his character of God of the univerſe : under his character of King of Iſrael, it well might. Hence it is, that we find him in the Old Teſtament ſo frequently repreſented with affec­tions analogous to human paſſions. The civil relation in which he ſtood to the Iſraelſtes made ſuch a repreſentation natural ; the groſſneſs of their conceptions made the representation necessary ; and the guarded manner in which it was always qualified prevented it from being miſchievous@@\*.” Hence too it is, that under the Moſaic diſpenſation, idolatry was a crime of ſtate, puniſhable by the civil magiſtrate. It was indeed high treason, againſt which laws were enacted upon the juſteſt principles, and carried into effect without danger of error. Nothing leſs indeed than penal- laws of the ſevereſt kind could have reſtrained the violent propenſity of that headſtrong people to worſhip, together with their own God, the gods of the Heathen. But penal laws enacted by human authority for errors in religion are manifeſtly unjuſt; and therefore a theocratic government ſeems to have been abſolutely neceſſary to obtain the end for which the Iſraelites were ſeparated from the surrounding nations.

It was for the ſame purpoſe of guarding them againſt idolatry, and preventing all undue communications with their Heathen neighbours, that the ritual law was given, after their preſumptuous rebellions in the wilderneſs. Before the business of the golden call, and their frequent attempts to return into Egypt, it ſeems not to have been the Divine in­tention to lay upon them a yoke of ordinances ; but to make his covenant depend entirely upon their duly practising the rite of circumciſion ; obſerving the feſtivals inſtituted in commemoration of their deliverance from bondage, and other ſignal ſervices vouchſafed them ; and keeping in­violate all the precepts of the decalogue @@(a), which, if they had done, they ſhould have even lived in them@@\*. But af­ter their repeated apoſtacies, and impious wiſhes to mix with the ſurrounding nations, it was neceſſary to ſubject

@@@[m]\* Colsus apud. Aug.

@@@[m]\* Exod. xix. 5.

@@@[m]\* I Sam. xxvi. 19.

@@@[m]\* Exod. xxxiii. 16.

@@@[m]\* Num. xxvii. 21. and Deut. xvii. 8-13.

@@@[m]\* Warburton's Div. Leg. b. v. sec. 2.

@@@[m]\* Divine Leg. b. iv. sec. 6.

@@@(z) It is not indeed evident that they had got entirely quit of this abſurd opinion at a much later period. Jephtha, one of their judges, who, though half paganized ( as Warburton observes) by a bad education, had probably as correct notions of religion as an ordinary Iſraelite, certainly talked to the king of Ammon as if he had believed the different nations of the earth to be under the immediate protection of different deities : “ Wilt not thou (ſays he) poſſeſs that which Chemoſh thy god giveth thee to poſſeſs? So whomſoever the Lord our God ſhall drive out from before us, them will we poſſeſs. (Judges xi. 24).

@@@(a) Of theſe precepts we think it not neceſſary, in an abſtract ſo ſhort as this, to waſte the reader’s time with a for­mal and laboured defence. To the decalogue no objection can be made by any man who admits the obligations of na­tural religion ; for, except the obſervation of the Sabbath-day, it enjoins not a ſingle duty which does not by the confeſſion of all men reſult from our relations to God, ourselves, and our fellow-creatures.