Reflections on the Revolution in France

EDMUND BURKE

Reflections on the Revolution in France

The 1790 text

Rendered into modern English with AI (Claude) and edited



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Reflections on the Revolution in France · Edmund Burke

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INTRODUCTION

In November 1789 the dissenting minister Richard Price told a London society that the French Revolution was the glorious sequel to England's Revolution of 1688. Edmund Burke, an Irish-born Whig who had defended the American colonists and attacked the abuses of British rule in India, answered him a year later in a long letter to a young Frenchman. Published in November 1790, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* sold in the tens of thousands and set off one of the great arguments in English political writing, drawing replies from Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine.

Burke wrote before the Terror, but he predicted it. Rights, he argues, are not abstract theorems to be applied to a society from outside; they are an inheritance, built up and corrected over generations. Society is "a partnership" between the living, the dead and those yet to be born, and a people that tears up its institutions in the name of reason will find itself ruled by force. His pages on the night the mob brought the king and queen from Versailles to Paris, and on the passing of "the age of chivalry," are among the most famous in the language.

Burke wrote one continuous letter; the parts and section headings here are editorial. The left column is the first edition of 1790, with Burke's own footnotes after the paragraphs that cite them; the right is a lightly modernized version.

The Occasion: Dr. Price and the Revolution Society

Burke explains why he writes, and turns to the London sermon in which Richard Price hailed the French Revolution as the sequel to England's of 1688.

TO THE READER

Burke explains how a letter to a young Frenchman grew into this book.

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p. iii	It may not be unnecessary to inform the Reader, that the following Reflections had their origin in a correspondence between the Author and a very young gentleman at Paris, who did him the honour of desiring his opinion upon the important transactions, which then, and ever since, have so much occupied the attention of all men. An answer was written some time in the month of October *1789;* but it was kept back upon prudential considerations. That letter is alluded to in the beginning of the following sheets. It has been since forwarded to the person to whom it was addressed. The reasons for the delay in sending it were assigned in a short letter to the same gentleman.	It may not be unnecessary to tell the reader that the following Reflections began in a correspondence between the author and a very young gentleman in Paris, who did him the honor of asking his opinion on the momentous events that then occupied, and have ever since occupied, the attention of everyone. An answer was written sometime in October *1789*, but it was held back for reasons of prudence. That letter is alluded to at the beginning of the following pages. It has since been sent to the person to whom it was addressed. The reasons for the delay in sending it were explained in a short letter to the same gentleman.[1]
	This produced on his part a new and pressing application for the Author's sentiments.	This prompted him to make a new and urgent request for the author's views.
	The Author began a second and more full discussion on the subject. This he had some thoughts of publishing early in the last spring; but the matter gaining upon him, he found that what he had undertaken not only far exceeded the measure of a letter, but that its importance required rather a more detailed consideration than at that time he had any leisure to bestow upon it. However,	The author began a second and fuller discussion of the subject. He had some thought of publishing it early last spring. But the subject grew on him, and he found not only that what he had undertaken far exceeded the limits of a letter, but that its importance called for a rather more detailed treatment than he then had the leisure to give it. However,
	having thrown down his first thoughts in the form of a letter, and indeed when he sat down to write, having intended [iv] it for a private letter, he found it difficult to change the form of address, when his sentiments had grown into a greater extent, and had received another direction.	having set down his first thoughts in the form of a letter, and indeed having intended [iv] it as a private letter when he sat down to write, he found it hard to change the form of address once his views had grown much larger and had taken another direction.
p. iv	A different plan, he is sensible, might be more favourable to a commodious division and distribution of his matter.	A different plan, he is aware, might lend itself better to a convenient division and arrangement of his material.

1 The young correspondent was Charles-Jean-François Depont (1767–1796), a family acquaintance of Burke.

BURKE AND THE LONDON CLUBS

Burke disowns the Constitutional and Revolution Societies and their address to the National Assembly.

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p. 1 Dear Sir,	Dear Sir,
You are pleased to call again, and with some earnestness, for my thoughts on the late proceedings in France. I will not give you reason to imagine, that I think my sentiments of such value as to wish myself to be solicited about them. They are of too little consequence to be very anxiously either communicated or withheld. It was from attention to you,	You are kind enough to ask again, and with some urgency, for my thoughts on the recent proceedings in France. I will not give you reason to suppose that I think my views so valuable that I want to be begged for them. They matter too little to be either shared or withheld with any great anxiety. It was out of consideration for you,
and to you only, that I hesitated at the time, when you first desired to receive them. In the first letter I had the honour to write to you, and which at length I send, I wrote neither for nor from any description of men; nor shall I in this. My errors, if any, are my own.	and for you alone, that I hesitated when you first asked for them. In the first letter I had the honor of writing to you, which I am at last sending, I wrote neither on behalf of any group of men nor as the voice of one, and I shall not do so in this letter either. My errors, if there are any, are my own.
My reputation alone is to answer for them.	My reputation alone must answer for them.
You see, Sir, by the long letter I have transmitted to you, that, though I do most heartily wish that France may be animated by a spirit of [2] rational liberty, and that I think you bound, in all honest policy, to provide a permanent body, in which that spirit may reside, and an effectual organ, by which it may act, it is my misfortune to entertain great doubts concerning several material points in your late transactions.	You will see, Sir, from the long letter I have sent you, that I most heartily wish France may be animated by a spirit of [2] rational liberty, and that I think you bound, in all honest policy, to provide a permanent body in which that spirit may reside and an effective organ through which it may act. Yet it is my misfortune to have great doubts about several material points in your recent proceedings.
p. 2 You imagined, when you wrote last, that I might possibly be reckoned among the approvers of certain proceedings in France, from the solemn public seal of sanction they have received from two clubs of gentlemen in London, called the Constitutional Society, and the Revolution Society.	When you last wrote, you supposed that I might possibly be counted among those who approve certain proceedings in France, because of the solemn public seal of approval those proceedings have received from two clubs of gentlemen in London, called the Constitutional Society and the Revolution Society.[2]
I certainly have the honour to belong to more clubs than one, in which the constitution of this kingdom, and the principles of the glorious Revolution, are held in high reverence; and I reckon myself among the most forward in my zeal for maintaining that constitution and those principles in their utmost purity and vigour. It is	I certainly have the honor of belonging to more than one club in which the constitution of this kingdom and the principles of the glorious Revolution are held in high reverence. I count myself among the most eager in my zeal to maintain that constitution and those principles in their fullest purity and vigor. It is precisely because I do so that I think there must be no mistake.[3]

2 Both were reformist clubs: the Society for Constitutional Information (founded 1780) and the Revolution Society, which met yearly to commemorate 1688. In November 1789 the Revolution Society sent a congratulatory address to the National Assembly.

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because I do so, that I think it necessary for me, that there should be no mistake.

Those who cultivate the memory of our revolution, and those who are attached to the constitution of this kingdom, will take good care how they are involved with persons who, under the pretext of zeal towards the Revolution and constitution, too frequently wander from their true principles; and are ready on every occasion to depart from the firm but cautious and deliberate spirit which produced the one, and which presides in the other.

Before I proceed to answer the more material [3] particulars in your letter, I shall beg leave to give you such information as I have been able to obtain of the two clubs which have thought proper, as bodies, to interfere in the concerns of France; first assuring you, that I am not, and that I have never been, a member of either of those societies.

p. 3 The first, calling itself the Constitutional Society, or Society for Constitutional Information, or by some such title, is, I believe, of seven or eight years standing. The institution of this society appears to be of a charitable, and so far of a laudable, nature: it was intended for the circulation, at the expence of the members, of many books, which few others would be at the expence of buying; and which might lie on the hands of the booksellers, to the great loss of an useful body of men. Whether the books so charitably circulated, were ever as charitably read, is more than I know.

Possibly several of them have been exported to France; and, like goods not in request here, may with you have found a market. I have heard much talk of the lights to be drawn from books that are sent from hence. What improvements they have had in their passage (as it is said some liquors are meliorated by crossing the sea) I cannot tell: But I never heard a man of common judgment, or the least degree of information, speak a word in praise of the greater part of the publications circulated by that society; nor have their proceedings [4] been accounted, except by some of themselves, as of any serious consequence.

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Those who cherish the memory of our Revolution, and those who are attached to the constitution of this kingdom, will take good care how they become entangled with people who, under the pretext of zeal for the Revolution and the constitution, too often stray from their true principles. Such people are ready at every opportunity to abandon the firm but cautious and deliberate spirit that produced the one and presides over the other.

Before I go on to answer the more material [3] particulars of your letter, allow me to give you what information I have been able to gather about the two clubs that have seen fit, as bodies, to interfere in the affairs of France. But first I assure you that I am not, and never have been, a member of either of those societies.

The first, which calls itself the Constitutional Society, or the Society for Constitutional Information, or some such title, has existed, I believe, for seven or eight years. Its purpose appears to be charitable, and to that extent praiseworthy. It was meant to circulate, at the members' expense, many books that few others would go to the expense of buying, and that might otherwise lie on the booksellers' hands, to the great loss of a useful body of men. Whether the books so charitably circulated were ever as charitably read is more than I know.

Perhaps several of them have been exported to France, and, like goods not wanted here, may have found a market with you. I have heard a great deal of talk about the lights to be drawn from books sent over from here. What improvements they may have undergone on the voyage (as some liquors are said to be improved by crossing the sea) I cannot tell. But I have never heard a man of ordinary judgment, or of the slightest information, say a word in praise of most of the publications circulated by that society. Nor have their proceedings [4] been thought, except by some of themselves, to be of any serious consequence.

3 In an English context "the Revolution" means the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which replaced James II with William and Mary.

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p. 4 Your National Assembly seems to entertain much the same opinion that I do of this poor charitable club. As a nation, you reserved the whole stock of your eloquent acknowledgments for the Revolution Society; when their fellows in the Constitutional were, in equity, entitled to some share. Since you have selected the Revolution Society as the great object of your national thanks and praises, you will think me excuseable in making its late conduct the subject of my observations. The National Assembly of France has given importance to these gentlemen by adopting them; and they return the favour, by acting as a sort of sub-committee in England for extending the principles of the National Assembly.	Your National Assembly seems to hold much the same opinion of this poor charitable club as I do. As a nation, you saved your whole stock of eloquent acknowledgments for the Revolution Society, when their fellows in the Constitutional were in fairness entitled to some share. Since you have chosen the Revolution Society as the great object of your national thanks and praise, you will excuse me for making its recent conduct the subject of my remarks. The National Assembly of France has given these gentlemen importance by adopting them, and they return the favor by acting as a sort of subcommittee in England for spreading the principles of the National Assembly.
Henceforward we must consider them as a kind of privileged persons; as no inconsiderable members in the diplomatic body. This is one among the revolutions which have given splendour to obscurity, and distinction to undiscerned merit. Until very lately I do not recollect to have heard of this club. I am quite sure that it never occupied a moment of my thoughts; nor, I believe, those of any person out of their own set.	From now on we must regard them as a kind of privileged persons, and as by no means insignificant members of the diplomatic corps. This is one of those revolutions that have given splendor to obscurity and distinction to unnoticed merit. Until very recently I do not remember hearing of this club. I am quite sure it never occupied a moment of my thoughts, nor, I believe, the thoughts of anyone outside their own set.
I find, upon enquiry, that on the anniversary of the Revolution in 1688, a club of dissenters, but of what denomination I know not, have long had the custom of hearing a sermon in one of their [5] churches; and that afterwards they spent the day cheerfully, as other clubs do, at the tavern. But I never heard that any public measure, or political system, much less that the merits of the constitution of any foreign nation, had been the subject of a formal proceeding at their festivals; until, to my inexpressible surprize, I found them in a sort of public capacity, by a congratulatory address, giving an authoritative sanction to the proceedings of the National Assembly in France.	I find, on inquiry, that on the anniversary of the Revolution of 1688 a club of Dissenters, of what denomination I do not know, has long had the custom of hearing a sermon in one of their [5] churches, and of spending the rest of the day cheerfully at the tavern, as other clubs do. But I never heard that any public measure or political system, much less the merits of the constitution of any foreign nation, had been the subject of formal proceedings at their festivities. Then, to my inexpressible surprise, I found them acting in a sort of public capacity, giving an authoritative sanction to the proceedings of the National Assembly in France by a congratulatory address.[4]
p. 5 In the antient principles and conduct of the club, so far at least as they were declared, I see nothing to which I, or any sober man, could possibly take exception. I think it very probable, that for some purpose, new members may have entered among them; and that some truly christian politicians, who love to dispense benefits, but are careful to	In the old principles and conduct of the club, at least so far as they were declared, I see nothing to which I, or any sober man, could possibly object. I think it very likely that, for some purpose, new members may have joined them. Some truly Christian politicians, who love to dispense benefits but take care to conceal the hand that distrib-

4 Dissenters: Protestants outside the Church of England, who were still barred from many public offices.

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conceal the hand which distributes the dole, may have made them the instruments of their pious designs. Whatever I may have reason to suspect concerning private management, I shall speak of nothing as of a certainty, but what is public.

For one, I should be sorry to be thought, directly or indirectly, concerned in their proceedings. I certainly take my full share, along with the rest of the world, in my individual and private capacity, in speculating on what has been done, or is doing, on the public stage; in any place antient or modern; in the republic of Rome, or the republic of Paris:

but having no [6] general apostolical mission, being a citizen of a particular state, and being bound up, in a considerable degree, by its public will, I should think it, at least improper and irregular, for me to open a formal public correspondence with the actual government of a foreign nation, without the express authority of the government under which I live.

p. 6 I should be still more unwilling to enter into that correspondence, under any thing like an equivocal description, which to many, unacquainted with our usages, might make the address, in which I joined, appear as the act of persons in some sort of corporate capacity, acknowledged by the laws of this kingdom, and authorized to speak the sense of some part of it.

On account of the ambiguity and uncertainty of unauthorized general descriptions, and of the deceit which may be practised under them, and not from mere formality, the House of Commons would reject the most sneaking petition for the most trifling object, under that mode of signature to which you have thrown open the folding-doors of your presence chamber, and have ushered into your National Assembly, with as much ceremony and parade, and with as great a bustle of applause, as if you had been visited by the whole representative majesty of the whole English nation. If what this society has thought proper to send forth had been a piece of argument, it would have signified little whose argument it was.

It would be neither the more nor [7] the less convincing on account of the party it came from.

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utes the dole, may have made them the instruments of their pious designs. Whatever I may have reason to suspect about private management, I shall speak of nothing as certain except what is public.

For my part, I should be sorry to be thought concerned, directly or indirectly, in their proceedings. Like the rest of the world, I certainly take my full share, in my individual and private capacity, in speculating on what has been done, or is being done, on the public stage, in any place, ancient or modern, in the republic of Rome or the republic of Paris.

But I have no [6] general apostolic mission. I am a citizen of a particular state, and I am bound to a considerable degree by its public will. I should therefore think it at least improper and irregular for me to open a formal public correspondence with the actual government of a foreign nation without the express authority of the government under which I live.

I should be still more unwilling to enter into such a correspondence under anything like an ambiguous designation. To many people unacquainted with our customs, such a designation might make the address I joined in appear to be the act of persons acting in some sort of corporate capacity, recognized by the laws of this kingdom and authorized to speak the mind of some part of it.

Not from mere formality, but because of the ambiguity and uncertainty of unauthorized general designations, and the deceit that can be practiced under them, the House of Commons would reject the most sneaking petition for the most trifling object if it came signed in the manner for which you have thrown open the folding doors of your presence chamber. You have ushered it into your National Assembly with as much ceremony and parade, and with as great a bustle of applause, as if you had been visited by the whole representative majesty of the whole English nation. If what this society saw fit to send out had been a piece of argument, it would have mattered little whose argument it was.[5]

It would be neither more nor [7] less convincing because of the party it came from. But this is only a

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But this is only a vote and resolution. It stands solely on authority; and in this case it is the mere authority of individuals, few of whom appear. Their signatures ought, in my opinion, to have been annexed to their instrument. The world would then have the means of knowing how many they are; who they are; and of what value their opinions may be, from their personal abilities, from their knowledge, their experience, or their lead and authority in this state.	vote and a resolution. It rests solely on authority, and in this case on the bare authority of individuals, few of whom appear. In my opinion their signatures ought to have been attached to their document. The world would then have had the means of knowing how many they are and who they are. It could also judge what their opinions may be worth, from their personal abilities, their knowledge, their experience, or their leadership and authority in this state.
p. 7 To me, who am but a plain man, the proceeding looks a little too refined, and too ingenious; it has too much the air of a political stratagem, adopted for the sake of giving, under an high-sounding name, an importance to the public declarations of this club, which, when the matter came to be closely inspected, they did not altogether so well deserve. It is a policy that has very much the complexion of a fraud.	To me, who am only a plain man, the proceeding looks a little too refined and too ingenious. It has too much the air of a political stratagem, adopted in order to give the club's public declarations, under a high-sounding name, an importance that they did not altogether deserve once the matter came to be closely examined. It is a policy that has very much the complexion of a fraud.
I flatter myself that I love a manly, moral, regulated liberty as well as any gentleman of that society, be he who he will; and perhaps I have given as good proofs of my attachment to that cause, in the whole course of my public conduct. I think I envy liberty as little as they do, to any other nation. But I cannot stand forward, and give praise or blame to any thing which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction.	I flatter myself that I love a manly, moral, regulated liberty as well as any gentleman of that society, whoever he may be. Perhaps I have given as good proofs of my attachment to that cause throughout the whole course of my public conduct. I think I begrudge liberty to any other nation as little as they do. But I cannot step forward and give praise or blame to anything relating to human actions and human concerns on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction.
Circumstances [8] (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour, and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind. Abstractedly speaking, government, as well as liberty, is good; yet could I, in common sense, ten years ago, have felicitated France on her enjoyment of a government (for she then had a government) without enquiry what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered? Can I now congratulate the same nation upon its freedom?	Circumstances [8] (which some gentlemen count as nothing) in reality give every political principle its distinguishing color and its discriminating effect. Circumstances are what make every civil and political scheme beneficial or harmful to mankind. In the abstract, government, like liberty, is good. Yet could I, in common sense, have congratulated France ten years ago on her enjoyment of a government (for she had a government then) without inquiring what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered? Can I now congratulate the same nation on its freedom?
p. 8 Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed amongst the blessings of mankind, that I am	Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed among the blessings of mankind that I am seri-

5 The Revolution Society's address was signed only by its chairman, Richard Price, on the society's behalf. A presence chamber was the room in which a sovereign received visitors.

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seriously to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate an highwayman and murderer, who has broke prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the gallies, and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysic Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance.

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ously to congratulate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate a highwayman and murderer who has broken out of prison on the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the galleys and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysical Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance.[6]

LIBERTY JUDGED BY ITS RESULTS

Liberty must be judged by what it does, so Burke withholds congratulations to France.

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When I see the spirit of liberty in action, I see a strong principle at work; and this, for a while, is all I can possibly know of it. The wild *gas,* the fixed air is plainly broke loose: but we ought to suspend our judgment until the first efservescence is a little subsided, till the liquor is cleared, and until we see something deeper [9] than the agitation of a troubled and frothy surface. I must be tolerably sure, before I venture publicly to congratulate men upon a blessing, that they have really received one. Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver; and adulation is not of more service to the people than to kings.

p. 9 I should therefore suspend my congratulations on the new liberty of France, until I was informed how it had been combined with government; with public force; with the discipline and obedience of armies; with the collection of an effective and well-distributed revenue; with morality and religion; with the solidity of property; with peace and order;

with civil and social manners. All these (in their way) are good things too; and, without them, liberty is not a benefit whilst it lasts, and is not likely to continue long. The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please: We ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risque congratulations, which may be soon turned into complaints.

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When I see the spirit of liberty in action, I see a strong principle at work; and this, for a while, is all I can possibly know of it. The wild *gas*, the fixed air, has plainly broken loose: but we ought to suspend our judgment until the first effervescence has subsided a little, until the liquor has cleared, and until we see something deeper [9] than the agitation of a troubled and frothy surface. Before I venture to congratulate men publicly on a blessing, I must be reasonably sure that they have really received one. Flattery corrupts both the one who receives it and the one who gives it; and adulation does the people no more good than it does kings.[7]

I should therefore hold back my congratulations on the new liberty of France until I was informed how it had been combined with government; with public force; with the discipline and obedience of armies; with the collection of an effective and well-distributed revenue; with morality and religion; with the security of property; with peace and order;

with civil and social manners. All these (in their way) are good things too; and without them liberty is no benefit while it lasts, and is not likely to last long. The effect of liberty on individuals is that they may do what they please: we ought to see what it will please them to do before we risk congratulations that may soon be turned into complaints.

6 Don Quixote, the "Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance," frees a chain of galley slaves in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Part I, chapter 22, and they promptly stone him.

7 "Fixed air" was the eighteenth-century name for carbon dioxide, the gas released in fermentation and effervescence.

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Prudence would dictate this in the case of separate insulated private men; but liberty, when men act in bodies, is *power.* Considerate people before they declare themselves will observe the use which is made of *power*; and particularly of so trying a thing as *new* power, in *new* persons, of whose principles, tempers, and dispositions, they have little or no experience, and in situations where those who appear the most stirring in the scene may possibly not be the real movers.

p. 10 All these considerations however were below the transcendental dignity of the Revolution Society. Whilst I continued in the country, from whence I had the honour of writing to you, I had but an imperfect idea of their transactions. On my coming to town, I sent for an account of their proceedings, which had been published by their authority, containing a sermon of Dr. Price, with the Duke de Rochefaucault's and the Archbishop of Aix's letter, and several other documents annexed. The whole of that publication, with the manifest design of connecting the affairs of France with those of England, by drawing us into an imitation of the conduct of the National Assembly, gave me a considerable degree of uneasiness.

The effect of that conduct upon the power, credit, prosperity, and tranquillity of France, became every day more evident. The form of constitution to be settled, for its future polity, became more clear. We are now in a condition to discern, with tolerable exactness, the true nature of the object held up to our imitation. If the prudence of reserve and decorum dictates silence in some circumstances, in others prudence of an higher order may justify us in speaking our thoughts. The beginnings of confusion with us in England are at present feeble enough;

but with you, we have seen an infancy still more feeble, growing by moments into a strength to heap mountains upon mountains, and to wage war with Heaven itself.

Whenever our neighbour's house is on fire, it [11] cannot be amiss for the engines to play a little on our own. Better to be despised for too anxious

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Prudence would dictate this in the case of separate, isolated private individuals; but liberty, when men act in bodies, is *power*. Thoughtful people, before they declare themselves, will watch the use that is made of *power*, and particularly of so testing a thing as *new* power in *new* persons, of whose principles, tempers, and dispositions they have little or no experience, and in situations where those who seem most active on the stage may not be the real movers.

All these considerations, however, were beneath the transcendental dignity of the Revolution Society. While I remained in the country, from where I had the honor of writing to you, I had only an imperfect idea of their doings. On coming to town, I sent for an account of their proceedings, published by their authority, containing a sermon by Dr. Price, with the letters of the Duke de La Rochefoucauld and the Archbishop of Aix, and several other documents attached. The whole of that publication, with its obvious design of connecting the affairs of France with those of England by drawing us into an imitation of the conduct of the National Assembly, made me considerably uneasy.[8]

The effect of that conduct on the power, credit, prosperity, and tranquility of France became more evident every day. The form of constitution to be settled for its future government became clearer. We are now in a position to discern, with fair exactness, the true nature of the thing held up for our imitation. If the prudence of reserve and decorum dictates silence in some circumstances, in others a prudence of a higher order may justify us in speaking our minds. The beginnings of confusion here in England are still feeble enough;

but with you we have seen an infancy feebler still grow by the moment into a strength able to heap mountains upon mountains and to wage war on Heaven itself.[9]

Whenever our neighbor's house is on fire, it [11] cannot be amiss for the fire engines to play a little on our own. Better to be despised for too anxious a

8 The Duc de La Rochefoucauld and Archbishop Boisgelin of Aix, both members of the National Assembly, had replied to the Revolution Society's congratulatory address.

9 An allusion to the Giants of classical myth, who piled Mount Ossa on Pelion to storm Olympus.

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apprehensions, than ruined by too confident a security.	fear than ruined by too confident a sense of security.
p. 11 Sollicitous chiefly for the peace of my own country, but by no means unconcerned for your's, I wish to communicate more largely, what was at first intended only for your private satisfaction. I shall still keep your affairs in my eye, and continue to address myself to you. Indulging myself in the freedom of epistolary intercourse, I beg leave to throw out my thoughts, and express my feelings, just as they arise in my mind, with very little attention to formal method. I set out with the proceedings of the Revolution Society; but I shall not confine myself to them. Is it possible I should?	Concerned chiefly for the peace of my own country, but by no means unconcerned for yours, I wish to make more widely known what was at first meant only for your private satisfaction. I shall still keep your affairs in view, and go on addressing myself to you. Allowing myself the freedom of a letter, I beg leave to throw out my thoughts and express my feelings just as they arise in my mind, with very little attention to formal method. I begin with the proceedings of the Revolution Society; but I shall not confine myself to them. How could I?
It looks to me as if I were in a great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe. All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world. The most wonderful things are brought about in many instances by means the most absurd and ridiculous; in the most ridiculous modes; and, apparently, by the most contemptible instruments. Every thing seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies.	It seems to me that I am in a great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe. All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has yet happened in the world. The most wonderful things are in many cases brought about by the most absurd and ridiculous means, in the most ridiculous ways, and, to all appearance, by the most contemptible instruments. Everything seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies.
In viewing this monstrous tragi-comic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix [12] with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror.	In viewing this monstrous tragicomic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily follow one another, and sometimes mingle [12] in the mind: contempt and indignation by turns; laughter and tears by turns; scorn and horror by turns.
p. 12 It cannot however be denied, that to some this strange scene appeared in quite another point of view. Into them it inspired no other sentiments than those of exultation and rapture. They saw nothing in what has been done in France, but a firm and temperate exertion of freedom; so consistent, on the whole, with morals and with piety, as to make it deserving not only of the secular applause of dashing Machiavelian politicians, but to render it a fit theme for all the devout effusions of sacred eloquence.	It cannot be denied, however, that to some this strange scene appeared in quite another light. It inspired in them no feelings but exultation and rapture. They saw nothing in what has been done in France but a firm and temperate exercise of freedom, so consistent on the whole with morals and piety as to deserve not only the secular applause of dashing Machiavellian politicians, but to be a fit theme for all the devout outpourings of sacred eloquence.

DR. PRICE'S SERMON AT THE OLD JEWRY

Burke attacks Price's political sermon and its claim that George III is a lawful king only by popular choice.

1790

On the forenoon of the 4th of November last, Doctor Richard Price, a non-conforming minister of eminence, preached at the dissenting meeting-house of the Old Jewry, to his club or society, a very extraordinary miscellaneous sermon, in which there are some good moral and religious sentiments, and not ill expressed, mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflexions: but the revolution in France is the grand ingredient in the cauldron. I consider the address transmitted by the Revolution Society to the National Assembly, through Earl Stanhope, as originating in the principles of the sermon, and as a corollary from them. It was moved by the preacher of that discourse.

It was passed by those who came reeking from the effect of the sermon, without any censure or qualification, expressed or implied. [13] If, however, any of the gentlemen concerned shall wish to separate the sermon from the resolution, they know how to acknowledge the one, and to disavow the other. They may do it: I cannot.

p. 13

For my part, I looked on that sermon as the public declaration of a man much connected with literary caballers, and intriguing philosophers; with political theologians, and theological politicians, both at home and abroad. I know they set him up as a sort of oracle; because, with the best intentions in the world, he naturally *philippizes,* and chaunts his prophetic song in exact unison with their designs.

That sermon is in a strain which I believe has not been heard in this kingdom, in any of the pulpits which are tolerated or encouraged in it, since the year 1648, when a predecessor of Dr. Price, the Reverend Hugh Peters, made the vault of the king's own chapel at St. James's ring with the honour and privilege of the Saints, who, with the "high praises of God in their mouths, and a *two*-edged sword in their hands, were to execute

MODERN

On the morning of the 4th of November last, Doctor Richard Price, a prominent Nonconformist minister, preached at the dissenting meeting-house of the Old Jewry, to his club or society, a very extraordinary miscellaneous sermon, in which there are some good moral and religious sentiments, and not badly expressed, mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections: but the revolution in France is the chief ingredient in the cauldron. I regard the address sent by the Revolution Society to the National Assembly, through Earl Stanhope, as originating in the principles of the sermon, and as a corollary from them. It was moved by the preacher of that discourse.[10]

It was passed by men who came still reeking from the effect of the sermon, without any censure or qualification, expressed or implied. [13] If, however, any of the gentlemen concerned wish to separate the sermon from the resolution, they know how to acknowledge the one and disown the other. They may do it: I cannot.

For my part, I looked on that sermon as the public declaration of a man closely connected with literary cabals and intriguing philosophers, with political theologians and theological politicians, both at home and abroad. I know they set him up as a sort of oracle; because, with the best intentions in the world, he naturally *philippizes*, and chants his prophetic song in exact unison with their designs.[11]

That sermon is in a strain which I believe has not been heard in this kingdom, from any of the pulpits tolerated or encouraged in it, since the year 1648, when a predecessor of Dr. Price, the Reverend Hugh Peters, made the vault of the king's own chapel at St. James's ring with the honor and privilege of the Saints, who, with the "high praises of God in their mouths, and a *two*-edged sword in their hands, were to execute judgment on the na-

10 Richard Price (1723–1791), Welsh dissenting minister and moral philosopher; his sermon was published as *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*. Charles, 3rd Earl Stanhope, chaired the Revolution Society's meeting.
11 Demosthenes accused the Delphic oracle of "philippizing," that is, prophesying to suit Philip of Macedon.

1790	MODERN
judgment on the heathen, and punishments upon the *people*; to bind their *kings* with chains, and their *nobles* with fetters of iron[1]."	tions, and punishments upon the *people*; to bind their *kings* with chains, and their *nobles* with fetters of iron[1]."[12]
Few harangues from the pulpit, except in the days of your league in France, or in the days of our solemn league and covenant in England, have ever breathed less of the spirit of moderation than [14] this lecture in the Old Jewry. Supposing, however, that something like moderation were visible in this political sermon; yet politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement. No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity. The cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little as that of religion by this confusion of duties.	Few harangues from the pulpit, except in the days of your League in France or of our Solemn League and Covenant in England, have ever breathed less of the spirit of moderation than [14] this lecture in the Old Jewry. Supposing, however, that something like moderation were visible in this political sermon, politics and the pulpit are still terms that have little in common. No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity. The cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little as the cause of religion from this confusion of duties.[13]
p. 14 Those who quit their proper character, to assume what does not belong to them, are, for the greater part, ignorant both of the character they leave, and of the character they assume. Wholly unacquainted with the world in which they are so fond of meddling, and inexperienced in all its affairs, on which they pronounce with so much confidence, they have nothing of politics but the passions they excite. Surely the church is a place where one day's truce ought to be allowed to the dissensions and animosities of mankind.	Those who quit their proper character to assume one that does not belong to them are, for the most part, ignorant both of the character they leave and of the character they assume. Wholly unacquainted with the world in which they are so fond of meddling, and inexperienced in all its affairs, on which they pronounce with such confidence, they have nothing of politics but the passions they stir up. Surely the church is a place where one day's truce ought to be allowed to the dissensions and animosities of mankind.
14	
This pulpit style, revived after so long a discontinuance, had to me the air of novelty, and of a novelty not wholly without danger. I do not charge this danger equally to every part of the discourse. The hint given to a noble and reverend lay-divine, who is supposed high in office in one of our universities[2], and to other lay-divines "of *rank* and literature," may be proper and seasonable, though somewhat new. If the noble *Seekers* should find nothing to satisfy their pious fancies [15] in the old staple of the national church, or in all the rich variety to be found in the well-assorted warehouses of the dissenting congregations, Dr.	This pulpit style, revived after so long a lapse, had for me the air of novelty, and of a novelty not entirely without danger. I do not charge this danger equally to every part of the discourse. The hint given to a noble and reverend lay divine, who is supposed to hold high office in one of our universities[2], and to other lay divines "of *rank* and literature," may be proper and timely, though somewhat new. If the noble *Seekers* should find nothing to satisfy their pious fancies [15] in the old staple goods of the national church, or in all the rich variety to be found in the well-assorted warehouses of the dissenting congregations, Dr.[15]

12 Hugh Peters (1598–1660), Puritan preacher and army chaplain who urged the trial of Charles I; he was executed as a regicide at the Restoration.

13 The Catholic League of the French Wars of Religion (1576–1590s) and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 between the English Parliament and the Scottish Presbyterians.

14

[1] Psalm cxlix. | [1] Psalm 149.

15 The "lay divine" is usually taken to be the Duke of Grafton, chancellor of Cambridge, who had turned Unitarian. The Seekers were a seventeenth-century sect who rejected every existing church.

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p. 15 Price advises them to improve upon nonconformity; and to set up, each of them, a separate meeting-house upon his own particular principles[3]. It is somewhat remarkable that this reverend divine should be so earnest for setting up new churches, and so perfectly indifferent concerning the doctrine which may be taught in them. His zeal is of a curious character. It is not for the propagation of his own opinions, but of any opinions. It is not for the diffusion of truth, but for the spreading of contradiction. Let the noble teachers but dissent, it is no matter from whom or from what. This great point once secured, it is taken for granted their religion will be rational and manly.	Price advises them to improve on nonconformity, and each to set up a separate meeting-house on his own particular principles[3]. It is rather remarkable that this reverend divine should be so eager to set up new churches, and so perfectly indifferent about the doctrine that may be taught in them. His zeal is of a curious kind. It is not for the spread of his own opinions, but of any opinions. It is not for the diffusion of truth, but for the spreading of contradiction. Only let the noble teachers dissent; it does not matter from whom or from what. This great point once secured, it is taken for granted that their religion will be rational and manly.
I doubt whether religion would reap all the benefits which the calculating divine computes from this "great company of great preachers." It would certainly be a valuable addition of nondescripts to the ample collection of known classes, genera and species, which at present beautify the *hortus siccus* of dissent. A sermon from a noble [16] duke, or a noble marquis,	I doubt whether religion would reap all the benefits that the calculating divine computes from this "great company of great preachers." It would certainly be a valuable addition of nondescripts to the ample collection of known classes, genera, and species that now adorn the herbarium of dissent. A sermon from a noble [16] duke, or a noble marquis,[16]
or a noble earl, or baron bold, would certainly increase and diversify the amusements of this town, which begins to grow satiated with the uniform round of its vapid dissipations. I should only stipulate that these new *Mess-Johns* in robes and coronets should keep some sort of bounds in the democratic and levelling principles which are expected from their titled pulpits.	or a noble earl, or baron bold, would certainly increase and vary the amusements of this town, which is beginning to grow sated with the monotonous round of its insipid dissipations. I should only stipulate that these new *Mess-Johns* in robes and coronets keep some sort of limits on the democratic and leveling principles expected from their titled pulpits.[17]
p. 16 The new evangelists will, I dare say, disappoint the hopes that are conceived of them. They will not become, literally as well as figuratively, polemic divines, nor be disposed so to drill their congregations that they may, as in former blessed times, preach their doctrines to regiments of dragoons, and corps of infantry and artillery. Such arrangements, however favourable to the cause of compulsory freedom, civil and religious, may not be equally conducive to the national tranquillity. These few restrictions I hope are no great stretches of intolerance, no very violent exertions of despotism.	The new evangelists will, I dare say, disappoint the hopes placed in them. They will not become polemical divines literally as well as figuratively, nor be inclined to drill their congregations so that they may, as in former blessed times, preach their doctrines to regiments of dragoons and corps of infantry and artillery. Such arrangements, however favorable to the cause of compulsory freedom, civil and religious, may not be equally conducive to the nation's tranquility. These few restrictions are, I hope, no great stretches of intolerance, no very violent exertions of despotism.[18]
1920	

16 Burke's Latin is *hortus siccus*, "dry garden," a collection of pressed and dried plants.
17 "Mess-John" (Mass John) was a contemptuous Scottish name for a minister.
18 An allusion to the preaching in Cromwell's New Model Army.

1790

But I may say of our preacher, “utinam nugis tota illa dedisset tempora saevitiae.” — All things in this his fulminating bull are not of so innoxious a tendency. His doctrines affect our constitution in its vital parts.

He tells the Revolution Society, in this political sermon, that his majesty “is almost the *only* lawful king in the world, because the *only* one who owes his crown to the *choice of his people.*” As to the kings of *the world,* all of whom (except one) this archpontiff of the *rights of men,* with all the [17] plenitude,

and with more than the boldness of the papal deposing power in its meridian fervour of the twelfth century, puts into one sweeping clause of ban and anathema, and proclaims usurpers by circles of longitude and latitude, over the whole globe, it behoves them to consider how they admit into their territories these apostolic missionaries, who are to tell their subjects they are not lawful kings.

p. 17 That is their concern. It is ours, as a domestic interest of some moment, seriously to consider the solidity of the *only* principle upon which these gentlemen acknowledge a king of Great Britain to be entitled to their allegiance.

MODERN

But I may say of our preacher, “would that he had given all those days of savagery to such trifles!”— Not everything in this thundering bull of his is so harmless in its tendency. His doctrines strike at our constitution in its vital parts.[21]

He tells the Revolution Society, in this political sermon, that his majesty “is almost the *only* lawful king in the world, because the *only* one who owes his crown to the *choice of his people*.” As to the kings of *the world,* all of whom (except one) this archpontiff of the *rights of men*, with all the [17] plenitude,

and with more than the boldness, of the papal deposing power at its height of fervor in the twelfth century, puts under one sweeping clause of ban and anathema, proclaiming them usurpers by circles of longitude and latitude over the whole globe, it behooves them to consider how they admit into their territories these apostolic missionaries, who are to tell their subjects that they are not lawful kings.

That is their concern. Ours, as a domestic interest of some importance, is to consider seriously the soundness of the *only* principle on which these gentlemen acknowledge a king of Great Britain to be entitled to their allegiance.

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[2] Discourse on the Love of our Country, Nov. 4, 1789, by Dr. Richard Price, 3d edition, p. 17 and 18.

[2] *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, Nov. 4, 1789, by Dr. Richard Price, 3rd edition, pp. 17 and 18.

20

[3] “Those who dislike that mode of worship which is prescribed by public authority ought, if they can find *no* worship *out* of the church which they approve, *to set up a separate worship for themselves*; and by doing this, and giving an example of a national and manly worship, men of *weight* from their *rank* and literature may do the greatest service to society and the world.” P. 13. Dr. Price’s Sermon.

[3] “Those who dislike that mode of worship which is prescribed by public authority ought, if they can find *no* worship *out* of the church which they approve, *to set up a separate worship for themselves*; and by doing this, and giving an example of a national and manly worship, men of *weight* from their *rank* and literature may do the greatest service to society and the world.” P. 13. Dr. Price’s Sermon.

21 Juvenal, *Satires* 4.150–51 (of the emperor Domitian): “utinam nugis tota illa dedisset tempora saevitiae.”

What the English Revolution Really Was

Against Price's three "rights," Burke reads 1688 as the preservation of inherited liberties, an "entailed inheritance."

THE FIRST CLAIM: A RIGHT TO CHOOSE OUR OWN GOVERNORS

Burke denies that the British crown rests on election and states Price's three claimed rights.

1790

This doctrine, as applied to the prince now on the British throne, either is nonsense, and therefore neither true nor false, or it affirms a most unfounded, dangerous, illegal, and unconstitutional position. According to this spiritual doctor of politics, if his majesty does not owe his crown to the choice of his people, he is no *lawful* king. Now nothing can be more untrue than that the crown of this kingdom is so held by his majesty.

Therefore if you follow their rule, the king of Great Britain, who most certainly does not owe his high office to any form of popular election, is in no respect better than the rest of the gang of usurpers, who reign, or rather rob, all over the face of this our miserable world, without any sort of right or title to the allegiance of their people. The policy of this general doctrine, so qualified, is evident enough. [18] The propagators of this political gospel are in hopes their abstract principle (their principle that a popular choice is necessary to the legal existence of the sovereign magistracy) would be overlooked whilst the king of Great Britain was not affected by it.

p. 18 In the mean time the ears of their congregations would be gradually habituated to it, as if it were a first principle admitted without dispute. For the present it would only operate as a theory, pickled in the preserving juices of pulpit eloquence, and laid by for future use. *Condo et compono quae mox depromere possim.* By this policy, whilst our government is soothed with a reservation in its favour, to which it has no claim, the security, which it has in common with all governments, so far as opinion is security, is taken away.

MODERN

Applied to the prince now on the British throne, this doctrine is either nonsense, and therefore neither true nor false, or it affirms a most unfounded, dangerous, illegal, and unconstitutional position. According to this spiritual doctor of politics, if his majesty does not owe his crown to the choice of his people, he is no *lawful* king. Now nothing could be more untrue than that his majesty holds the crown of this kingdom on such terms.

So if you follow their rule, the king of Great Britain, who most certainly does not owe his high office to any form of popular election, is in no respect better than the rest of the gang of usurpers who reign, or rather rob, all over the face of this miserable world of ours, without any sort of right or title to the allegiance of their people. The policy of this general doctrine, so qualified, is obvious enough. [18] The propagators of this political gospel hope that their abstract principle (their principle that a popular choice is necessary to the legal existence of the sovereign magistracy) will be overlooked as long as the king of Great Britain is not affected by it.

Meanwhile the ears of their congregations would gradually grow used to it, as if it were a first principle admitted without dispute. For the present it would operate only as a theory, pickled in the preserving juices of pulpit eloquence and laid by for future use. *I store and set in order what I may soon bring out.* By this policy, while our government is soothed with an exception in its favor, to which it has no claim, the security it has in common with all governments, so far as opinion is security, is taken away.[1]

1 The Latin line is Horace, *Epistles* 1.1.12: "Condo et compono quae mox depromere possim."

1790

Thus these politicians proceed, whilst little notice is taken of their doctrines; but when they come to be examined upon the plain meaning of their words and the direct tendency of their doctrines, then equivocations and slippery constructions come into play. When they say the king owes his crown to the choice of his people, and is therefore the only lawful sovereign in the world, they will perhaps tell us they mean to say no more than that some of the king's predecessors have been called to the throne by some sort of choice;

and therefore he owes his crown to the choice of his people. Thus, by a miserable subterfuge, they hope to render their proposition safe, by rendering it [19] nugatory.

p. 19 They are welcome to the asylum they seek for their offence; since they take refuge in their folly. For, if you admit this interpretation, how does their idea of election differ from our idea of inheritance? And how does the settlement of the crown in the Brunswick line derived from James the first, come to legalize our monarchy, rather than that of any of the neighbouring countries? At some time or other, to be sure, all the beginners of dynasties were chosen by those who called them to govern.

There is ground enough for the opinion that all the kingdoms of Europe were, at a remote period, elective, with more or fewer limitations in the objects of choice; but whatever kings might have been here or elsewhere, a thousand years ago, or in whatever manner the ruling dynasties of England or France may have begun, the King of Great Britain is at this day king by a fixed rule of succession, according to the laws of his country;

and whilst the legal conditions of the compact of sovereignty are performed by him (as they are performed) he holds his crown in contempt of the choice of the Revolution Society, who have not a single vote for a king amongst them, either individually or collectively; though I make no doubt they would soon erect themselves into an electoral college, if things were ripe to give effect to their claim.

His majesty's heirs and successors, each in his time and order, will come to the crown with [20] the

MODERN

This is how these politicians proceed while little notice is taken of their doctrines. But when they are examined on the plain meaning of their words and the direct tendency of their doctrines, then equivocations and slippery constructions come into play. When they say the king owes his crown to the choice of his people, and is therefore the only lawful sovereign in the world, they will perhaps tell us they mean no more than that some of the king's predecessors were called to the throne by some sort of choice;

and that he therefore owes his crown to the choice of his people. Thus, by a miserable subterfuge, they hope to make their proposition safe by making it [19] meaningless.

They are welcome to the asylum they seek for their offense, since they take refuge in their folly. For if you admit this interpretation, how does their idea of election differ from our idea of inheritance? And how does the settlement of the crown in the Brunswick line, derived from James the First, come to make our monarchy legal, rather than that of any of the neighboring countries? At some time or other, to be sure, all the founders of dynasties were chosen by those who called them to govern.[2]

There is ground enough for the opinion that all the kingdoms of Europe were, at some remote period, elective, with more or fewer limits on who could be chosen. But whatever kings may have been, here or elsewhere, a thousand years ago, and however the ruling dynasties of England or France may have begun, the King of Great Britain is today king by a fixed rule of succession, according to the laws of his country;

and as long as he performs the legal conditions of the compact of sovereignty (as he does), he holds his crown in contempt of the choice of the Revolution Society, who have not a single vote for a king among them, either individually or collectively—though I have no doubt they would soon set themselves up as an electoral college, if things were ripe to give effect to their claim.

His majesty's heirs and successors, each in his time and order, will come to the crown with [20] the

1790	MODERN
same contempt of their choice with which his majesty has succeeded to that he wears.	same contempt of their choice with which his majesty succeeded to the crown he wears.
p. 20 Whatever may be the success of evasion in explaining away the gross error of *fact,* which supposes that his majesty (though he holds it in concurrence with the wishes) owes his crown to the choice of his people, yet nothing can evade their full explicit declaration, concerning the principle of a right in the people to choose, which right is directly maintained, and tenaciously adhered to. All the oblique insinuations concerning election bottom in this proposition, and are referable to it.	However successful evasion may be in explaining away the gross error of *fact* which supposes that his majesty (though he holds his crown in accordance with their wishes) owes it to the choice of his people, nothing can evade their full and explicit declaration of the principle of a right in the people to choose—a right they directly maintain and tenaciously adhere to. All the oblique insinuations about election rest on this proposition and can be traced back to it.
Lest the foundation of the king's exclusive legal title should pass for a mere rant of adulatory freedom, the political Divine proceeds dogmatically to assert[1], that by the principles of the Revolution the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights, all which, with him, compose one system, and lie together in one short sentence;	Lest the foundation of the king's exclusive legal title should pass for a mere rant of flattery in the name of freedom, the political divine goes on to assert dogmatically[1] that by the principles of the Revolution the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights, all of which, for him, make up one system and lie together in one short sentence;
namely, that we have acquired a right 1. "To choose our own governors." 2. "To cashier them for misconduct." 3. "To frame a government for ourselves." This new, and hitherto unheard-of bill of rights, though made in the name of the whole people, belongs to those gentlemen and their faction only. The body of the people of England have no share in it. They utterly disclaim it.	namely, that we have acquired a right 1. "To choose our own governors." 2. "To cashier them for misconduct." 3. "To frame a government for ourselves." This new and hitherto unheard-of bill of rights, though made in the name of the whole people, belongs to these gentlemen and their faction alone. The body of the people of England has no share in it. They utterly disown it.[3]
They [21] will resist the practical assertion of it with their lives and fortunes. They are bound to do so by the laws of their country, made at the time of that very Revolution, which is appealed to in favour of the fictitious rights claimed by the society which abuses its name.	They [21] will resist any attempt to put it into practice with their lives and fortunes. They are bound to do so by the laws of their country, made at the time of that very Revolution which is invoked in support of the fictitious rights claimed by the society that abuses its name.

4

THE DECLARATION OF RIGHT AND THE ACT OF SETTLEMENT

The statutes of 1689 and 1701 bound liberty to hereditary succession and renounced any right of election.

1790	MODERN
p. 21 These gentlemen of the Old Jewry, in all their reasonings on the Revolution of 1688, have a	These gentlemen of the Old Jewry, in all their reasoning on the Revolution of 1688, have a revolution

2 The Brunswick line is the House of Hanover, descended from James I through his daughter Elizabeth and her daughter Sophia, Electress of Hanover.

3 "Cashier" means to dismiss from office, as an officer is dismissed from the army.

1790

revolution which happened in England about forty years before, and the late French revolution, so much before their eyes, and in their hearts, that they are constantly confounding all the three together. It is necessary that we should separate what they confound.

We must recall their erring fancies to the *acts* of the Revolution which we revere, for the discovery of its true *principles.* If the *principles* of the Revolution of 1688 are any where to be found, it is in the statute called the *Declaration of Right.* In that most wise, sober, and considerate declaration, drawn up by great lawyers and great statesmen, and not by warm and inexperienced enthusiasts, not one word is said, nor one suggestion made, of a general right "to choose our own *governors*; to cashier them for misconduct; and to *form* a government for *ourselves.*"

This Declaration of Right (the act of the 1st of William and Mary, sess. 2. ch. 2.) is the cornerstone of our constitution, as reinforced, explained, improved, and in its fundamental principles for ever settled. It is called "An act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and for [22] *settling* the *succession* of the crown." You will observe, that these rights and this succession are declared in one body, and bound indissolubly together.

p. 22

A few years after this period, a second opportunity offered for asserting a right of election to the crown. On the prospect of a total failure of issue from King William, and from the Princess, afterwards Queen Anne, the consideration of the settlement of the crown, and of a further security for the liberties of the people again came before the legislature. Did they this second time make any provision for legalizing the crown on the spurious Revolution principles of the Old Jewry? No. They followed the principles which prevailed in the Declaration of Right; indicating with more precision the persons who were to inherit in the Protestant line.

This act also incorporated, by the same policy, our liberties, and an hereditary succession in the

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that happened in England about forty years earlier, and the recent French revolution, so much before their eyes and in their hearts that they constantly confuse all three. We must separate what they confuse.[5]

To discover the true *principles* of the Revolution we revere, we must call their straying fancies back to its *acts.* If the *principles* of the Revolution of 1688 are to be found anywhere, it is in the statute called the *Declaration of Right.* In that most wise, sober, and considered declaration, drawn up by great lawyers and great statesmen, not by heated and inexperienced enthusiasts, not one word is said, nor one suggestion made, of a general right "to choose our own *governors*; to cashier them for misconduct; and to *form* a government for *ourselves.*"[6]

This Declaration of Right (the act of the 1st of William and Mary, sess. 2, ch. 2) is the cornerstone of our constitution, as reinforced, explained, improved, and in its fundamental principles settled forever. It is called "An act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and for [22] *settling* the *succession* of the crown." You will observe that these rights and this succession are declared in one body and bound indissolubly together.

A few years later a second opportunity arose for asserting a right of election to the crown. When it appeared that neither King William nor the Princess, afterwards Queen Anne, would leave any heirs, the settlement of the crown, and a further security for the liberties of the people, again came before the legislature. Did they this second time make any provision for legalizing the crown on the spurious Revolution principles of the Old Jewry? No. They followed the principles that prevailed in the Declaration of Right, indicating with more precision the persons who were to inherit in the Protestant line.[7]

By the same policy, this act also joined our liberties and a hereditary succession in one and the same act. Instead of a right to choose our own gov-

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[1] P. 34, Discourse on the Love of our Country, by Dr. Price.

[1] P. 34, *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, by Dr. Price.

5 The earlier revolution is that of the 1640s: the Civil War, the execution of Charles I in 1649, and the Commonwealth.

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same act. Instead of a right to choose our own governors, they declared that the *succession* in that line (the protestant line drawn from James the First) was absolutely necessary "for the peace, quiet, and security of the realm," and that it was equally urgent on them "to maintain a *certainty in the succession* thereof, to which the subjects may safely have recourse for their protection."

Both these acts, in which are heard the unerring, unambiguous oracles of Revolution policy, instead of countenancing the delusive, gypsey predictions of a "right to choose our governors," prove to [23] a demonstration how totally adverse the wisdom of the nation was from turning a case of necessity into a rule of law.

p. 23 Unquestionably there was at the Revolution, in the person of King William, a small and a temporary deviation from the strict order of a regular hereditary succession; but it is against all genuine principles of jurisprudence to draw a principle from a law made in a special case, and regarding an individual person. *Privilegium non transit in exemplum.* If ever there was a time favourable for establishing the principle, that a king of popular choice was the only legal king, without all doubt it was at the Revolution. Its not being done at that time is a proof that the nation was of opinion it ought not to be done at any time.

There is no person so completely ignorant of our history, as not to know, that the majority in parliament of both parties were so little disposed to any thing resembling that principle, that at first they were determined to place the vacant crown, not on the head of the prince of Orange, but on that of his wife Mary, daughter of King James, the eldest born of the issue of that king, which they acknowledged as undoubtedly his.

It would be to repeat a very trite story, to recall to your memory all those circumstances which demonstrated that their accepting King William was not properly a *choice*; but, to all those who did not wish, in effect to recall King James, or to deluge their country in blood, and again to bring

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ernors, they declared that the *succession* in that line (the Protestant line descended from James the First) was absolutely necessary "for the peace, quiet, and security of the realm," and that it was equally urgent for them "to maintain a *certainty in the succession* thereof, to which the subjects may safely have recourse for their protection."

In both these acts we hear the unerring, unambiguous oracles of Revolution policy. Far from lending any support to the delusive fortune-teller's predictions of a "right to choose our governors," they prove beyond [23] all doubt how utterly averse the wisdom of the nation was to turning a case of necessity into a rule of law.

Unquestionably there was at the Revolution, in the person of King William, a small and temporary deviation from the strict order of a regular hereditary succession. But it is against all genuine principles of jurisprudence to draw a principle from a law made in a special case and concerning an individual person. *A privilege does not pass into a precedent.* If ever there was a time favorable to establishing the principle that a king of popular choice was the only legal king, it was beyond all doubt the Revolution. That it was not done then proves that the nation was of the opinion it ought never to be done.[8]

No one is so completely ignorant of our history as not to know that the majority in parliament, of both parties, were so little inclined to anything resembling that principle that at first they were determined to place the vacant crown not on the head of the Prince of Orange but on that of his wife Mary, daughter of King James and the eldest of that king's children whom they acknowledged as undoubtedly his.[9]

It would be repeating a very trite story to recall to your memory all the circumstances which showed that their accepting King William was not properly a *choice*. But for all who did not wish, in effect, to recall King James, or to drown their country in

6 The Declaration of Right, presented to William and Mary in February 1689, was enacted later that year as the statute known as the Bill of Rights.

7 This is the Act of Settlement (1701), passed after the death in 1700 of Anne's last surviving child, the Duke of Gloucester.

8 The Latin legal maxim is "Privilegium non transit in exemplum."

9 The qualification glances at James II's infant son, James Francis Edward (b. 1688), whose legitimacy many Protestants then disputed.

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their religion, laws, [24] and liberties into the peril they had just escaped, it was an act of *necessity,* in the strictest moral sense in which necessity can be taken.	blood and once more bring their religion, laws, [24] and liberties into the peril they had just escaped, it was an act of *necessity,* in the strictest moral sense in which necessity can be taken.
p. 24 In the very act, in which for a time, and in a single case, parliament departed from the strict order of inheritance, in favour of a prince, who, though not next, was however very near in the line of succession, it is curious to observe how Lord Somers, who drew the bill called the Declaration of Right, has comported himself on that delicate occasion. It is curious to observe with what address this temporary solution of continuity is kept from the eye;	In the very act in which parliament, for a time and in a single case, departed from the strict order of inheritance in favor of a prince who, though not next, was nevertheless very near in the line of succession, it is curious to observe how Lord Somers, who drafted the bill called the Declaration of Right, conducted himself on that delicate occasion. It is curious to observe with what skill this temporary break in continuity is kept out of sight;[10]
whilst all that could be found in this act of necessity to countenance the idea of an hereditary succession is brought forward, and fostered, and made the most of, by this great man, and by the legislature who followed him.	while everything that could be found in this act of necessity to support the idea of a hereditary succession is brought forward, cherished, and made the most of by this great man and by the legislature that followed him.
Quitting the dry, imperative style of an act of parliament, he makes the lords and commons fall to a pious, legislative ejaculation, and declare, that they consider it "as a marvellous providence, and merciful goodness of God to this nation, to preserve their said majesties *royal* persons, most happily to reign over us *on the throne of their ancestors,* for which, from the bottom of their hearts, they return their humblest thanks and praises." —The legislature plainly had in view the act of recognition of the first of Queen Elizabeth, Chap. 3d, and of that of James the First, Chap.	Abandoning the dry, imperative style of an act of parliament, he has the lords and commons break into a pious legislative exclamation and declare that they consider it "as a marvelous providence, and merciful goodness of God to this nation, to preserve their said majesties *royal* persons, most happily to reign over us *on the throne of their ancestors,* for which, from the bottom of their hearts, they return their humblest thanks and praises."—The legislature plainly had in view the act of recognition of the first year of Queen Elizabeth, chapter 3, and that of James the First, chapter
1st, both acts strongly declaratory of the inheritable nature of the crown; and in many [25] parts they follow, with a nearly literal precision, the words and even the form of thanksgiving, which is found in these old declaratory statutes.	1, both acts strongly declaring the inheritable nature of the crown; and in many [25] places they follow, with almost literal precision, the words and even the form of thanksgiving found in those old declaratory statutes.
p. 25 The two houses, in the act of king William, did not thank God that they had found a fair opportunity to assert a right to choose their own governors, much less to make an election the *only lawful* title to the crown. Their having been in a condition to avoid the very appearance of it, as much as possible, was by them considered as a providential escape. They threw a politic, well-wrought veil over every circumstance tending to weaken the rights, which in the meliorated order	The two houses, in the act of King William, did not thank God that they had found a fair opportunity to assert a right to choose their own governors, much less to make an election the *only lawful* title to the crown. That they had been in a position to avoid even the appearance of it, as far as possible, they regarded as a providential escape. They threw a politic, well-wrought veil over every circumstance that tended to weaken the rights which, in the improved order of succession, they

10 John Somers (1651–1716), Whig lawyer and later Lord Chancellor, was a principal drafter of the Declaration of Right.

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of succession they meant to perpetuate; or which might furnish a precedent for any future departure from what they had then settled for ever.	meant to perpetuate, or that might furnish a precedent for any future departure from what they had then settled forever.
Accordingly, that they might not relax the nerves of their monarchy, and that they might preserve a close conformity to the practice of their ancestors, as it appeared in the declaratory statutes of queen Mary[2] and queen Elizabeth, in the next clause they vest, by recognition, in their majesties, *all* the legal prerogatives of the crown, declaring, "that in them they are most *fully,* rightfully, and *intirely* invested, incorporated, united, and annexed."	Accordingly, so as not to slacken the sinews of their monarchy, and to keep close to the practice of their ancestors as it appeared in the declaratory statutes of Queen Mary[2] and Queen Elizabeth, in the next clause they vest *all* the legal prerogatives of the crown, by recognition, in their majesties, declaring "that in them they are most *fully,* rightfully, and *entirely* invested, incorporated, united, and annexed."
In the clause which follows, for preventing questions, by reason of any pretended titles to the crown, they declare (observing also in this the traditionary [26] language, along with the traditionary policy of the nation, and repeating as from a rubric the language of the preceding acts of Elizabeth and James) that on the preserving "a *certainty* in the SUCCESSION thereof, the unity, peace, and tranquillity of this nation doth, under God, wholly depend."	In the clause that follows, to prevent disputes arising from any pretended titles to the crown, they declare (observing in this too the traditional [26] language, along with the traditional policy, of the nation, and repeating as if from a rubric the language of the earlier acts of Elizabeth and James) that on preserving "a *certainty* in the SUCCESSION thereof, the unity, peace, and tranquillity of this nation doth, under God, wholly depend."[11]
12	
p. 26 They knew that a doubtful title of succession would but too much resemble an election; and that an election would be utterly destructive of the "unity, peace, and tranquillity of this nation," which they thought to be considerations of some moment. To provide for these objects, and therefore to exclude for ever the Old Jewry doctrine of "a right to choose our own governors," they follow with a clause, containing a most solemn pledge, taken from the preceding act of Queen Elizabeth, as solemn a pledge as ever was or can be given in favour of an hereditary succession, and as solemn a renunciation as could be made of the principles by this society imputed to them.	They knew that a doubtful title of succession would all too closely resemble an election, and that an election would be utterly destructive of the "unity, peace, and tranquillity of this nation," which they thought considerations of some importance. To provide for these ends, and so to exclude forever the Old Jewry doctrine of "a right to choose our own governors," they follow with a clause containing a most solemn pledge, taken from the earlier act of Queen Elizabeth. It is as solemn a pledge as ever was or can be given in favor of a hereditary succession, and as solemn a renunciation as could be made of the principles this society imputes to them.
"The lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, do, in the name of all the people aforesaid, most humbly and faithfully submit *themselves, their heirs and posterities for ever*; and do faithfully promise, that they will stand to, maintain, and	"The lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, do, in the name of all the people aforesaid, most humbly and faithfully submit *themselves, their heirs and posterities for ever*; and do faithfully promise, that they will stand to, maintain, and defend their

11 A rubric is a fixed liturgical direction, originally printed in red, recited or followed word for word.

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[2] 1st Mary, Sess. 3. ch. 1.

[2] 1st Mary, sess. 3, ch. 1.

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defend their said majesties, and also the *limitation of the crown,* herein specified and contained, to the utmost of their powers," &c. &c.	said majesties, and also the *limitation of the crown,* herein specified and contained, to the utmost of their powers," etc., etc.
p. 27 So far is it from being true, that we acquired a right by the Revolution to elect our kings, that if we had possessed it before, the English nation did at that time most solemnly renounce and abdicate it, for themselves and for all their posterity for ever. These gentlemen may value themselves as much as they please on their whig principles;	So far is it from being true that we acquired a right by the Revolution to elect our kings that, even if we had possessed it before, the English nation at that time most solemnly renounced and abdicated it, for themselves and for all their posterity forever. These gentlemen may pride themselves as much as they please on their Whig principles;
but I never desire to be thought a better whig than Lord Somers; or to understand the principles of the Revolution better than those by whom it was brought about; or to read in the declaration of right any mysteries unknown to those whose penetrating style has engraved in our ordinances, and in our hearts, the words and spirit of that immortal law.	but I have no wish to be thought a better Whig than Lord Somers, or to understand the principles of the Revolution better than those who brought it about, or to read in the Declaration of Right any mysteries unknown to those whose penetrating style has engraved the words and spirit of that immortal law in our statutes and in our hearts.
It is true that, aided with the powers derived from force and opportunity, the nation was at that time, in some sense, free to take what course it pleased for filling the throne; but only free to do so upon the same grounds on which they might have wholly abolished their monarchy, and every other part of their constitution. However they did not think such bold changes within their commission.	It is true that, aided by the powers that came from force and opportunity, the nation was at that time in some sense free to take whatever course it pleased in filling the throne. But it was free to do so only on the same grounds on which it might have abolished its monarchy altogether, and every other part of its constitution. They did not, however, think such bold changes within their commission.
It is indeed difficult, perhaps impossible, to give limits to the mere *abstract* competence of the supreme power, such as was exercised by parliament at that time; but the limits of a *moral* competence, subjecting, even in powers more indisputably sovereign, occasional will to permanent reason, and to the steady maxims of faith, justice, and fixed fundamental policy, are perfectly intelligible, and [28] perfectly binding upon those who exercise any authority, under any name, or under any title, in the state. The house of lords, for instance, is not morally competent to dissolve the house of commons; no, nor even to dissolve itself, nor to abdicate, if it would, its portion in the legislature of the kingdom.	It is indeed difficult, perhaps impossible, to set limits to the mere *abstract* competence of the supreme power, such as parliament exercised at that time. But the limits of a *moral* competence are perfectly intelligible, and [28] perfectly binding on all who exercise any authority in the state, under any name or any title. Even in powers more indisputably sovereign, this moral competence subjects occasional will to permanent reason, and to the steady maxims of faith, justice, and fixed fundamental policy. The House of Lords, for instance, is not morally competent to dissolve the House of Commons—no, nor even to dissolve itself, nor to abdicate its share in the legislature of the kingdom, even if it wished to.
p. 28 Though a king may abdicate for his own person, he cannot abdicate for the monarchy. By as strong, or by a stronger reason, the house of commons cannot renounce its share of authority. The engagement and pact of society, which generally goes by the name of the constitution,	Though a king may abdicate for his own person, he cannot abdicate for the monarchy. By as strong a reason, or a stronger, the House of Commons cannot renounce its share of authority. The engagement and pact of society, which generally goes by the name of the constitution, forbids such

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forbids such invasion and such surrender. The constituent parts of a state are obliged to hold their public faith with each other, and with all those who derive any serious interest under their engagements, as much as the whole state is bound to keep its faith with separate communities. Otherwise competence and power would soon be confounded, and no law be left but the will of a prevailing force.

On this principle the succession of the crown has always been what it now is, an hereditary succession by law: in the old line it was a succession by the common law; in the new by the statute law, operating on the principles of the common law, not changing the substance, but regulating the mode, and describing the persons. Both these descriptions of law are of the same force, and are derived from an equal authority, emanating from the common agreement and original compact of the state, *communi sponsione reipublicae,* and as such are equally [29] binding on king, and people too, as long as the terms are observed, and they continue the same body politic.

p. 29 It is far from impossible to reconcile, if we do not suffer ourselves to be entangled in the mazes of metaphysic sophistry, the use both of a fixed rule and an occasional deviation; the sacredness of an hereditary principle of succession in our government, with a power of change in its application in cases of extreme emergency.

Even in that extremity (if we take the measure of our rights by our exercise of them at the Revolution) the change is to be confined to the peccant part only; to the part which produced the necessary deviation; and even then it is to be effected without a decomposition of the whole civil and political mass, for the purpose of originating a new civil order out of the first elements of society.

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invasion and such surrender. The constituent parts of a state are obliged to keep public faith with one another, and with all who derive any serious interest from their engagements, just as the whole state is bound to keep faith with separate communities. Otherwise competence and power would soon be confused, and no law would be left but the will of a prevailing force.

On this principle the succession of the crown has always been what it is now, a hereditary succession by law. In the old line it was a succession by the common law; in the new, by the statute law, operating on the principles of the common law—not changing the substance, but regulating the mode and describing the persons. Both these kinds of law have the same force and derive from an equal authority, emanating from the common agreement and original compact of the state, *by the common pledge of the commonwealth.* As such they are equally [29] binding on king and people alike, as long as the terms are observed and they continue to be the same body politic.[13]

Provided we do not let ourselves get entangled in the mazes of metaphysical sophistry, it is far from impossible to reconcile the use of a fixed rule with an occasional deviation from it: the sacredness of a hereditary principle of succession in our government, with a power to change how it is applied in cases of extreme emergency.

Even in that extremity (if we measure our rights by how we exercised them at the Revolution), the change is to be confined to the diseased part only, the part that made the deviation necessary. Even then it is to be carried out without breaking up the whole civil and political mass in order to create a new civil order out of the first elements of society.

CHANGE IN ORDER TO CONSERVE

In 1660 and 1688 England repaired the damaged part of its constitution and kept the hereditary principle.

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A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Without

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A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Without such means it might even risk losing the very part

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such means it might even risque the loss of that part of the constitution which it wished the most religiously to preserve. The two principles of conservation and correction operated strongly at the two critical periods of the Restoration and Revolution, when England found itself without a king. At both those periods the nation had lost the bond of union in their ancient edifice; they did not, however, dissolve the whole fabric. On the contrary, in both cases they regenerated the deficient part of the old constitution through [30] the parts which were not impaired.

p. 30 They kept these old parts exactly as they were, that the part recovered might be suited to them. They acted by the ancient organized states in the shape of their old organization, and not by the organic *moleculae* of a disbanded people. At no time, perhaps, did the sovereign legislature manifest a more tender regard to that fundamental principle of British constitutional policy, than at the time of the Revolution, when it deviated from the direct line of hereditary succession. The crown was carried somewhat out of the line in which it had before moved; but the new line was derived from the same stock.

It was still a line of hereditary descent; still an hereditary descent in the same blood, though an hereditary descent qualified with protestantism. When the legislature altered the direction, but kept the principle, they shewed that they held it inviolable.

On this principle, the law of inheritance had admitted some amendment in the old time, and long before the aera of the Revolution. Some time after the conquest great questions arose upon the legal principles of hereditary descent. It became a matter of doubt, whether the heir *per capita* or the heir *per stirpes* was to succeed;

but whether the heir *per capita* gave way when the heirdom *per stirpes* took place, or the Catholic heir when the Protestant was preferred, the inheritable principle survived with a sort of immortality through all transmigrations—*multosque* [31] *per annos stat fortuna domus et avi*

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of the constitution it most devoutly wished to preserve. The two principles of conservation and correction worked powerfully at the two critical periods of the Restoration and the Revolution, when England found itself without a king. At both those periods the nation had lost the bond of union in its ancient edifice. It did not, however, dissolve the whole structure. On the contrary, in both cases it regenerated the deficient part of the old constitution through [30] the parts that were not impaired.[14]

It kept these old parts exactly as they were, so that the recovered part might be fitted to them. It acted through the ancient organized estates in the shape of their old organization, and not through the organic *molecules* of a disbanded people. Perhaps at no time did the sovereign legislature show a more tender regard for that fundamental principle of British constitutional policy than at the time of the Revolution, when it deviated from the direct line of hereditary succession. The crown was carried somewhat out of the line in which it had moved before; but the new line was derived from the same stock.

It was still a line of hereditary descent; still a hereditary descent in the same blood, though a hereditary descent qualified by Protestantism. When the legislature altered the direction but kept the principle, it showed that it held the principle inviolable.

On this principle the law of inheritance had admitted some amendment in the old days, long before the era of the Revolution. Some time after the Conquest great questions arose about the legal principles of hereditary descent. It became doubtful whether the heir *per capita* or the heir *per stirpes* was to succeed;[15]

but whether the heir *per capita* gave way when inheritance *per stirpes* prevailed, or the Catholic heir when the Protestant was preferred, the principle of inheritance survived with a kind of immortality through all its transmigrations—*and for many* [31]

13 "Communi sponsione reipublicae" echoes the Roman jurist Papinian's definition of law as the "common pledge of the commonwealth" (Digest 1.3.1).

14 The Restoration of Charles II in 1660, after the Interregnum; the Revolution of 1688, after the flight of James II.

15 Legal terms: inheritance *per capita* ("by heads," the nearest living relative) versus *per stirpes* ("by stocks," descendants representing a deceased ancestor). The Conquest is the Norman Conquest of 1066.

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numerantur avorum. This is the spirit of our constitution, not only in its settled course, but in all its revolutions.	*years the fortune of the house stands firm, and grandfathers of grandfathers are numbered.* This is the spirit of our constitution, not only in its settled course but in all its revolutions.[16]
p. 31 Whoever came in, or however he came in, whether he obtained the crown by law, or by force, the hereditary succession was either continued or adopted.	Whoever came in, or however he came in, whether he obtained the crown by law or by force, the hereditary succession was either continued or adopted.
The gentlemen of the Society for Revolutions see nothing in that of 1688 but the deviation from the constitution; and they take the deviation from the principle for the principle. They have little regard to the obvious consequences of their doctrine, though they must see, that it leaves positive authority in very few of the positive institutions of this country. When such an unwarrantable maxim is once established, that no throne is lawful but the elective, no one act of the princes who preceded their aera of fictitious election can be valid. Do these theorists mean to imitate some of their predecessors, who dragged the bodies of our antient sovereigns out of the quiet of their tombs?	The gentlemen of the Society for Revolutions see nothing in that of 1688 but the deviation from the constitution; and they take the deviation from the principle for the principle. They pay little attention to the obvious consequences of their doctrine, though they must see that it leaves positive authority in very few of the positive institutions of this country. Once so unwarrantable a maxim is established—that no throne is lawful but an elective one—no single act of the princes who preceded their era of fictitious election can be valid. Do these theorists mean to imitate some of their predecessors, who dragged the bodies of our ancient sovereigns out of the quiet of their tombs?[17]
Do they mean to attaint and disable backwards all the kings that have reigned before the Revolution, and consequently to stain the throne of England with the blot of a continual usurpation? Do they mean to invalidate, annul, or to call into question, together with the titles of the whole line of our kings, that great body of our statute law which passed under those whom they treat as usurpers? to annul laws of inestimable value to our liberties —of as great [32] value at least as any which have passed at or since the period of the Revolution?	Do they mean to attaint and disqualify retroactively all the kings who reigned before the Revolution, and so stain the throne of England with the blot of a continual usurpation? Do they mean to invalidate, annul, or call into question, together with the titles of the whole line of our kings, that great body of our statute law which was passed under those they treat as usurpers? To annul laws of inestimable value to our liberties—of at least as great [32] value as any passed at or since the period of the Revolution?[18]
p. 32 If kings, who did not owe their crown to the choice of their people, had no title to make laws, what will become of the statute *de tallagio non concedendo?*—of the *petition of right?*—	If kings who did not owe their crown to the choice of their people had no title to make laws, what will become of the statute *de tallagio non concedendo?*—of the *Petition of Right?*—[19]
of the act of *habeas corpus?* Do these new doctors of the rights of men presume to assert, that King James the Second, who came to the crown as next of blood, according to the rules of a then unqualified succession, was not to all intents and	of the *Habeas Corpus* Act? Do these new doctors of the rights of men presume to assert that King James the Second, who came to the crown as next of blood according to the rules of a then unqualified succession, was not to all intents and pur-

16 Virgil, *Georgics* 4.208–9, of the undying race of bees.
17 "The Society for Revolutions" is Burke's mocking name for the Revolution Society.
18 To "attaint" is to condemn legally, with forfeiture of rights.
19 *De tallagio non concedendo* ("on not granting tallage"), a statute attributed to 1297 forbidding taxation without consent; the Petition of Right of 1628, under Charles I.

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purposes a lawful king of England, before he had done any of those acts which were justly construed into an abdication of his crown? If he was not, much trouble in parliament might have been saved at the period these gentlemen commemorate.

But King James was a bad king with a good title, and not an usurper. The princes who succeeded according to the act of parliament which settled the crown on the electress Sophia and on her descendants, being Protestants, came in as much by a title of inheritance as King James did. He came in according to the law, as it stood at his accession to the crown; and the princes of the House of Brunswick came to the inheritance of the crown, not by election, but by the law, as it stood at their several accessions of Protestant descent and inheritance, as I hope I have shewn sufficiently.

The law by which this royal family is specifically destined to the succession, is the act of [33] the 12th and 13th of King William. The terms of this act bind "us and our *heirs,* and our *posterity,* to them, their *heirs,* and their *posterity,*" being Protestants, to the end of time, in the same words as the declaration of right had bound us to the heirs of King William and Queen Mary. It therefore secures both an hereditary crown and an hereditary allegiance.

p. 33 On what ground, except the constitutional policy of forming an establishment to secure that kind of succession which is to preclude a choice of the people for ever, could the legislature have fastidiously rejected the fair and abundant choice which our own country presented to them, and searched in strange lands for a foreign princess, from whose womb the line of our future rulers were to derive their title to govern millions of men, through a series of ages?

The Princess Sophia was named in the act of settlement of the 12th and 13th of King William, for a *stock* and root of *inheritance* to our kings, and not for her merits as a temporary administratrix of a power, which she might not, and in fact did not, herself ever exercise. She was adopted for one reason, and for one only, because, says the

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poses a lawful king of England before he had done any of those acts that were justly construed as an abdication of his crown? If he was not, much trouble in parliament might have been saved at the period these gentlemen commemorate.[20]

But King James was a bad king with a good title, and not a usurper. The princes who succeeded under the act of parliament that settled the crown on the Electress Sophia and her descendants, being Protestants, came in by a title of inheritance just as much as King James did. He came in according to the law as it stood at his accession to the crown; and the princes of the House of Brunswick came to the inheritance of the crown not by election but by the law as it stood at their several accessions, the law of Protestant descent and inheritance—as I hope I have sufficiently shown.[21]

The law by which this royal family is specifically destined to the succession is the act of [33] the 12th and 13th of King William. The terms of this act bind "us and our *heirs*, and our *posterity*, to them, their *heirs*, and their *posterity*," being Protestants, to the end of time, in the same words in which the Declaration of Right had bound us to the heirs of King William and Queen Mary. It therefore secures both a hereditary crown and a hereditary allegiance.

On what ground—except the constitutional policy of forming a settled institution to secure the kind of succession that is to rule out a choice by the people forever—could the legislature have fastidiously rejected the fair and abundant choice our own country offered it, and searched in strange lands for a foreign princess, from whose womb the line of our future rulers was to derive its title to govern millions of men through a series of ages?

The Princess Sophia was named in the Act of Settlement of the 12th and 13th of King William as a *stock* and root of *inheritance* for our kings, and not for her merits as a temporary administrator of a power that she might never exercise herself, and in fact never did. She was adopted for one reason and one only: because, says the act, "the most ex-

20 The Habeas Corpus Act of 1679, under Charles II.

21 Sophia (1630–1714), Electress of Hanover; the House of Brunswick is the Hanoverian dynasty, beginning with her son George I.

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act, "the most excellent Princess Sophia, Electress and Dutchess Dowager of Hanover, is *daughter* of the most excellent Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of Bohemia, *daughter* of our late *sovereign lord* King James the First, of happy memory, and is hereby declared to be the next in *succession* [34] in the Protestant line," &c.

p. 34 "and the crown shall continue to the *heirs* of her body, being Protestants." This limitation was made by parliament, that through the Princess Sophia an inheritable line, not only was to be continued in future but (what they thought very material) that through her it was to be connected with the old stock of inheritance in King James the First; in order that the monarchy might preserve an unbroken unity through all ages, and might be preserved (with safety to our religion) in the old approved mode by descent, in which, if our liberties had been once endangered, they had often, through all storms and struggles of prerogative and privilege, been preserved. They did well.

No experience has taught us, that in any other course or method than that of an *hereditary crown,* our liberties can be regularly perpetuated and preserved sacred as our *hereditary right.* An irregular, convulsive movement may be necessary to throw off an irregular, convulsive disease. But the course of succession is the healthy habit of the British constitution. Was it that the legislature wanted, at the act for the limitation of the crown in the Hanoverian line, drawn through the female descendants of James the First, a due sense of the inconveniencies of having two or three, or possibly more, foreigners in succession to the British throne?

No!—they had a due sense of the evils which might happen from such foreign rule, and more than a due sense of [35] them. But a more decisive proof cannot be given of the full conviction of the British nation, that the principles of the Revolution did not authorize them to elect kings at their pleasure, and without any attention to the ancient fundamental principles of our government, than their continuing to adopt a plan of hereditary Protestant succession in the old line, with all the dangers and all the inconveniences of its being a foreign line full

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cellent Princess Sophia, Electress and Duchess Dowager of Hanover, is *daughter* of the most excellent Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of Bohemia, *daughter* of our late *sovereign lord* King James the First, of happy memory, and is hereby declared to be the next in *succession* [34] in the Protestant line," etc.,

"and the crown shall continue to the *heirs* of her body, being Protestants." Parliament made this limitation so that through the Princess Sophia an inheritable line would not only be continued in the future, but (what they thought very important) would through her be connected with the old stock of inheritance in King James the First. The aim was that the monarchy might preserve an unbroken unity through all ages, and might be preserved (with safety to our religion) in the old approved mode of descent—the mode in which our liberties, whenever they had been endangered, had so often been preserved through all the storms and struggles of prerogative and privilege. They did well.

No experience has taught us that by any other course or method than that of a *hereditary crown* our liberties can be regularly perpetuated and kept sacred as our *hereditary right*. An irregular, convulsive movement may be necessary to throw off an irregular, convulsive disease. But the course of succession is the healthy habit of the British constitution. Was it that the legislature, when it passed the act limiting the crown to the Hanoverian line, drawn through the female descendants of James the First, lacked a due sense of the inconveniences of having two or three, or possibly more, foreigners in succession on the British throne?

No!—they had a due sense of the evils that might come from such foreign rule, and more than a due sense of [35] them. But no more decisive proof can be given of the British nation's full conviction that the principles of the Revolution did not authorize it to elect kings at its pleasure, without any regard to the ancient fundamental principles of our government, than its continuing to adopt a plan of hereditary Protestant succession in the old line, with all the dangers and all the inconveniences of its being a foreign line full before its eyes and acting with the utmost force on its mind.

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before their eyes and operating with the utmost force upon their minds.	
p. 35 A few years ago I should be ashamed to overload a matter, so capable of supporting itself, by the then unnecessary support of any argument; but this seditious, unconstitutional doctrine is now publicly taught, avowed, and printed.	A few years ago I would have been ashamed to overload a matter so capable of supporting itself with any argument, which would then have been unnecessary. But this seditious, unconstitutional doctrine is now publicly taught, avowed, and printed.
The dislike I feel to revolutions, the signals for which have so often been given from pulpits; the spirit of change that is gone abroad; the total contempt which prevails with you, and may come to prevail with us, of all antient institutions, when set in opposition to a present sense of convenience, or to the bent of a present inclination; all these considerations make it not unadviseable, in my opinion, to call back our attention to the true principles of our own domestic laws; that you, my French friend, should begin to know, and that we should continue to cherish them.	My dislike of revolutions, the signals for which have so often been given from pulpits; the spirit of change that has gone abroad; the total contempt for all ancient institutions, when set against a present sense of convenience or the bent of a present inclination, which prevails with you and may come to prevail with us—all these considerations make it not inadvisable, in my opinion, to call our attention back to the true principles of our own domestic laws: that you, my French friend, should begin to know them, and that we should continue to cherish them.
We ought not, on either side of the water, to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the counterfeit wares which some persons, by a [36] double fraud, export to you in illicit bottoms, as raw commodities of British growth though wholly alien to our soil, in order afterwards to smuggle them back again into this country, manufactured after the newest Paris fashion of an improved liberty.	We ought not, on either side of the water, to let ourselves be imposed upon by the counterfeit wares that some persons, by a [36] double fraud, export to you in illicit ships as raw commodities of British growth, though wholly alien to our soil, in order afterward to smuggle them back into this country, manufactured after the newest Paris fashion of an improved liberty.
p. 36 The people of England will not ape the fashions they have never tried; nor go back to those which they have found mischievous on trial. They look upon the legal, hereditary succession of their crown as among their rights, not as among their wrongs; as a benefit, not as a grievance; as a security for their liberty, not as a badge of servitude. They look on the frame of their commonwealth, *such as it stands,* to be of inestimable value; and they conceive the undisturbed succession of the crown to be a pledge of the stability and perpetuity of all the other members of our constitution.	The people of England will not ape fashions they have never tried, nor go back to those they have found mischievous on trial. They look on the legal, hereditary succession of their crown as among their rights, not among their wrongs; as a benefit, not a grievance; as a security for their liberty, not a badge of servitude. They regard the frame of their commonwealth, *such as it stands*, as of inestimable value; and they conceive the undisturbed succession of the crown to be a pledge of the stability and permanence of all the other members of our constitution.
I shall beg leave, before I go any further, to take notice of some paltry artifices, which the abettors of election as the only lawful title to the crown, are ready to employ, in order to render the support of the just principles of our constitution a	Before I go any further, I must beg leave to take notice of some paltry tricks that the champions of election as the only lawful title to the crown are ready to use in order to make the defense of the just principles of our constitution a somewhat odi-

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task somewhat invidious. These sophisters substitute a fictitious cause, and feigned personages, in whose favour they suppose you engaged, whenever you defend the inheritable nature of the crown. It is common with them to dispute as if they were in a conflict with some of those exploded fanatics of slavery, who formerly maintained, what I believe no creature [37] now maintains, "that the crown is held by divine, hereditary, and indefeasible right."

p. 37 —These old fanatics of single arbitrary power dogmatized as if hereditary royalty was the only lawful government in the world, just as our new fanatics of popular arbitary power, maintain that a popular election is the sole lawful source of authority. The old prerogative enthusiasts, it is true, did speculate foolishly, and perhaps impiously too, as if monarchy had more of a divine fanction than any other mode of government; and as if a right to govern by inheritance were in strictness *indefeasible* in every person, and under every circumstance, which no civil or political right can be.

But an absurd opinion concerning the king's hereditary right to the crown, does not prejudice one that is rational, and bottomed upon solid principles of law and policy. If all the absurd theories of lawyers and divines were to vitiate the objects in which they are conversant, we should have no law, and no religion, left in the world. But an absurd theory on one side of a question forms no justification for alledging a false fact, or promulgating mischievous maxims on the other.

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ous task. These sophists substitute a fictitious cause, and feigned personages, whose side they suppose you to have taken whenever you defend the inheritable nature of the crown. They commonly argue as if they were in conflict with some of those discredited fanatics of slavery who once maintained what I believe no creature [37] now maintains, "that the crown is held by divine, hereditary, and indefeasible right."

—These old fanatics of single arbitrary power dogmatized as if hereditary royalty were the only lawful government in the world, just as our new fanatics of popular arbitrary power maintain that popular election is the sole lawful source of authority. The old enthusiasts for prerogative, it is true, did speculate foolishly, and perhaps impiously too, as if monarchy had more divine sanction than any other form of government, and as if a right to govern by inheritance were strictly *indefeasible* in every person and under every circumstance—which no civil or political right can be.

But an absurd opinion about the king's hereditary right to the crown does not prejudice one that is rational and grounded on solid principles of law and policy. If all the absurd theories of lawyers and divines were to taint the subjects they deal with, we would have no law and no religion left in the world. And an absurd theory on one side of a question is no justification for alleging a false fact, or promulgating mischievous maxims, on the other.

THE SECOND CLAIM: CASHIERING KINGS FOR MISCONDUCT

Kings are not servants removable for "misconduct"; 1688 was a case of necessity, not a rule.

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The second claim of the Revolution Society is "a right of cashiering their governors on *misconduct.*" Perhaps the apprehensions our ancestors entertained of forming such a precedent as that "of cashiering for misconduct," was the cause that the declaration of the act which implied the abdication of king James, [38] was, if it had any fault, rather too guarded, and too circumstantial[3].

p. 38 But all this guard, and all this accumulation of circumstances, serves to shew the spirit of

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The second claim of the Revolution Society is "a right of cashiering their governors for *misconduct*." Perhaps it was our ancestors' fear of setting such a precedent as that "of cashiering for misconduct" that made the declaration of the act which implied the abdication of King James, [38] if it had any fault, rather too guarded and too circumstantial[3].

But all this guarding, and all this piling up of circumstances, shows the spirit of caution that pre-

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caution which predominated in the national councils, in a situation in which men irritated by oppression, and elevated by a triumph over it, are apt to abandon themselves to violent and extreme courses: it shews the anxiety of the great men who influenced the conduct of affairs at that great event, to make the Revolution a parent of settlement, and not a nursery of future revolutions.

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No government could stand a moment, if it could be blown down with any thing so loose and indefinite as an opinion of "*misconduct.*" They who led at the Revolution, grounded the virtual abdication of King James upon no such light and uncertain a principle. They charged him with nothing less than a design, confirmed by a multitude of illegal overt acts, to *subvert the Protestant church and state,* and their *fundamental,* unquestionable laws and liberties:

they charged him with having broken the *original contract* between king and people. This was [39] more than *misconduct.* A grave and over-ruling necessity obliged them to take the step they took, and took with infinite reluctance, as under that most rigorous of all laws.

p. 39 Their trust for the future preservation of the constitution was not in future revolutions. The grand policy of all their regulations was to render it almost impracticable for any future sovereign to compel the states of the kingdom to have again recourse to those violent remedies. They left the crown what, in the eye and estimation of law, it had ever been,

perfectly irresponsible. In order to lighten the crown still further, they aggravated responsibility

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dominated in the national councils, in a situation in which men irritated by oppression, and elated by triumph over it, are apt to abandon themselves to violent and extreme courses. It shows how anxious the great men who guided the conduct of affairs at that great event were to make the Revolution a parent of settlement, and not a nursery of future revolutions.

No government could stand for a moment if it could be blown down by anything so loose and indefinite as an opinion of "*misconduct*." Those who led at the Revolution grounded the virtual abdication of King James on no such light and uncertain principle. They charged him with nothing less than a design, confirmed by a multitude of illegal overt acts, to *subvert the Protestant church and state*, and their *fundamental*, unquestionable laws and liberties;

they charged him with having broken the *original contract* between king and people. This was [39] more than *misconduct*. A grave and overruling necessity obliged them to take the step they took—and they took it with infinite reluctance, as under that most rigorous of all laws.

They did not place their trust for the future preservation of the constitution in future revolutions. The grand policy of all their regulations was to make it almost impossible for any future sovereign to force the estates of the kingdom to resort again to those violent remedies. They left the crown what, in the eye and estimation of the law, it had always been:

perfectly unaccountable. To lighten the crown still further, they increased the responsibility of ministers of state. By the statute of the 1st of King William, session 2, called "the act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and for settling the succession of the crown," they enacted that

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on ministers of state. By the statute of the 1st of King William, sess. 2d, called "the act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and for settling the succession of the crown," they enacted, that the ministers should serve the crown on the terms of that declaration.

They secured soon after the *frequent meetings of parliament,* by which the whole government would be under the constant inspection and active controul of the popular representative and of the magnates of the kingdom. In the next great constitutional act, that of the 12th and 13th of King William, for the further limitation of the crown, and *better* securing the rights and liberties of the subject, they provided, "that no pardon under the great seal of England should be pleadable to an impeachment by the commons in parliament."

The rule laid down for government in the Declaration of Right, [40] the constant inspection of parliament, the practical claim of impeachment, they thought infinitely a better security, not only for their constitutional liberty, but against the vices of administration, than the reservation of a right so difficult in the practice, so uncertain in the issue, and often so mischievous in the consequences, as that of "cashiering their governors."

p. 40 Dr. Price, in this sermon[4], condemns very properly the practice of gross, adulatory addresses to kings. Instead of this fulsome style, he proposes that his majesty should be told, on occasions of congratulation, that "he is to consider himself as more properly the servant than the sovereign of his people." For a compliment, this new form of address does not seem to be very soothing. Those who are servants, in name, as well as in effect, do not like to be told of their situation, their duty, and their obligations. The slave, in the old play, tells his master, "Haec commemoratio est quasi

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ministers should serve the crown on the terms of that declaration.

Soon afterward they secured the *frequent meetings of parliament*, by which the whole government would be under the constant inspection and active control of the people's representatives and of the magnates of the kingdom. In the next great constitutional act, that of the 12th and 13th of King William, for the further limitation of the crown and the *better* securing of the rights and liberties of the subject, they provided "that no pardon under the great seal of England should be pleadable to an impeachment by the commons in parliament."[24]

The rule laid down for government in the Declaration of Right, [40] the constant inspection of parliament, the practical claim of impeachment—these they thought an infinitely better security, not only for their constitutional liberty but against the vices of administration, than reserving a right so difficult in practice, so uncertain in outcome, and often so mischievous in its consequences as that of "cashiering their governors."

Dr. Price, in this sermon[4], quite rightly condemns the practice of crude, flattering addresses to kings. In place of this fulsome style, he proposes that his majesty should be told, on occasions of congratulation, that "he is to consider himself as more properly the servant than the sovereign of his people." As a compliment, this new form of address does not seem very soothing. Those who are servants, in name as well as in fact, do not like to be reminded of their situation, their duty, and their obligations. The slave in the old play tells his master, "This reminder is a kind of

23

[3] "That King James the second, having endeavoured to *subvert the constitution* of the kingdom, by breaking the *original contract* between king and people, and by the advice of jesuits, and other wicked persons, having violated the *fundamental* laws, and *having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom,* hath *abdicated* the government, and the throne is thereby *vacant.*"

[3] "That King James the Second, having endeavored to *subvert the constitution* of the kingdom by breaking the *original contract* between king and people, and by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons, having violated the *fundamental* laws, and *having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom,* has *abdicated* the government, and the throne is thereby *vacant.*"[22]

22 The resolution of the Convention Parliament, January 1689.

24 The frequent meetings were secured by the Triennial Act of 1694.

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exprobratio." It is not pleasant as compliment; it is not wholesome as instruction.

After all, if the king were to bring himself to echo this new kind of address, to adopt it in terms, and even to take the appellation of Servant of the People as his royal style, how either he or we should be much mended by it, I cannot imagine. I have seen very assuming letters, signed, Your most obedient,

humble servant. The proudest domination that ever was endured on earth took a title of [41] still greater humility than that which is now proposed for sovereigns by the Apostle of Liberty. Kings and nations were trampled upon by the foot of one calling himself "the Servant of Servants;" and mandates for deposing sovereigns were sealed with the signet of "the Fisherman."

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p. 41 I should have considered all this as no more than a sort of flippant vain discourse, in which, as in an unsavoury fume, several persons suffer the spirit of liberty to evaporate, if it were not plainly in support of the idea, and a part of the scheme of "cashiering kings for misconduct." In that light it is worth some observation.

Kings, in one sense, are undoubtedly the servants of the people, because their power has no other rational end than that of the general advantage; but it is not true that they are, in the ordinary sense (by our constitution, at least) any thing like servants; the essence of whose situation is to obey the commands of some other, and to be removeable at pleasure. But the king of Great Britain obeys no other person; all other persons are individually, and collectively too, under him, and owe to him a legal obedience.

The law, which knows neither to flatter nor to insult, calls this high magistrate, not our servant, as this humble Divine calls him, but "our sovereign Lord the King;" and we, on our parts, have learned to speak only the primitive language

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reproach." It is not pleasant as compliment; it is not wholesome as instruction.[25]

After all, if the king were to bring himself to echo this new kind of address, to adopt it in so many words, and even to take the title of Servant of the People as his royal style, I cannot imagine how either he or we would be much improved by it. I have seen very presumptuous letters signed, Your most obedient,

humble servant. The proudest domination ever endured on earth took a title of [41] still greater humility than the one now proposed for sovereigns by the Apostle of Liberty. Kings and nations were trampled under the foot of one who called himself "the Servant of Servants"; and mandates for deposing sovereigns were sealed with the signet of "the Fisherman."[26]

I would have regarded all this as no more than a sort of flippant, empty talk, in which, as in an unsavory vapor, a number of people let the spirit of liberty evaporate, if it were not plainly in support of the idea, and part of the scheme, of "cashiering kings for misconduct." In that light it deserves some comment.

Kings, in one sense, are undoubtedly the servants of the people, because their power has no other rational end than the general advantage; but it is not true that they are, in the ordinary sense (by our constitution, at least), anything like servants, the essence of whose situation is to obey the commands of someone else and to be removable at will. But the king of Great Britain obeys no other person; all other persons, individually and collectively too, are under him and owe him a legal obedience.

The law, which knows neither how to flatter nor how to insult, calls this high magistrate not our servant, as this humble divine calls him, but "our sovereign Lord the King"; and we, for our part, have learned to speak only the primitive language

25 Terence, *Andria* 44 ("Haec commemoratio est quasi exprobratio"), spoken by the freedman Sosia to his master Simo.
26 The papacy: the pope is styled "servant of the servants of God," and papal documents were sealed with the Fisherman's Ring, after St. Peter.
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[4] P. 22, 23, 24. | [4] Pp. 22, 23, 24.

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of the law, and not the confused jargon of their Babylonian pulpits.

As he is not to obey us, but as we are to [42] obey the law in him, our constitution has made no sort of provision towards rendering him, as a servant, in any degree responsible. Our constitution knows nothing of a magistrate like the *Justicia* of Arragon; nor of any court legally appointed, nor of any process legally settled for submitting the king to the responsibility belonging to all servants.

p. 42 In this he is not distinguished from the commons and the lords; who, in their several public capacities, can never be called to an account for their conduct; although the Revolution Society chooses to assert, in direct opposition to one of the wisest and most beautiful parts of our constitution, that "a king is no more than the first servant of the public, created by it, and *responsible to it.*"

Ill would our ancestors at the Revolution have deserved their fame for wisdom, if they had found no security for their freedom, but in rendering their government feeble in its operations, and precarious in its tenure; if they had been able to contrive no better remedy against arbitrary power than civil confusion. Let these gentlemen state who that *representative* public is to whom they will affirm the king, as a servant, to be responsible. It will be then time enough for me to produce to them the positive statute law which affirms that he is not.

The ceremony of cashiering kings, of which these gentlemen talk so much at their ease, can rarely, if ever, be performed without force. It then becomes a case of war, and not of constitution. [43] Laws are commanded to hold their tongues amongst arms; and tribunals fall to the ground with the peace they are no longer able to uphold. The Revolution of 1688 was obtained by a just war, in the only case in which any war, and much more a civil war, can be just.

p. 43 "Justa bella quibus *necessaria.*" The question of dethroning, or, if these gentlemen like the phrase better, "cashiering," kings, will always be, as it has

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of the law, and not the confused jargon of their Babylonian pulpits.

As he is not to obey us, but we are to [42] obey the law in him, our constitution has made no provision whatever for making him, as a servant, in any degree responsible. Our constitution knows nothing of a magistrate like the *Justicia* of Aragon, nor of any court legally appointed, nor of any process legally established, for submitting the king to the responsibility that belongs to all servants.[28]

In this he is no different from the commons and the lords, who, in their several public capacities, can never be called to account for their conduct; although the Revolution Society chooses to assert, in direct opposition to one of the wisest and most beautiful parts of our constitution, that "a king is no more than the first servant of the public, created by it, and *responsible to it.*"

Our ancestors at the Revolution would ill have deserved their fame for wisdom if they had found no security for their freedom except in making their government feeble in its operations and precarious in its tenure—if they had been able to devise no better remedy against arbitrary power than civil confusion. Let these gentlemen state who that *representative* public is to whom they will affirm that the king, as a servant, is responsible. It will then be time enough for me to show them the positive statute law which affirms that he is not.

The ceremony of cashiering kings, of which these gentlemen talk so much at their ease, can rarely, if ever, be performed without force. It then becomes a case of war, not of constitution. [43] Laws are commanded to hold their tongues amid arms; and tribunals fall to the ground with the peace they are no longer able to uphold. The Revolution of 1688 was obtained by a just war, in the only case in which any war, and much more a civil war, can be just.

"Wars are just for those to whom they are *necessary.*" The question of dethroning, or, if these gentlemen prefer the phrase, "cashiering" kings will

28 The Justicia (chief justice) of Aragon was a medieval Aragonese officer empowered to protect subjects against unlawful acts of the crown.

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always been, an extraordinary question of state, and wholly out of the law; a question (like all other questions of state) of dispositions, and of means, and of probable consequences, rather than of positive rights. As it was not made for common abuses, so it is not to be agitated by common minds. The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily definable. It is not a single act, or a single event, which determines it.

Governments must be abused and deranged indeed, before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom nature has qualified to administer in extremities this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a distempered state. Times and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lessons.

The wise will determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable from sensibility to oppression; the high-minded from disdain [44] and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause: but, with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good.

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always be, as it has always been, an extraordinary question of state, and wholly outside the law; a question (like all other questions of state) of dispositions, of means, and of probable consequences, rather than of positive rights. As it was not made for common abuses, so it is not to be stirred up by common minds. The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily defined. It is not a single act or a single event that determines it.[29]

Governments must be abused and disordered indeed before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom nature has qualified to administer, in extremities, this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a distempered state. Times, occasions, and provocations will teach their own lessons.

The wise will decide from the gravity of the case; the irritable from sensitivity to oppression; the high-minded from disdain [44] and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold from love of honorable danger in a generous cause: but, with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resort of the thinking and the good.

THE THIRD CLAIM: FRAMING A GOVERNMENT FOR OURSELVES

From Magna Carta on, the English have claimed their liberties as an inheritance, not abstract rights.

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p. 44 The third head of right, asserted by the pulpit of the Old Jewry, namely, the "right to form a government for ourselves," has, at least, as little countenance from any thing done at the Revolution, either in precedent or principle, as the two first of their claims. The Revolution was made to preserve our *antient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *antient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty.

If you are desirous of knowing the spirit of our constitution, and the policy which predominated in that great period which has secured it to this

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The third head of right asserted by the pulpit of the Old Jewry, namely the "right to form a government for ourselves," has at least as little support from anything done at the Revolution, either in precedent or in principle, as their first two claims. The Revolution was made to preserve our *ancient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *ancient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty.

If you wish to know the spirit of our constitution, and the policy that prevailed in that great period which has secured it to this hour, please look for

29 Adapted from Livy 9.1: "iustum est bellum… quibus necessarium" ("war is just for those to whom it is necessary").

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hour, pray look for both in our histories, in our records, in our acts of parliament, and journals of parliament, and not in the sermons of the Old Jewry, and the after-dinner toasts of the Revolution Society.—In the former you will find other ideas and another language. Such a claim is as ill-suited to our temper and wishes as it is unsupported by any appearance of authority. The very idea of the fabrication of a new government, is enough to fill us with disgust and horror.

We wished at the period of the Revolution, and do now wish, to derive all we possess as *an inheritance from our* [45] *forefathers.* Upon that body and stock of inheritance we have taken care not to inoculate any cyon alien to the nature of the original plant. All the reformations we have hitherto made, have proceeded upon the principle of reference to antiquity; and I hope, nay I am persuaded, that all those which possibly may be made hereafter, will be carefully formed upon analogical precedent, authority, and example.

p. 45

Our oldest reformation is that of Magna Charta. You will see that Sir Edward Coke, that great oracle of our law, and indeed all the great men who follow him, to Blackstone[5], are industrious to prove the pedigree of our liberties. They endeavour to prove, that the antient charter, the Magna charta of King John, was connected with another positive charter from Henry I. and that both the one and the other were nothing more than a re-affirmance of the still more antient standing law of the kingdom.

In the matter of fact, for the greater part, these authors appear to be in the right; perhaps not always: but if the lawyers mistake in some particulars, it proves my position still the more strongly; because it demonstrates the powerful prepossession towards antiquity, with which the minds of all our lawyers and legislators, and of all the people whom they wish to influence, have been always filled; and the stationary policy of this kingdom in considering their most sacred rights and franchises as an *inheritance.*

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both in our histories, in our records, in our acts of parliament and journals of parliament, and not in the sermons of the Old Jewry and the after-dinner toasts of the Revolution Society.—In the former you will find other ideas and another language. Such a claim is as ill-suited to our temper and wishes as it is unsupported by any appearance of authority. The very idea of fabricating a new government is enough to fill us with disgust and horror.

We wished at the period of the Revolution, and we wish now, to derive all we possess as *an inheritance from our* [45] *forefathers.* Upon that body and stock of inheritance we have taken care not to graft any scion alien to the nature of the original plant. All the reforms we have made so far have proceeded on the principle of reference to antiquity; and I hope, indeed I am persuaded, that all those which may possibly be made hereafter will be carefully formed upon analogical precedent, authority, and example.

Our oldest reform is that of Magna Carta. You will see that Sir Edward Coke, that great oracle of our law, and indeed all the great men who follow him, down to Blackstone[5], are industrious in proving the pedigree of our liberties. They endeavor to prove that the ancient charter, the Magna Carta of King John, was connected with another positive charter from Henry I, and that both the one and the other were nothing more than a reaffirmation of the still more ancient standing law of the kingdom.[30]

As a matter of fact, these authors appear for the most part to be right; perhaps not always: but if the lawyers are mistaken in some particulars, that proves my position all the more strongly, because it demonstrates the powerful predisposition toward antiquity with which the minds of all our lawyers and legislators, and of all the people they wish to influence, have always been filled; and the stationary policy of this kingdom in regarding their most sacred rights and franchises as an *inheritance.*

30 Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), chief justice and author of the *Institutes*; Sir William Blackstone (1723–1780), author of the *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Henry I issued his Charter of Liberties in AD 1100.

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In the famous law of the 3d of Charles I. called the *Petition of Right,* the parliament says to the king, "Your subjects have *inherited* this freedom," claiming their franchises not on abstract principles "as the rights of men," but as the rights of Englishmen, and as a patrimony derived from their forefathers. Selden, and the other profoundly learned men, who drew this petition of right, were as well acquainted, at least, with all the general theories concerning the "rights of men," as any of the discoursers in our pulpits, or on your tribune; full as well as Dr. Price, or as the Abbé Seyes.

But, for reasons worthy of that practical wisdom which superseded their theoretic science, they preferred this positive, recorded, *hereditary* title to all which can be dear to the man and the citizen, to that vague speculative right, which exposed their sure inheritance to be scrambled for and torn to pieces by every wild litigious spirit.

The same policy pervades all the laws which have since been made for the preservation of our liberties. In the 1st of William and Mary, in the famous statute, called the Declaration of Right, the two houses utter not a syllable of "a right to frame a government for themselves." You will see, that their whole care was to secure the religion, laws, and liberties, that had been long possessed, and had been lately endangered.

"Taking[6] into their most serious consideration the *best* means for making such an establishment, [47] that their religion, laws, and liberties, might not be in danger of being again subverted," they auspicate all their proceedings, by stating as some of those *best* means, "in the *first place*" to do "as their *ancestors in like cases have usually* done for vindicating their *antient* rights and liberties, to *declare*;" —and then they pray the king and queen, "that it may be *declared* and enacted, that *all and singular* the rights and liberties *asserted and declared* are the true *ancient* and indubitable rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom."

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In the famous law of the 3rd of Charles I, called the *Petition of Right,* parliament says to the king, "Your subjects have *inherited* this freedom," claiming their franchises not on abstract principles "as the rights of men," but as the rights of Englishmen, and as a patrimony derived from their forefathers. Selden and the other profoundly learned men who drew up this Petition of Right were at least as well acquainted with all the general theories concerning the "rights of men" as any of the discoursers in our pulpits or on your tribune—fully as well as Dr. Price or the Abbé Sieyès.[32]

But, for reasons worthy of that practical wisdom which took precedence over their theoretical learning, they preferred this positive, recorded, *hereditary* title to all that can be dear to the man and the citizen over that vague speculative right which exposed their sure inheritance to be scrambled for and torn to pieces by every wild, litigious spirit.

The same policy runs through all the laws made since then for the preservation of our liberties. In the 1st of William and Mary, in the famous statute called the Declaration of Right, the two houses do not utter a syllable about "a right to frame a government for themselves." You will see that their whole care was to secure the religion, laws, and liberties that had long been possessed and had lately been endangered.

"Taking[6] into their most serious consideration the *best* means for making such an establishment, [47] that their religion, laws, and liberties might not be in danger of being again subverted," they solemnly open all their proceedings by stating, as some of those *best* means, "in the *first place*" to do "as their *ancestors in like cases have usually* done for vindicating their *ancient* rights and liberties, to *declare*"—and then they pray the king and queen "that it may be *declared* and enacted, that *all and singular* the rights and liberties *asserted and declared* are the true *ancient* and indubitable rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom."

31

[5] See Blackstone's Magna Charta, printed at Oxford, 1759.

[5] See Blackstone's *Magna Carta*, printed at Oxford, 1759.

32 The Petition of Right (1628) was drafted partly by the jurist John Selden (1584–1654). Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès wrote the pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* (1789).

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p. 47	You will observe, that from Magna Charta to the Declaration of Right, it has been the uniform policy of our constitution, to claim and assert our liberties, as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity; as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom, without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right. By this means our constitution preserves an unity in so great a diversity of its parts. We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and an house of commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties, from a long line of ancestors.	You will observe that from Magna Carta to the Declaration of Right it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity —as an estate belonging specially to the people of this kingdom, without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right. By this means our constitution preserves a unity amid so great a diversity of its parts. We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and a House of Commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties from a long line of ancestors.[34]

AN ENTAILED INHERITANCE

Burke argues that treating liberty as a family inheritance gives it stability, dignity and reverence.

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	This policy appears to me to be the result of profound reflection; or rather the happy effect of following nature, which is wisdom without reflection, and above it. A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity, [48] who never look backward to their ancestors. Besides, the people of England well know, that the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission; without at all excluding a principle of improvement. It leaves acquisition free; but it secures what it acquires.	This policy appears to me to be the result of profound reflection—or rather the happy effect of following nature, which is wisdom without reflection, and above it. A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and narrow views. People will not look forward to posterity [48] who never look backward to their ancestors. Besides, the people of England know well that the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation and a sure principle of transmission, without at all excluding a principle of improvement. It leaves acquisition free; but it secures what it acquires.
p. 48	Whatever advantages are obtained by a state proceeding on these maxims, are locked fast as in a sort of family settlement; grasped as in a kind of mortmain for ever. By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit, our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives. The institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of Providence, are handed down, to us and from us, in the same course and order.	Whatever advantages are obtained by a state proceeding on these maxims are locked fast as in a sort of family settlement, grasped as in a kind of mortmain forever. By a constitutional policy working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives. The institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of Providence are handed down, to us and from us, in the same course and order.[35]

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[6] 1 W. and M. | [6] 1 William and Mary.

34 An entail is a legal settlement that fixes an estate on a set line of heirs, so that no single holder can sell or break it up.

35 Mortmain ("dead hand"): property held inalienably by a corporation, such as a church, and so never passing out of its grip.

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Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are [49] never wholly obsolete.

p. 49 By adhering in this manner and on those principles to our forefathers, we are guided not by the superstition of antiquarians, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.

Through the same plan of a conformity to nature in our artificial institutions, and by calling in the aid of her unerring and powerful instincts, to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason, we have derived several other, and those no small benefits, from considering our liberties in the light of an inheritance. Always acting as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity. This idea of a liberal descent inspires us with a sense of habitual native dignity, which prevents that upstart insolence almost inevitably adhering to and disgracing those who are the first acquirers of any distinction.

By this means our liberty becomes a noble freedom. It carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree, and illustrating ancestors. It has its bearings, and its ensigns armorial. It has its gallery [50] of portraits; its monumental inscriptions; its records, evidences,

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Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; in which, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom molding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at any one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but, in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied course of perpetual decay, fall, renewal, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are [49] never wholly obsolete.

By adhering to our forefathers in this manner and on these principles, we are guided not by the superstition of antiquarians but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood, binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties, adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections, keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected loves, our state, our hearths, our sepulchers, and our altars.

Through the same plan of conformity to nature in our artificial institutions, and by calling in the aid of her unerring and powerful instincts to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason, we have derived several other benefits, and no small ones, from considering our liberties in the light of an inheritance. Since we always act as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, which in itself leads to misrule and excess, is tempered by an awe-struck gravity. This idea of a free and honorable descent inspires us with a sense of habitual native dignity, which prevents that upstart insolence which almost inevitably clings to and disgraces those who are the first to acquire any distinction.

By this means our liberty becomes a noble freedom. It carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree and illustrious ancestors. It has its bearings and its armorial ensigns. It has its gallery [50] of portraits, its monumental inscriptions, its records, evidences, and titles. We win reverence for

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and titles. We procure reverence to our civil institutions on the principle upon which nature teaches us to revere individual men; on account of their age; and on account of those from whom they are descended.	our civil institutions on the principle by which nature teaches us to revere individual men: on account of their age, and on account of those from whom they are descended.
p. 50 All your sophisters cannot produce any thing better adapted to preserve a rational and manly freedom than the course that we have pursued, who have chosen our nature rather than our speculations, our breasts rather than our inventions, for the great conservatories and magazines of our rights and privileges.	All your sophists cannot produce anything better suited to preserve a rational and manly freedom than the course we have pursued, who have chosen our nature rather than our speculations, our hearts rather than our inventions, as the great conservatories and storehouses of our rights and privileges.

The New Assembly and the Real Rights of Men

What France might have done; who sits in the National Assembly; real rights against metaphysical ones.

WHAT FRANCE MIGHT HAVE DONE

France could have rebuilt on its old estates; instead it despised its past and brought on ruin.

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You might, if you pleased, have profited of our example, and have given to your recovered freedom a correspondent dignity. Your privileges, though discontinued, were not lost to memory. Your constitution, it is true, whilst you were out of possession, suffered waste and dilapidation; but you possessed in some parts the walls, and in all the foundations of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls; you might have built on those old foundations. Your constitution was suspended before it was perfected; but you had the elements of a constitution very nearly as good as could be wished.

In your old states you possessed that variety of parts corresponding with the various descriptions of which your community was happily composed; you had all that combination, and all that opposition of interests, you had that action and counteraction which, in the natural and in the political [51] world, from the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers, draws out the harmony of the universe.

p. 51 These opposed and conflicting interests, which you considered as so great a blemish in your old and in our present constitution, interpose a salutary check to all precipitate resolutions; They render deliberation a matter not of choice, but of necessity; they make all change a subject of *compromise*; which naturally begets moderation; they produce *temperaments,* preventing the sore evil of harsh, crude, unqualified reformations; and rendering all the headlong exertions of arbitrary power, in the few or in the many, for ever impracticable.

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You might, if you had pleased, have profited from our example, and given your recovered freedom a corresponding dignity. Your privileges, though discontinued, were not lost to memory. Your constitution, it is true, suffered waste and dilapidation while you were out of possession; but you possessed in some parts the walls, and in all the foundations, of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls; you might have built on those old foundations. Your constitution was suspended before it was perfected; but you had the elements of a constitution very nearly as good as could be wished.

In your old states you possessed that variety of parts corresponding to the various descriptions of people of which your community was happily composed; you had all that combination and all that opposition of interests; you had that action and counteraction which, in the natural and in the political [51] world, draws out the harmony of the universe from the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers.[1]

These opposed and conflicting interests, which you considered so great a blemish in your old constitution and in our present one, interpose a healthy check against all hasty resolutions. They make deliberation a matter not of choice but of necessity; they make all change a subject of *compromise*, which naturally begets moderation; they produce *temperaments*, preventing the painful evil of harsh, crude, unqualified reforms, and rendering all the headlong exertions of arbitrary power, whether in the few or in the many, forever impracticable.[2]

1 "States" means the Estates: the states general and the provincial assemblies of the separate orders of clergy, nobility and commons.

2 "Temperaments" in the old sense of mutual adjustments or mitigating compromises.

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Through that diversity of members and interests, general liberty had as many securities as there were separate views in the several orders; whilst by pressing down the whole by the weight of a real monarchy, the separate parts would have been prevented from warping and starting from their allotted places.

You had all these advantages in your ancient states; but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society, and had every thing to begin anew. You began ill, because you began by despising every thing that belonged to you. You set up your trade without a capital. If the last generations of your country appeared without much lustre in your eyes,

you might have passed them by, and derived your claims from a more early race of ancestors. Under a pious predilection to those ancestors, your imaginations [52] would have realized in them a standard of virtue and wisdom, beyond the vulgar practice of the hour: and you would have risen with the example to whose imitation you aspired.

p. 52 Respecting your forefathers, you would have been taught to respect yourselves. You would not have chosen to consider the French as a people of yesterday, as a nation of low-born servile wretches until the emancipating year of 1789. In order to furnish, at the expence of your honour, an excuse to your apologists here for several enormities of yours, you would not have been content to be represented as a gang of Maroon slaves, suddenly broke loose from the house of bondage, and therefore to be pardoned for your abuse of the liberty to which you were not accustomed and ill fitted.

Would it not, my worthy friend, have been wiser to have you thought, what I, for one, always thought you, a generous and gallant nation, long misled to your disadvantage by your high and romantic sentiments of fidelity, honour, and loyalty; that events had been unfavourable to you, but that you were not enslaved through any illiberal or servile disposition; that in your most devoted submission, you were actuated by a principle of public spirit, and that it was your country you worshipped, in the person of your king?

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You had all these advantages in your ancient states; but you chose to act as if you had never been molded into civil society, and had everything to begin anew. You began badly, because you began by despising everything that belonged to you. You set up your trade without capital. If the last generations of your country appeared without much luster in your eyes,

you might have passed them by and derived your claims from an earlier race of ancestors. Under a pious attachment to those ancestors, your imaginations [52] would have realized in them a standard of virtue and wisdom beyond the vulgar practice of the hour; and you would have risen with the example you aspired to imitate.

Respecting your forefathers, you would have been taught to respect yourselves. You would not have chosen to consider the French a people of yesterday, a nation of low-born, servile wretches until the emancipating year of 1789. In order to furnish your apologists here, at the expense of your honor, with an excuse for several of your enormities, you would not have been content to be represented as a gang of Maroon slaves suddenly broken loose from the house of bondage, and therefore to be pardoned for abusing a liberty to which you were not accustomed and for which you were ill fitted.[3]

Would it not, my worthy friend, have been wiser to have yourselves thought of as what I, for one, always thought you: a generous and gallant nation, long misled to your disadvantage by your high and romantic sentiments of fidelity, honor, and loyalty; that events had been unfavorable to you, but that you were not enslaved through any illiberal or servile disposition; that in your most devoted submission you were moved by a principle of public spirit, and that it was your country you worshiped in the person of your king?

3 Maroons were escaped slaves who formed free communities in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

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Had you made it to be understood, that in the delusion of this amiable error you had gone further than your wise ancestors; that you were resolved to resume your ancient privileges, whilst you preserved the spirit of your ancient and your [53] recent loyalty and honour; or, if diffident of yourselves, and not clearly discerning the almost obliterated constitution of your ancestors, you had looked to your neighbours in this land, who had kept alive the ancient principles and models of the old common law of Europe meliorated and adapted to its present state—by following wise examples you would have given new examples of wisdom to the world.

p. 53 You would have rendered the cause of liberty venerable in the eyes of every worthy mind in every nation. You would have shamed despotism from the earth, by shewing that freedom was not only reconcileable, but as, when well disciplined it is, auxiliary to law. You would have had an unoppressive but a productive revenue. You would have had a flourishing commerce to feed it.

You would have had a free constitution; a potent monarchy; a disciplined army; a reformed and venerated clergy; a mitigated but spirited nobility, to lead your virtue, not to overlay it; you would have had a liberal order of commons, to emulate and to recruit that nobility; you would have had a protected, satisfied, laborious, and obedient people, taught to seek and to recognize the happiness that is to be found by virtue in all conditions;

in which consists the true moral equality of mankind, and not in that monstrous fiction, which, by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and imbitter that real inequality, [54] which it never can remove; and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in an humble state, as those whom it is able to exalt to a condition more splendid, but not more happy.

p. 54 You had a smooth and easy career of felicity and glory laid open to you, beyond any thing recorded in the history of the world; but you have shewn that difficulty is good for man.

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Had you made it understood that in the delusion of this amiable error you had gone further than your wise ancestors; that you were resolved to resume your ancient privileges while preserving the spirit of your ancient and your [53] recent loyalty and honor; or if, distrustful of yourselves and not clearly discerning the almost obliterated constitution of your ancestors, you had looked to your neighbors in this land, who had kept alive the ancient principles and models of the old common law of Europe, improved and adapted to its present state—by following wise examples you would have given new examples of wisdom to the world.

You would have made the cause of liberty venerable in the eyes of every worthy mind in every nation. You would have shamed despotism from the earth, by showing that freedom was not only reconcilable with law but, as it is when well disciplined, an auxiliary to it. You would have had an unoppressive but a productive revenue. You would have had a flourishing commerce to feed it.

You would have had a free constitution; a potent monarchy; a disciplined army; a reformed and venerated clergy; a mitigated but spirited nobility, to lead your virtue, not to smother it; you would have had a liberal order of commons, to emulate and to replenish that nobility; you would have had a protected, satisfied, hardworking, and obedient people, taught to seek and to recognize the happiness that is to be found through virtue in all conditions;

in which consists the true moral equality of mankind—and not in that monstrous fiction which, by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations in men destined to travel the obscure path of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and embitter that real inequality [54] which it can never remove, and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in a humble state as of those whom it is able to raise to a condition more splendid, but not more happy.

You had a smooth and easy course of happiness and glory laid open before you, beyond anything recorded in the history of the world; but you have shown that difficulty is good for man.

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Compute your gains: see what is got by those extravagant and presumptuous speculations which have taught your leaders to despise all their predecessors, and all their contemporaries, and even to despise themselves, until the moment in which they became truly despicable. By following those false lights, France has bought undisguised calamities at a higher price than any nation has purchased the most unequivocal blessings! France has bought poverty by crime! France has not sacrificed her virtue to her interest;

but she has abandoned her interest, that she might prostitute her virtue. All other nations have begun the fabric of a new government, or the reformation of an old, by establishing originally, or by enforcing with greater exactness some rites or other of religion.

All other people have laid the foundations of civil freedom in severer manners, and a system of a more austere and masculine morality. France, when she let loose the reins of regal authority, doubled the licence, of a ferocious dissoluteness in manners, and of an insolent irreligion in opinions and practices; [55] and has extended through all ranks of life, as if she were communicating some privilege, or laying open some secluded benefit, all the unhappy corruptions that usually were the disease of wealth and power. This is one of the new principles of equality in France.

p. 55 France, by the perfidy of her leaders, has utterly disgraced the tone of lenient council in the cabinets of princes, and disarmed it of its most potent topics. She has sanctified the dark suspicious maxims of tyrannous distrust; and taught kings to tremble at (what will hereafter be called) the delusive plausibilities, of moral politicians. Sovereigns will consider those who advise them to place an unlimited confidence in their people, as subverters of their thrones; as traitors who aim at their destruction, by leading their easy good-nature, under specious pretences, to admit combinations of bold and faithless men into a participation of their power. This alone (if there were nothing else) is an irreparable calamity to you and to mankind.

Remember that your parliament of Paris told your king, that in calling the states together, he

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she has abandoned her interest, so that she might prostitute her virtue. All other nations have begun the fabric of a new government, or the reform of an old one, by establishing from the start, or by enforcing with greater strictness, some rites or other of religion.

All other peoples have laid the foundations of civil freedom in stricter manners and a system of more austere and masculine morality. France, when she let loose the reins of royal authority, doubled the license of a ferocious dissoluteness in manners and of an insolent irreligion in opinions and practices; [55] and she has spread through all ranks of life, as if she were conferring some privilege or laying open some secluded benefit, all the unhappy corruptions that used to be the disease of wealth and power. This is one of the new principles of equality in France.

France, by the perfidy of her leaders, has utterly discredited the voice of lenient counsel in the cabinets of princes, and disarmed it of its most powerful arguments. She has sanctified the dark, suspicious maxims of tyrannical distrust, and taught kings to tremble at (what will hereafter be called) the delusive plausibilities of moral politicians. Sovereigns will regard those who advise them to place unlimited confidence in their people as subverters of their thrones: as traitors who aim at their destruction by leading their easy good nature, under specious pretenses, to admit combinations of bold and faithless men to a share of their power. This alone (if there were nothing else) is an irreparable calamity to you and to mankind.

Remember that your parliament of Paris told your king that in calling the states together he had

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had nothing to fear but the prodigal excess of their zeal in providing for the support of the throne. It is right that these men should hide their heads. It is right that they should bear their part in the ruin which their counsel has brought on their sovereign and their country. Such sanguine declarations tend to lull authority asleep;

to encourage it rashly to engage in perilous adventures of untried policy; [56] to neglect those provisions, preparations, and precautions, which distinguish benevolence from imbecillity; and without which no man can answer for the salutary effect of any abstract plan of government or of freedom.

p. 56 For want of these, they have seen the medicine of the state corrupted into its poison. They have seen the French rebel against a mild and lawful monarch, with more fury, outrage, and insult, than ever any people has been known to rise against the most illegal usurper, or the most sanguinary tyrant. Their resistance was made to concession; their revolt was from protection; their blow was aimed at an hand holding out graces, favours, and immunities.

This was unnatural. The rest is in order. They have found their punishment in their success. Laws overturned; tribunals subverted; industry without vigour; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoverished; a church pillaged, and a state not relieved; civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom; every thing human and divine sacrificed to the idol of public credit, and national bankruptcy the consequence;

and to crown all, the paper securities of new, precarious, tottering power, the discredited paper securities of impoverished fraud, and beggared rapine, held out as a currency for the support of an empire, in lieu of the two great recognized species that represent the lasting conventional credit of mankind, which disappeared [57] and hid themselves in the earth from whence they came, when the principle of property, whose creatures and representatives they are, was systematically subverted.

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nothing to fear but the prodigal excess of their zeal in providing for the support of the throne. It is right that these men should hide their heads. It is right that they should bear their part in the ruin which their counsel has brought on their sovereign and their country. Such sanguine declarations tend to lull authority to sleep;[4]

to encourage it to engage rashly in perilous adventures of untried policy; [56] to neglect those provisions, preparations, and precautions which distinguish benevolence from weakness, and without which no one can answer for the beneficial effect of any abstract plan of government or of freedom.

For want of these, they have seen the medicine of the state corrupted into its poison. They have seen the French rebel against a mild and lawful monarch with more fury, outrage, and insult than any people has ever been known to show in rising against the most illegal usurper or the most bloodthirsty tyrant. Their resistance was made to concession; their revolt was from protection; their blow was aimed at a hand holding out graces, favors, and immunities.

This was unnatural. The rest is in order. They have found their punishment in their success. Laws overturned; tribunals subverted; industry without vigor; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoverished; a church pillaged, and a state not relieved; civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom; everything human and divine sacrificed to the idol of public credit, and national bankruptcy the consequence;

and to crown it all, the paper securities of a new, precarious, tottering power—the discredited paper securities of impoverished fraud and beggared plunder—held out as a currency for the support of an empire, in place of the two great recognized species that represent the lasting conventional credit of mankind, which disappeared [57] and hid themselves in the earth from which they came when the principle of property, whose creatures and representatives they are, was systematically subverted.[5]

4 The parliament of Paris was the chief sovereign law court of the old monarchy, not a legislature; in 1787–88 it pressed for the calling of the states general.

5 The "two great recognized species" are gold and silver coin; the paper securities are the assignats.

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p. 57 Were all these dreadful things necessary? were they the inevitable results of the desperate struggle of determined patriots, compelled to wade through blood and tumult, to the quiet shore of a tranquil and prosperous liberty? No! nothing like it. The fresh ruins of France, which shock our feelings wherever we can turn our eyes, are not the devastation of civil war; they are the sad but instructive monuments of rash and ignorant counsel in time of profound peace. They are the display of inconsiderate and presumptuous, because unresisted and irresistible authority.

The persons who have thus squandered away the precious treasure of their crimes, the persons who have made this prodigal and wild waste of public evils (the last stake reserved for the ultimate ransom of the state) have met in their progress with little, or rather with no opposition at all. Their whole march was more like a triumphal procession than the progress of a war. Their pioneers have gone before them, and demolished and laid every thing level at their feet. Not one drop of *their* blood have they shed in the cause of the country they have ruined.

They have made no sacrifices to their projects of greater consequence than their shoebuckles, whilst they were imprisoning their king, [58] murdering their fellow citizens, and bathing in tears, and plunging in poverty and distress, thousands of worthy men and worthy families. Their cruelty has not even been the base result of fear. It has been the effect of their sense of perfect safety, in authorizing treasons, robberies, rapes, assassinations, slaughters, and burnings throughout their harrassed land. But the cause of all was plain from the beginning.

p. 58 This unforced choice, this fond election of evil, would appear perfectly unaccountable, if we did not consider the composition of the National Assembly; I do not mean its formal constitution, which, as it now stands, is exceptionable enough, but the materials of which in a great measure it is composed, which is of ten thousand times greater consequence than all the formalities in the world. If we were to know nothing of this Assembly but

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Were all these dreadful things necessary? Were they the inevitable results of the desperate struggle of determined patriots, compelled to wade through blood and tumult to the quiet shore of a tranquil and prosperous liberty? No! Nothing like it. The fresh ruins of France, which shock our feelings wherever we can turn our eyes, are not the devastation of civil war; they are the sad but instructive monuments of rash and ignorant counsel in a time of profound peace. They are the display of inconsiderate and presumptuous authority, presumptuous because unresisted and irresistible.

The persons who have thus squandered the precious treasure of their crimes, the persons who have made this prodigal and wild waste of public evils (the last stake reserved for the ultimate ransom of the state), have met in their progress with little, or rather with no opposition at all. Their whole march was more like a triumphal procession than the advance of a war. Their pioneers have gone before them, and demolished and leveled everything at their feet. Not one drop of *their* blood have they shed in the cause of the country they have ruined.

They have made no sacrifices to their projects of greater consequence than their shoe buckles, while they were imprisoning their king, [58] murdering their fellow citizens, and bathing in tears, and plunging into poverty and distress, thousands of worthy men and worthy families. Their cruelty has not even been the base result of fear. It has been the effect of their sense of perfect safety, in authorizing treasons, robberies, rapes, assassinations, slaughters, and burnings throughout their harassed land. But the cause of all this was plain from the beginning.[6]

This unforced choice, this infatuated election of evil, would appear perfectly inexplicable if we did not consider the composition of the National Assembly. I do not mean its formal constitution, which, as it now stands, is objectionable enough, but the materials of which it is in great measure composed, which matter ten thousand times more than all the formalities in the world. If we knew nothing of this Assembly but its title and function,

6 In September 1789 members of the National Assembly made a patriotic gift of their silver shoe buckles to the treasury.

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by its title and function, no colours could paint to the imagination any thing more venerable.

In that light the mind of an enquirer, subdued by such an awful image as that of the virtue and wisdom of a whole people collected into a focus, would pause and hesitate in condemning things even of the very worst aspect. Instead of blameable, they would appear only mysterious. But no name, no power, no function, no artificial institution whatsoever, can make the men of whom any system of authority is composed, any other than God, and nature, and education, and their habits of life have made them. Capacities [59] beyond these the people have not to give.

p. 59 Virtue and wisdom may be the objects of their choice; but their choice confers neither the one nor the other on those upon whom they lay their ordaining hands. They have not the engagement of nature, they have not the promise of revelation for any such powers.

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no colors could paint to the imagination anything more venerable.

In that light the mind of an inquirer, overawed by so solemn an image as that of the virtue and wisdom of a whole people collected into a focus, would pause and hesitate to condemn even things of the very worst appearance. Instead of blameworthy, they would seem only mysterious. But no name, no power, no function, no artificial institution whatsoever can make the men of whom any system of authority is composed anything other than what God, and nature, and education, and their habits of life have made them. Capacities [59] beyond these the people have none to give.

Virtue and wisdom may be the objects of their choice; but their choice confers neither the one nor the other on those on whom they lay their ordaining hands. They have neither the engagement of nature nor the promise of revelation for any such powers.

THE THIRD ESTATE

Burke describes the Third Estate as mostly provincial lawyers with no experience of governing.

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After I had read over the list of the persons and descriptions elected into the *Tiers Etat,* nothing which they afterwards did could appear astonishing. Among them, indeed, I saw some of known rank; some of shining talents; but of any practical experience in the state, not one man was to be found. The best were only men of theory. But whatever the distinguished few may have been, it is the substance and mass of the body which constitutes its character, and must finally determine its direction. In all bodies, those who will lead, must also, in a considerable degree, follow.

They must conform their propositions to the taste, talent, and disposition of those whom they wish to conduct: therefore, if an Assembly is viciously or feebly composed in a very great part of it, nothing but such a supreme degree of virtue as very rarely appears in the world, and for that reason cannot enter into calculation, will prevent the men of talents disseminated through it from

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After I had read over the list of the persons and descriptions elected to the *Tiers Etat*, nothing they afterwards did could appear astonishing. Among them, indeed, I saw some of known rank, some of shining talents; but of any practical experience in the state, not one man was to be found. The best were only men of theory. But whatever the distinguished few may have been, it is the substance and mass of the body that constitutes its character and must finally determine its direction. In all bodies, those who would lead must also, to a considerable degree, follow.[7]

They must conform their proposals to the taste, talent, and disposition of those whom they wish to direct. Therefore, if an Assembly is viciously or feebly composed in a very great part of it, nothing but a supreme degree of virtue (such as very rarely appears in the world, and for that reason cannot enter into calculation) will keep the men of talent scattered through it from becoming merely the expert instruments of absurd projects!

7 *Tiers Etat*: the Third Estate, the deputies of the commons in the states general.

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becoming only the expert instruments of absurd projects!	
If what is the more likely event, instead of that unusual degree of virtue, they should be actuated by sinister ambition and a lust of meretricious glory, then the feeble part of the [60] Assembly, to whom at first they conform, becomes in its turn the dupe and instrument of their designs. In this political traffick the leaders will be obliged to bow to the ignorance of their followers, and the followers to become subservient to the worst designs of their leaders.	If, as is more likely, instead of that unusual degree of virtue, they are moved by sinister ambition and a lust for meretricious glory, then the feeble part of the [60] Assembly, to which at first they conform, becomes in its turn the dupe and instrument of their designs. In this political traffic the leaders will be obliged to bow to the ignorance of their followers, and the followers to become subservient to the worst designs of their leaders.
p. 60 To secure any degree of sobriety in the propositions made by the leaders in any public assembly, they ought to respect, in some degree perhaps to fear, those whom they conduct. To be led any otherwise than blindly, the followers must be qualified, if not for actors, at least for judges; they must also be judges of natural weight and authority. Nothing can secure a steady and moderate conduct in such assemblies, but that the body of them should be respectably composed, in point of condition in life, of permanent property, of education, and of such habits as enlarge and liberalize the understanding.	If the proposals made by the leaders of any public assembly are to have any sobriety, those leaders ought to respect, and perhaps in some degree to fear, the men they lead. If followers are to be led other than blindly, they must be qualified, if not as actors, at least as judges; and they must be judges of natural weight and authority. Nothing can secure steady and moderate conduct in such assemblies except that the body of them be respectably composed in station in life, in permanent property, in education, and in the kind of habits that enlarge and liberalize the understanding.
In the calling of the states general of France, the first thing which struck me, was a great departure from the antient course. I found the representation for the Third Estate composed of six hundred persons. They were equal in number to the representatives of both the other orders. If the orders were to act separately, the number would not,	In the summoning of the states general of France, the first thing that struck me was a great departure from the ancient practice. I found the representation for the Third Estate composed of six hundred persons. They equaled in number the representatives of both the other orders together. If the orders were to act separately, the number would not,[8]
beyond the consideration of the expence, be of much moment. But when it became apparent that the three orders were to be melted down into one, the policy and necessary effect of this numerous representation became obvious. A [61] very small desertion from either of the other two orders must throw the power of both into the hands of the third.	apart from the question of expense, be of much consequence. But when it became apparent that the three orders were to be melted down into one, the purpose of this numerous representation, and its necessary effect, became obvious. A [61] very small desertion from either of the other two orders must throw the power of both into the hands of the third.
p. 61 In fact, the whole power of the state was soon resolved into that body. Its due composition became therefore of infinitely the greater importance.	In fact, the whole power of the state was soon resolved into that body. Its proper composition therefore became of infinitely greater importance.

8 In December 1788 the royal council granted the Third Estate double representation, equal to that of the clergy and nobility combined.

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Judge, sir, of my surprize, when I found that a very great proportion of the Assembly (a majority, I believe, of the members who attended) was composed of practitioners in the law. It was composed not of distinguished magistrates, who had given pledges to their country of their science, prudence, and integrity; not of leading advocates, the glory of the bar; not of renowned professors in universities;—but for the far greater part, as it must in such a number, of the inferior, unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the profession.

There were distinguished exceptions; but the general composition was of obscure provincial advocates, of stewards of petty local jurisdictions, country attornies, notaries, and the whole train of the ministers of municipal litigation, the fomentors and conductors of the petty war of village vexation. From the moment I read the list I saw distinctly, and very nearly as it has happened, all that was to follow.

The degree of estimation in which any profession is held becomes the standard of the estimation in which the professors hold themselves. Whatever the personal merits of many individual [62] lawyers might have been, and in many it was undoubtedly very considerable, in that military kingdom, no part of the profession had been much regarded, except the highest of all, who often united to their professional offices great family splendour, and were invested with great power and authority. These certainly were highly respected, and even with no small degree of awe. The next rank was not much esteemed; the mechanical part was in a very low degree of repute.

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Whenever the supreme authority is invested in a body so composed, it must evidently produce the consequences of supreme authority placed in the hands of men not taught habitually to respect themselves; who had no previous fortune in character at stake; who could not be expected to bear with moderation, or to conduct with discretion, a power which they themselves, more than any others, must be surprised to find in their hands. Who could flatter himself that these men, suddenly, and, as it were, by enchantment, snatched from the humblest rank of

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Judge, sir, of my surprise when I found that a very great proportion of the Assembly (a majority, I believe, of the members who attended) consisted of practitioners of the law. It was composed not of distinguished magistrates, who had given their country pledges of their learning, prudence, and integrity; not of leading advocates, the glory of the bar; not of renowned university professors—but for the far greater part, as it must be in such a number, of the inferior, unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the profession.

There were distinguished exceptions; but the general composition was of obscure provincial advocates, stewards of petty local jurisdictions, country attorneys, notaries, and the whole train of the ministers of municipal litigation, the instigators and managers of the petty war of village harassment. From the moment I read the list I saw distinctly, and very nearly as it has happened, all that was to follow.

The esteem in which any profession is held becomes the standard of the esteem in which its members hold themselves. Whatever the personal merits of many individual [62] lawyers might have been (and in many they were undoubtedly very considerable), in that military kingdom no part of the profession had been much regarded except the very highest, who often joined great family splendor to their professional offices and were invested with great power and authority. These were certainly highly respected, and even regarded with no small degree of awe. The next rank was not much esteemed; the mechanical part was held in very low repute.

Whenever supreme authority is vested in a body so composed, it must evidently produce the consequences of supreme authority placed in the hands of men not taught by habit to respect themselves; who had no prior fortune of reputation at stake; who could not be expected to bear with moderation, or to exercise with discretion, a power which they themselves, more than anyone else, must be surprised to find in their hands. Who could flatter himself that these men, suddenly and, as it were, by enchantment snatched from the humblest rank of subordination, would not be

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subordination, would not be intoxicated with their unprepared greatness?

Who could conceive, that men who are habitually meddling, daring, subtle, active, of litigious dispositions and unquiet minds, would easily fall back into their old condition of obscure contention, and laborious, low, unprofitable chicane? Who could doubt but that, at any [63] expence to the state, of which they understood nothing, they must pursue their private interests, which they understood but too well? It was not an event depending on chance or contingency. It was inevitable; it was necessary; it was planted in the nature of things.

p. 63 They must *join* (if their capacity did not permit them to *lead*) in any project which could procure to them a *litigious constitution*; which could lay open to them those innumerable lucrative jobs which follow in the train of all great convulsions and revolutions in the state, and particularly in all great and violent permutations of property. Was it to be expected that they would attend to the stability of property, whose existence had always depended upon whatever rendered property questionable, ambiguous, and insecure? Their objects would be enlarged with their elevation, but their disposition and habits, and mode of accomplishing their designs, must remain the same.

Well! but these men were to be tempered and restrained by other descriptions, of more sober minds, and more enlarged understandings. Were they then to be awed by the super-eminent authority and awful dignity of an handful of country clowns who have seats in that Assembly, some of whom are said not to be able to read and write? and by not a greater number of traders, who, though somewhat more instructed, and more conspicuous in the order of society, had never known any thing beyond their counting-house? [64] No! both these descriptions were more formed to be overborne and swayed by the intrigues and artifices of lawyers, than to become their counterpoise.

p. 64 With such a dangerous disproportion, the whole must needs be governed by them. To the faculty of law was joined a pretty considerable proportion of the faculty of medicine. This faculty had not, any more than that of the law,

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intoxicated with a greatness for which they were unprepared?

Who could imagine that men who are habitually meddling, daring, subtle, active, of litigious dispositions and restless minds, would readily fall back into their old condition of obscure contention and laborious, low, unprofitable chicanery? Who could doubt that, at whatever [63] cost to the state, of which they understood nothing, they must pursue their private interests, which they understood all too well? It was not an event depending on chance or contingency. It was inevitable; it was necessary; it was planted in the nature of things.

They must *join* (if their capacity did not allow them to *lead*) in any project that could procure them a *litigious constitution*, one that could open to them the innumerable lucrative opportunities for jobbery that follow in the train of all great convulsions and revolutions in the state, and especially of all great and violent transfers of property. Was it to be expected that they would attend to the stability of property, these men whose existence had always depended on whatever made property questionable, ambiguous, and insecure? Their aims would expand with their elevation, but their disposition and habits, and their way of accomplishing their designs, must remain the same.

Well! But these men were to be tempered and restrained by men of other kinds, of soberer minds and broader understanding. Were they, then, to be awed by the super-eminent authority and awesome dignity of a handful of country bumpkins who have seats in that Assembly, some of whom are said to be unable to read and write? And by an equally small number of traders, who, though somewhat better instructed and more conspicuous in the order of society, had never known anything beyond their counting-house? [64] No! Both these kinds were better formed to be overborne and swayed by the intrigues and artifices of lawyers than to serve as their counterweight.

With such a dangerous disproportion, the whole must necessarily be governed by them. To the faculty of law was joined a fairly considerable proportion of the faculty of medicine. This faculty, no more than that of law, had enjoyed its due esteem

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possessed in France its just estimation. Its professors therefore must have the qualities of men not habituated to sentiments of dignity. But supposing they had ranked as they ought to do, and as with us they do actually, the sides of sick beds are not the academies for forming statesmen and legislators. Then came the dealers in stocks and funds, who must be eager, at any expence, to change their ideal paper wealth for the more solid substance of land.

To these were joined men of other descriptions, from whom as little knowlege of or attention to the interests of a great state was to be expected, and as little regard to the stability of any institution; men formed to be instruments, not controls. Such in general was the composition of the *Tiers Etat* in the National Assembly; in which was scarcely to be perceived the slightest traces of what we call the natural landed interest of the country.

We know that the British house of commons, without shutting its doors to any merit in any class, is, by the sure operation of adequate causes, [65] filled with every thing illustrious in rank, in descent, in hereditary and in acquired opulence, in cultivated talents, in military, civil, naval, and politic distinction, that the country can afford. But supposing, what hardly can be supposed as a case, that the house of commons should be composed in the same manner with the Tiers Etat in France, would this dominion of chicane be borne with patience, or even conceived without horror? God forbid I should insinuate any thing derogatory to that profession, which is another priesthood, administering the rites of sacred justice.

p. 65 But whilst I revere men in the functions which belong to them, and would do, as much as one man can do, to prevent their exclusion from any, I cannot, to flatter them, give the lye to nature. They are good and useful in the composition; they must be mischievous if they preponderate so as virtually to become the whole. Their very excellence in their peculiar functions may be far from a qualification for others.

It cannot escape observation, that when men are too much confined to professional and faculty habits, and, as it were, inveterate in the recurrent employment of that narrow circle, they are rather

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in France. Its members, therefore, must have the qualities of men not accustomed to sentiments of dignity. But even supposing they had ranked as they ought to, and as with us they actually do, the bedsides of the sick are not the academies for forming statesmen and legislators. Then came the dealers in stocks and funds, who must be eager, at any cost, to exchange their imaginary paper wealth for the more solid substance of land.

To these were joined men of other kinds, from whom as little knowledge of, or attention to, the interests of a great state was to be expected, and as little regard for the stability of any institution: men formed to be instruments, not controls. Such in general was the composition of the *Tiers Etat* in the National Assembly, in which scarcely the slightest trace could be perceived of what we call the natural landed interest of the country.

We know that the British House of Commons, without shutting its doors to merit of any class, is, by the sure operation of adequate causes, [65] filled with everything illustrious in rank, in descent, in hereditary and acquired wealth, in cultivated talents, in military, civil, naval, and political distinction, that the country can supply. But supposing (what can hardly be supposed even as a hypothesis) that the House of Commons were composed in the same manner as the Tiers Etat in France, would this dominion of chicanery be borne with patience, or even conceived without horror? God forbid I should insinuate anything derogatory to that profession, which is another priesthood, administering the rites of sacred justice.

But while I revere men in the functions that belong to them, and would do as much as one man can to prevent their exclusion from any, I cannot, to flatter them, give the lie to nature. They are good and useful as part of the mixture; they must be harmful if they preponderate so far as virtually to become the whole. Their very excellence in their own special functions may be far from a qualification for others.

Can it escape observation that when men are too much confined to the habits of their profession and faculty, and, as it were, hardened in the repeated work of that narrow circle, they are dis-

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disabled than qualified for whatever depends on the knowledge of mankind, on experience in mixed affairs, on a comprehensive connected view of the various complicated external and internal interests which go to the formation of that multifarious thing called a state?	abled rather than qualified for whatever depends on knowledge of mankind, on experience in mixed affairs, on a comprehensive, connected view of the various and complicated external and internal interests that go to form that multifarious thing called a state?
p. 66 After all, if the house of commons were to have an wholly professional and faculty composition, what is the power of the house of commons, circumscribed and shut in by the immoveable barriers of laws, usages, positive rules of doctrine and practice, counterpoized by the house of lords, and every moment of its existence at the discretion of the crown to continue, prorogue, or dissolve us? The power of the house of commons, direct or indirect, is indeed great;	After all, if the House of Commons were to be composed wholly of the professions and faculties, what is the power of the House of Commons? It is circumscribed and shut in by the immovable barriers of laws, usages, and positive rules of doctrine and practice; it is counterbalanced by the House of Lords; and at every moment of its existence it lies at the discretion of the crown to continue, prorogue, or dissolve us. The power of the House of Commons, direct or indirect, is indeed great;
and long may it be able to preserve its greatness, and the spirit belonging to true greatness, at the full; and it will do so, as long as it can keep the breakers of law in India from becoming the makers of law for England.	and long may it be able to preserve its greatness, and the spirit belonging to true greatness, in full; and it will do so as long as it can keep the breakers of law in India from becoming the makers of law for England.[9]
The power, however, of the house of commons, when least diminished, is as a drop of water in the ocean, compared to that residing in a settled majority of your National Assembly. That Assembly, since the destruction of the orders, has no fundamental law, no strict convention, no respected usage to restrain it. Instead of finding themselves obliged to conform to a fixed constitution, they have a power to make a constitution which shall conform to their designs. Nothing in heaven or upon earth can serve as a control on them.	The power of the House of Commons, however, even when least diminished, is as a drop of water in the ocean compared with that residing in a settled majority of your National Assembly. That Assembly, since the destruction of the orders, has no fundamental law, no strict convention, no respected usage to restrain it. Instead of finding themselves obliged to conform to a fixed constitution, they have the power to make a constitution that shall conform to their designs. Nothing in heaven or on earth can serve as a check on them.

9 A thrust at East India Company men who bought seats in Parliament; Burke was then leading the impeachment of Warren Hastings, former governor-general of Bengal.

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What ought to be the heads, the hearts, the dispositions, that are qualified, or that dare, not only to make laws under a fixed constitution, but at one heat to strike out a totally new constitution for a great kingdom, and in every part of it, from the monarch on the throne to the vestry of a [67] parish? But— "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." In such a state of unbounded power, for undefined and undefinable purposes, the evil of a moral and almost physical inaptitude of the man to the function must be the greatest we can conceive to happen in the management of human affairs.

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What must be the heads, the hearts, the dispositions that are qualified, or that dare, not only to make laws under a fixed constitution, but in a single heat to strike out a totally new constitution for a great kingdom, and for every part of it, from the monarch on the throne to the vestry of a [67] parish? But—"fools rush in where angels fear to tread." In such a state of unbounded power, for undefined and undefinable purposes, the evil of a moral and almost physical unfitness of the man for the function must be the greatest we can conceive of in the management of human affairs.[10]

THE CLERGY AND THE NOBLES WHO JOINED THEM

Poor country curates and discontented nobles joined the lawyers; Burke praises loving "the little platoon."

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p. 67 Having considered the composition of the third estate as it stood in its original frame, I took a view of the representatives of the clergy. There too it appeared, that full as little regard was had to the general security of property, or to the aptitude of the deputies for their public purposes, in the principles of their election.

That election was so contrived as to send a very large proportion of mere country curates to the great and arduous work of new-modelling a state; men who never had seen the state so much as in a picture; men who knew nothing of the world beyond the bounds of an obscure village; who, immersed in hopeless poverty, could regard all property, whether secular or ecclesiastical, with no other eye than that of envy; among whom must be many, who, for the smallest hope of the meanest dividend in plunder, would readily join in any attempts upon a body of wealth, in which they could hardly look to have any share, except in a general scramble.

Instead of balancing the power of the active chicaners in the other assembly, these curates must necessarily become the active coadjutors, or at best the passive instruments of those with whom they had been habitually guided in their petty village concerns. [68] They too could hardly be the most conscientious of their kind, who presuming upon their incompetent

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Having considered the composition of the Third Estate as it stood in its original form, I took a look at the representatives of the clergy. There too it appeared that the principles of their election paid just as little regard to the general security of property, or to the fitness of the deputies for their public purposes.

That election was so contrived as to send a very large proportion of mere country curates to the great and arduous work of remodeling a state: men who had never seen the state so much as in a picture; men who knew nothing of the world beyond the bounds of an obscure village; who, sunk in hopeless poverty, could look on all property, whether secular or ecclesiastical, with no eye but that of envy; among whom there must be many who, for the smallest hope of the meanest share of the plunder, would readily join in any attack on a body of wealth in which they could hardly expect to have any share except in a general scramble.[11]

Instead of balancing the power of the active chicaners in the other chamber, these curates must necessarily become the active collaborators, or at best the passive instruments, of those by whom they had habitually been guided in their petty village concerns. [68] Those, too, could hardly be the most conscientious of their kind who, presuming on their inadequate understanding, could intrigue

10 The quotation is from Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711).

11 Burke's "curates" are the French *curés*, the parish priests, who made up the majority of the clergy's deputies.

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understanding, could intrigue for a trust which led them from their natural relation to their flocks, and their natural spheres of action, to undertake the regeneration of kingdoms. This preponderating weight being added to the force of the body chicane in the Tiers Etat, completed that momentum of ignorance, rashness, presumption, and lust of plunder, which nothing has been able to resist.

p. 68

To observing men it must have appeared from the beginning, that the majority of the Third Estate, in conjunction with such a deputation from the clergy as I have described, whilst it pursued the destruction of the nobility, would inevitably become subservient to the worst designs of individuals in that class. In the spoil and humiliation of their own order these individuals would possess a sure fund for the pay of their new followers. To squander away the objects which made the happiness of their fellows, would be to them no sacrifice at all. Turbulent, discontented men of quality, in proportion as they are puffed up with personal pride and arrogance, generally despise their own order.

One of the first symptoms they discover of a selfish and mischievous ambition, is a profligate disregard of a dignity which they partake with others. To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series [69] by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind. The interests of that portion of social arrangement is a trust in the hands of all those who compose it; and as none but bad men would justify it in abuse, none but traitors would barter it away for their own personal advantage.

p. 69

There were, in the time of our civil troubles in England (I do not know whether you have any such in your Assembly in France) several persons, like the then Earl of Holland, who by themselves or their families had brought an odium on the throne, by the prodigal dispensation of its bounties towards them, who afterwards joined in the rebellions arising from the discontents of which they were themselves the cause; men who helped to subvert that throne to which they owed, some of them, their

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for a trust that drew them from their natural relation to their flocks, and from their natural spheres of action, to undertake the regeneration of kingdoms. This preponderating weight, added to the force of the body of chicanery in the Tiers Etat, completed that momentum of ignorance, rashness, presumption, and lust for plunder which nothing has been able to resist.

To observant men it must have been apparent from the beginning that the majority of the Third Estate, in conjunction with such a deputation from the clergy as I have described, would, while pursuing the destruction of the nobility, inevitably become subservient to the worst designs of individuals within that class. In the spoil and humiliation of their own order these individuals would possess a sure fund for paying their new followers. To squander the things that made up the happiness of their fellows would be no sacrifice to them at all. Turbulent, discontented men of rank, in proportion as they are puffed up with personal pride and arrogance, generally despise their own order.

One of the first symptoms they show of a selfish and mischievous ambition is a profligate disregard of a dignity they share with others. To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ, as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series [69] by which we proceed toward a love of our country and of mankind. The interests of that portion of the social arrangement are a trust in the hands of all who compose it; and as none but bad men would justify its abuse, none but traitors would barter it away for their own personal advantage.

In the time of our civil troubles in England (I do not know whether you have any such people in your Assembly in France) there were several persons, like the then Earl of Holland, who by themselves or their families had brought odium on the throne through its lavish dispensing of bounties to them, and who afterward joined in the rebellions that arose from the discontents they themselves had caused. These were men who helped to overthrow the throne to which some of them owed

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existence, others all that power which they employed to ruin their benefactor.

If any bounds are set to the rapacious demands of that sort of people, or that others are permitted to partake in the objects they would engross, revenge and envy soon fill up the craving void that is left in their avarice. Confounded by the complication of distempered passions, their reason is disturbed; their views become vast and perplexed; to others inexplicable; to themselves uncertain. They find, on all sides, bounds to their unprincipled ambition in any fixed order of things. But in the fog and haze of confusion all is enlarged, and appears without any limit.

p. 70 When men of rank sacrifice all ideas of dignity to an ambition without a distinct object, and work with low instruments and for low ends, the whole composition becomes low and base. Does not something like this now appear in France? Does it not produce something ignoble and inglorious? a kind of meanness in all the prevalent policy? a tendency in all that is done to lower along with individuals all the dignity and importance of the state? Other revolutions have been conducted by persons,

who whilst they attempted or effected changes in the commonwealth, sanctified their ambition by advancing the dignity of the people whose peace they troubled. They had long views. They aimed at the rule, not at the destruction of their country.

They were men of great civil, and great military talents, and if the terror, the ornament of their age. They were not like Jew brokers contending with each other who could best remedy with fraudulent circulation and depreciated paper the wretchedness and ruin brought on their country by their degenerate councils. The compliment made to one of the great bad men of the old stamp (Cromwell) by his kinsman, a favourite poet of that time, shews what it was he proposed, and what indeed to a great degree he accomplished in the success of his ambition:

"Still as *you* rise, the *state,* exalted too,
Finds no distemper whilst 'tis chang'd by *you*;

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their very existence, and others all the power they then used to ruin their benefactor.[12]

If any limits are set to the rapacious demands of people of that sort, or if others are allowed a share in the things they would monopolize, revenge and envy soon fill the craving void left in their avarice. Confused by a tangle of diseased passions, their reason is unsettled. Their views become vast and muddled, inexplicable to others and uncertain to themselves. In any fixed order of things they find limits on every side to their unprincipled ambition. But in the fog and haze of confusion everything is enlarged, and seems to have no limit.

When men of rank sacrifice every idea of dignity to an ambition with no distinct object, and work with low instruments for low ends, the whole composition becomes low and base. Does not something like this appear in France now? Does it not produce something ignoble and inglorious? A kind of meanness in all the policy that prevails? A tendency in everything that is done to lower, along with individuals, all the dignity and importance of the state? Other revolutions have been led by people

who, while they attempted or carried out changes in the commonwealth, sanctified their ambition by advancing the dignity of the people whose peace they disturbed. They took long views. They aimed to rule their country, not to destroy it.

They were men of great civil and great military talents, and if they were the terror of their age, they were also its ornament. They were not like Jew brokers competing with one another over who could best remedy, with fraudulent circulation and depreciated paper, the wretchedness and ruin their degenerate counsels had brought on their country. The compliment paid to one of the great bad men of the old stamp (Cromwell) by his kinsman, a favorite poet of that time, shows what he set out to do, and what indeed he achieved to a great degree when his ambition succeeded:[13]

"Still as *you* rise, the *state,* exalted too,
Finds no distemper while 'tis changed by *you*;

12 Henry Rich, 1st Earl of Holland (1590–1649), a favorite loaded with grants by James I and Charles I, who sided with Parliament, changed sides more than once, and was executed in 1649.
13 Burke's hostile linking of Jews with financial speculation reflects a common prejudice of the period.

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Chang'd like the world's great scene, when without noise
The rising sun night's *vulgar* lights destroys."

p. 71 These disturbers were not so much like men usurping power, as asserting their natural place in society. Their rising was to illuminate and beautify the world. Their conquest over their competitors was by outshining them. The hand that, like a destroying angel, smote the country, communicated to it the force and energy under which it suffered. I do not say (God forbid) I do not say, that the virtues of such men were to be taken as a balance to their crimes;

but they were some corrective to their effects. Such was, as I said, our Cromwell. Such were your whole race of Guises, Condés, and Colignis. Such the Richlieus, who in more quiet times acted in the spirit of a civil war.

Such, as better men, and in a less dubious cause, were your Henry the 4th and your Sully, though nursed in civil confusions, and not wholly without some of their taint. It is a thing to be wondered at, to see how very soon France, when she had a moment to respire, recovered and emerged from the longest and most dreadful civil war that ever was known in any nation. Why? Because, among all their massacres, they had not slain the *mind* in their country. A conscious dignity, a noble pride, a generous sense of glory and emulation, was not extinguished. On the contrary, it was kindled and inflamed. The organs also of the state, however shattered, existed.

All the prizes of honour and virtue, all the rewards, all the distinctions, remained. But your present confusion, like a palsy, has attacked the fountain [72] of life itself. Every person in your country, in a situation to be actuated by a principle of honour, is disgraced and degraded, and can entertain no sensation of life, except in a mortified and humiliated indignation. But this generation will quickly pass away. The next generation of the nobility will resemble the artificers and clowns, and money-jobbers, usurers, and Jews, who will be always their fellows, sometimes their masters. Believe me, Sir,

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Changed like the world's great scene, when without noise
The rising sun night's *vulgar* lights destroys."[14]

These disturbers were not so much like men usurping power as like men asserting their natural place in society. Their rising was to illuminate and beautify the world. They conquered their competitors by outshining them. The hand that, like a destroying angel, struck the country also gave it the force and energy under which it suffered. I do not say (God forbid), I do not say that the virtues of such men were to be taken as a counterweight to their crimes;

but they were some corrective to their effects. Such, as I said, was our Cromwell. Such was your whole race of Guises, Condés, and Colignys. Such were the Richelieus, who in quieter times acted in the spirit of a civil war.[15]

Such, as better men and in a less doubtful cause, were your Henry IV and your Sully, though they were nursed in civil confusion and not wholly free of its taint. It is a thing to wonder at, how very soon France, once she had a moment to breathe, recovered and emerged from the longest and most dreadful civil war ever known in any nation. Why? Because, amid all their massacres, they had not slain the *mind* in their country. A conscious dignity, a noble pride, a generous sense of glory and emulation, had not been extinguished. On the contrary, it was kindled and inflamed. The organs of the state, too, however shattered, still existed.[16]

All the prizes of honor and virtue, all the rewards, all the distinctions, remained. But your present confusion, like a palsy, has attacked the fountain [72] of life itself. Every person in your country who is in a position to be moved by a principle of honor is disgraced and degraded, and can feel no sensation of life except a mortified and humiliated indignation. But this generation will soon pass away. The next generation of the nobility will resemble the artisans and peasants, and money-jobbers, usurers, and Jews, who will always be their companions and sometimes their masters. Believe me,

14 Edmund Waller, Cromwell's kinsman, "A Panegyric to My Lord Protector" (1655).
15 The Guises (Catholic) and the Condés and Admiral Coligny (Protestant) led rival factions in the French Wars of Religion (1562–98). Cardinal Richelieu was chief minister to Louis XIII.
16 Henry IV (reigned 1589–1610) ended the Wars of Religion. His minister, the Duke of Sully, restored the kingdom's finances.

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those who attempt to level, never equalize. In all societies, consisting of various descriptions of citizens, some description must be uppermost.	Sir, those who attempt to level never equalize. In all societies made up of various kinds of citizens, some kind must be uppermost.
p. 72 The levellers therefore only change and pervert the natural order of things; they load the edifice of society, by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground. The associations of taylors and carpenters, of which the republic (of Paris, for instance) is composed, cannot be equal to the situation, into which, by the worst of usurpations, an usurpation on the prerogatives of nature, you attempt to force them.	The levelers therefore only change and pervert the natural order of things. They overload the edifice of society by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground. The associations of tailors and carpenters of which the republic (of Paris, for instance) is composed cannot be equal to the situation into which you are trying to force them by the worst of usurpations, a usurpation on the prerogatives of nature.
The chancellor of France at the opening of the states, said, in a tone of oratorial flourish, that all occupations were honourable. If he meant only, that no honest employment was disgraceful, he would not have gone beyond the truth. But in asserting, that any thing is honourable, we imply some distinction in its favour. The occupation of an hair-dresser, or of a working tallowchandler, cannot be a matter of honour to any [73] person—to say nothing of a number of other more servile employments. Such descriptions of men ought not to suffer oppression from the state; but the state suffers oppression, if such as they, either individually or collectively, are permitted to rule.	At the opening of the states general, the chancellor of France said, with a flourish of oratory, that all occupations were honorable. If he meant only that no honest employment was disgraceful, he would not have gone beyond the truth. But in asserting that anything is honorable, we imply some distinction in its favor. The occupation of a hairdresser, or of a working tallow-chandler, cannot be a matter of honor to any [73] person—to say nothing of a number of other, more servile employments. Such kinds of men ought not to suffer oppression from the state. But the state suffers oppression if people like them, either individually or collectively, are allowed to rule.[17]
p. 73 In this you think you are combating prejudice, but you are at war with nature[1].	In this you think you are combating prejudice, but you are at war with nature[1].

17 Charles de Barentin, Keeper of the Seals, spoke at the opening on May 5, 1789. A tallow-chandler made and sold tallow candles.
18 Burke quotes the King James version of the Apocrypha (the Wisdom of Sirach).

I do not, my dear Sir, conceive you to be of that sophistical captious spirit, or of that uncandid dulness, as to require, for every general observation or sentiment, an explicit detail of all the correctives and exceptions, which reason will presume to be included in all the general propositions which come from reasonable men. You do not imagine, that I wish to confine power, authority, and distinction to blood, and names, and titles. No, Sir. There is no qualification for government, [74] but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of Heaven to human place and honour.

p. 74 Woe to the country which would madly and impiously reject the service of the talents and virtues, civil, military, or religious, that are given to grace and to serve it; and would condemn to obscurity every thing formed to diffuse lustre and glory around a state. Woe to that country too, that passing into the opposite extreme, considers a low education, a mean contracted view of things, a sordid mercenary occupation, as a preferable title to command. Every thing ought to be open; but not indifferently to every man. No rotation; no appointment by lot; no mode of election

I do not suppose, my dear Sir, that you are of that sophistical, captious spirit, or of that uncandid dullness, which demands, for every general observation or sentiment, an explicit list of all the correctives and exceptions that reason will presume are included in all general propositions coming from reasonable men. You do not imagine that I wish to confine power, authority, and distinction to blood, and names, and titles. No, Sir. There is no qualification for government [74] but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, they have the passport of Heaven to human place and honor.

Woe to the country that would madly and impiously reject the service of the talents and virtues, civil, military, or religious, that are given to grace and to serve it, and would condemn to obscurity everything formed to spread luster and glory around a state. Woe to that country too which, passing to the opposite extreme, considers a low education, a mean and narrow view of things, a sordid mercenary occupation, as a better title to command. Everything ought to be open, but not indiscriminately to every man. No rotation, no appointment by lot, no mode of election operating in

23 The Gallican church is the Catholic Church of France, which counts Ecclesiasticus as Scripture. The Church of England places it among the Apocrypha.

19

[1] Ecclesiasticus, chap. xxxviii. verse 24, 25. “The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall become wise.” — “How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad; that driveth oxen; and is occupied in their labours; and whose talk is of bullocks.”

[1] Ecclesiasticus, chapter 38, verses 24–25: “The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall become wise.”—“How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad; that driveth oxen; and is occupied in their labours; and whose talk is of bullocks.”[18]

20

Ver. 27. “So every carpenter and work-master that laboureth night and day,”&c.

Verse 27: “So every carpenter and work-master that laboureth night and day,” etc.

21

Ver. 33. “They shall not be sought for in public counsel, nor sit high in the congregation: They shall not sit on the judges seat, nor understand the sentence of judgment: they cannot declare justice and judgment, and they shall not be found where parables are spoken.”

Verse 33: “They shall not be sought for in public counsel, nor sit high in the congregation: They shall not sit on the judges’ seat, nor understand the sentence of judgment: they cannot declare justice and judgment, and they shall not be found where parables are spoken.”

22

Ver. 34. “But they will maintain the state of the world.”

Verse 34: “But they will maintain the state of the world.”

24

I do not determine whether this book be canonical, as the Gallican church (till lately) has considered it, or apocryphal, as here it is taken. I am sure it contains a great deal of sense, and truth.

I do not decide whether this book is canonical, as the Gallican church has (until lately) considered it, or apocryphal, as it is taken here. I am sure it contains a great deal of sense and truth.[23]

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operating in the spirit of sortition or rotation, can be generally good in a government conversant in extensive objects.

Because they have no tendency, direct or indirect, to fit the man to the duty. I do not hesitate to say, that the road to eminence and power, from obscure condition, ought not to be made too easy, nor a thing too much of course. If rare merit be the rarest of all rare things, it ought to pass through some sort of probation. The temple of honour ought to be seated on an eminence. If it be open through virtue, let it be remembered too, that virtue is never tried but by some difficulty, and some struggle.

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the spirit of sortition or rotation, can be generally good in a government that deals with extensive objects.

Because they have no tendency, direct or indirect, to fit the man to the duty. I do not hesitate to say that the road to eminence and power from an obscure condition ought not to be made too easy, nor too much a matter of course. If rare merit is the rarest of all rare things, it ought to pass through some sort of probation. The temple of honor ought to be set on a height. If it is open through virtue, let it be remembered too that virtue is never tested except by some difficulty and some struggle.

PROPERTY AND REPRESENTATION

Burke argues that property, especially inherited wealth, must be heavily represented to be safe from ability and envy.

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Nothing is a due and adequate representation of a state, that does not represent its ability, as [75] well as its property. But as ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert, and timid, it never can be safe from the invasions of ability, unless it be, out of all proportion, predominant in the representation. It must be represented too in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected. The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and conservation, is to be *unequal.* The great masses therefore which excite envy, and tempt rapacity, must be put out of the possibility of danger.

p. 75 Then they form a natural rampart about the lesser properties in all their gradations. The same quantity of property, which is by the natural course of things, divided among many, has not the same operation. Its defensive power is weakened as it is diffused. In this diffusion each man's portion is less than what, in the eagerness of his desires, he may flatter himself to obtain by dissipating the accumulations of others. The plunder of the few would indeed give but a share inconceivably small in the distribution to the many. But the many are not capable of making this calculation; and those who lead them to rapine, never intend this distribution.

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Nothing is a due and adequate representation of a state that does not represent its ability as [75] well as its property. But ability is a vigorous and active principle, while property is sluggish, inert, and timid. So property can never be safe from the invasions of ability unless it is predominant in the representation out of all proportion. It must also be represented in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected. The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and its conservation, is to be *unequal.* The great masses, therefore, which excite envy and tempt rapacity, must be put beyond the possibility of danger.

Then they form a natural rampart around the lesser properties in all their gradations. The same quantity of property, divided among many by the natural course of things, does not have the same effect. Its defensive power weakens as it is spread out. In this diffusion each man's portion is less than what, in the eagerness of his desires, he may flatter himself he could get by squandering the accumulations of others. The plunder of the few would indeed yield an inconceivably small share when distributed among the many. But the many are not capable of making this calculation, and those who lead them to plunder never intend this distribution.

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The perpetuation of property in our families is the most valuable and most interesting circumstance attending it, that which demonstrates most of a benevolent disposition in its owners, and that which tends most to the perpetuation of society itself. The possessors of family wealth, and of the distinction which attends [76] hereditary possession (as most concerned in it) are the natural securities for this transmission. With us, the house of peers is formed upon this principle. It is wholly composed of hereditary property and hereditary distinction; and made therefore the third of the legislature; and in the last event, the sole judge of all property in all its subdivisions.

p. 76 The house of commons too, though not necessarily, yet in fact, is always so composed in the far greater part. Let those large proprietors be what they will, and they have their chance of being amongst the best, they are at the very worst, the ballast in the vessel of the commonwealth. For though hereditary wealth, and the rank which goes with it, are too much idolized by creeping sycophants, and the blind abject admirers of power, they are too rashly slighted in shallow speculations of the petulant, assuming, short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy. Some decent regulated pre-eminence, some preference (not exclusive appropriation) given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic.

It is said, that twenty-four millions ought to prevail over two hundred thousand. True; if the constitution of a kingdom be a problem of arithmetic. This sort of discourse does well enough with the lamp-post for its second: to men who *may* reason calmly, it is ridiculous. The will of the many, and their interest, must very often differ;

and great will be the difference when they make an evil choice. A government of five hundred country attornies [77] and obscure curates is not good for twenty-four millions of men, though it were chosen by eight and forty millions; nor is it the better for being guided by a dozen of persons

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The perpetuation of property in our families is the most valuable and most interesting circumstance attending it. It shows most of a benevolent disposition in its owners, and it tends most to the perpetuation of society itself. The possessors of family wealth, and of the distinction that attends [76] hereditary possession, are (as those most concerned in it) the natural guarantees of this transmission. With us, the House of Peers is formed on this principle. It is wholly composed of hereditary property and hereditary distinction. It is therefore made the third branch of the legislature, and in the last resort the sole judge of all property in all its subdivisions.[25]

The House of Commons too, though not necessarily, is in fact always composed this way for the far greater part. Let those large proprietors be what they will (and they have their chance of being among the best), at the very worst they are the ballast in the vessel of the commonwealth. Hereditary wealth, and the rank that goes with it, are too much idolized by creeping sycophants and the blind, abject admirers of power. But they are too rashly slighted in the shallow speculations of the petulant, presumptuous, short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy. Some decent, regulated pre-eminence, some preference (not exclusive appropriation) given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic.

It is said that twenty-four million ought to prevail over two hundred thousand. True, if the constitution of a kingdom is a problem in arithmetic. This sort of talk does well enough with the lamp-post for its second; to men who *may* reason calmly, it is ridiculous. The will of the many and their interest must very often differ,[26]

and great will be the difference when they make an evil choice. A government of five hundred country attorneys [77] and obscure curates is not good for twenty-four million men, even if it were chosen by forty-eight million. Nor is it any better for being guided by a dozen persons of quality

25 The House of Lords was also the final court of appeal in Britain.
26 The lamp-post served the Paris crowds as an improvised gallows ("À la lanterne!"). A "second" backs a party in a duel.

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of quality, who have betrayed their trust in order to obtain that power.

p. 77 At present, you seem in every thing to have strayed out of the high road of nature. The property of France does not govern it. Of course property is destroyed, and rational liberty has no existence. All you have got for the present is a paper circulation, and a stockjobbing constitution: and as to the future, do you seriously think that the territory of France, upon the republican system of eighty-three independent municipalities, (to say nothing of the parts that compose them) can ever be governed as one body, or can ever be set in motion by the impulse of one mind? When the National Assembly has completed its work, it will have accomplished its ruin.

These commonwealths will not long bear a state of subjection to the republic of Paris. They will not bear that this one body should monopolize the captivity of the king, and the dominion over the assembly calling itself National. Each will keep its own portion of the spoil of the church to itself; and it will not suffer either that spoil, or the more just fruits of their industry, or the natural produce of their soil, to be sent to swell the insolence, or pamper the luxury of the mechanics of Paris.

In this they will see none of the equality, under the pretence of which they have been tempted to throw off their allegiance [78] to their sovereign, as well as the antient constitution of their country. There can be no capital city in such a constitution as they have lately made. They have forgot, that when they framed democratic governments,

they had virtually dismembered their country. The person whom they persevere in calling king, has not power left to him by the hundredth part sufficient to hold together this collection of republics. The republic of Paris will endeavour indeed to compleat the debauchery of the army, and illegally to perpetuate the assembly, without resort to its constituents, as the means of continuing its despotism.

p. 78 It will make efforts, by becoming the heart of a boundless paper circulation, to draw every thing

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who have betrayed their trust in order to obtain that power.

At present you seem in everything to have strayed from the high road of nature. The property of France does not govern it. Naturally, then, property is destroyed, and rational liberty has no existence. All you have gained for the present is a paper circulation and a stockjobbing constitution. And as for the future, do you seriously think that the territory of France, on the republican system of eighty-three independent municipalities (to say nothing of the parts that compose them), can ever be governed as one body, or ever be set in motion by the impulse of one mind? When the National Assembly has completed its work, it will have accomplished its ruin.[27]

These commonwealths will not long bear subjection to the republic of Paris. They will not bear that this one body should monopolize the captivity of the king and dominion over the assembly that calls itself National. Each will keep its own portion of the spoil of the church for itself. It will not allow that spoil, or the more just fruits of their industry, or the natural produce of their soil, to be sent to swell the insolence or pamper the luxury of the artisans of Paris.

In this they will see none of the equality on the pretense of which they were tempted to throw off their allegiance [78] to their sovereign, as well as the ancient constitution of their country. There can be no capital city in a constitution such as they have lately made. They have forgotten that when they framed democratic governments,

they had in effect dismembered their country. The person they persist in calling king has not a hundredth part of the power left to him that would be needed to hold this collection of republics together. The republic of Paris will indeed try to complete the debauching of the army, and to perpetuate the assembly illegally, without recourse to its constituents, as the means of continuing its despotism.

It will try, by becoming the heart of a boundless paper circulation, to draw everything to itself, but

27 In 1790 the Assembly divided France into eighty-three departments, replacing the old provinces.

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to itself; but in vain. All this policy in the end will appear as feeble as it is now violent.

If this be your actual situation, compared to the situation to which you were called, as it were by the voice of God and man, I cannot find it in my heart to congratulate you on the choice you have made, or the success which has attended your endeavours. I can as little recommend to any other nation a conduct grounded on such principles, and productive of such effects. That I must leave to those who can see further into your affairs than I am able to do, and who best know how far your actions are favourable to their designs.

The gentlemen of the Revolution Society, who were so early in their congratulations, appear to be strongly of opinion that there is some scheme of politics relative to this [79] country, in which your proceedings may, in some way, be useful. For your Dr.

p. 79

Price, who seems to have speculated himself into no small degree of fervour upon this subject, addresses his auditory in the following very remarkable words: "I cannot conclude without recalling *particularly* to your recollection a consideration which I have *more than once alluded to,* and which probably your thoughts have *been all along anticipating*; a consideration with which my *mind is impressed more than I can express.* I mean the consideration of the *favourableness of the present times to all exertions in the cause of liberty.*"

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in vain. In the end all this policy will appear as feeble as it is now violent.

If this is your actual situation, compared with the situation to which you were called, as it were, by the voice of God and man, I cannot find it in my heart to congratulate you on the choice you have made, or on the success that has attended your efforts. Nor can I recommend to any other nation a conduct grounded on such principles and productive of such effects. That I must leave to those who can see further into your affairs than I can, and who know best how far your actions serve their designs.

The gentlemen of the Revolution Society, who were so early with their congratulations, appear to be firmly of the opinion that there is some political scheme relating to this [79] country in which your proceedings may in some way be useful. For your Dr.

Price, who seems to have speculated himself into no small degree of fervor on this subject, addresses his audience in the following very remarkable words: "I cannot conclude without recalling *particularly* to your recollection a consideration which I have *more than once alluded to,* and which probably your thoughts have *been all along anticipating*; a consideration with which my *mind is impressed more than I can express.* I mean the consideration of the *favorableness of the present times to all exertions in the cause of liberty.*"

PRICE'S DOCTRINE AND THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION

Burke asks what Price's "exertions in the cause of liberty" would mean for England, and defends its representation.

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It is plain that the mind of this *political* Preacher was at the time big with some extraordinary design; and it is very probable, that the thoughts of his audience, who understood him better than I do, did all along run before him in his reflection, and in the whole train of consequences to which it led.

Before I read that sermon, I really thought I had lived in a free country; and it was an error I cherished, because it gave me a greater liking to the country I lived in. I was indeed aware, that a jealous, ever-waking vigilance, to guard the

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It is plain that the mind of this *political* preacher was at the time big with some extraordinary design; and it is very probable that the thoughts of his audience, who understood him better than I do, did all along run ahead of him in his reflection, and in the whole train of consequences to which it led.

Before I read that sermon, I really thought I had lived in a free country; and it was an error I cherished, because it gave me a greater liking for the country I lived in. I was indeed aware that a jealous, ever-waking vigilance, to guard the treasure

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treasure of our liberty, not only from invasion, but from decay and corruption, was our best wisdom and our first duty. However, I considered that treasure rather as a possession to be secured than as a prize to be contended for. I did not discern how the present time came to be so very favourable to all *exertions* in the cause of freedom.

The present [80] time differs from any other only by the circumstance of what is doing in France. If the example of that nation is to have an influence on this, I can easily conceive why some of their proceedings which have an unpleasant aspect, and are not quite reconcileable to humanity, generosity, good faith, and justice, are palliated with so much milky good-nature towards the actors, and borne with so much heroic fortitude towards the sufferers. It is certainly not prudent to discredit the authority of an example we mean to follow.

p. 80 But allowing this, we are led to a very natural question;—What is that cause of liberty, and what are those exertions in its favour, to which the example of France is so singularly auspicious? Is our monarchy to be annihilated, with all the laws, all the tribunals, and all the ancient corporations of the kingdom? Is every land-mark of the country to be done away in favour of a geometrical and arithmetical constitution? Is the house of lords to be voted useless? Is episcopacy to be abolished? Are the church lands to be sold to Jews and jobbers; or given to bribe new-invented municipal republics into a participation in sacrilege?

Are all the taxes to be voted grievances, and the revenue reduced to a patriotic contribution, or patriotic presents? Are silver shoe-buckles to be substituted in the place of the land tax and the malt tax, for the support of the naval strength of this kingdom? Are all orders, ranks, and distinctions to be confounded, that out of universal anarchy, joined to national bankruptcy, [81] three or four thousand democracies should be formed into eighty-three, and that they may all, by some sort of unknown attractive power, be organized into one?

p. 81 For this great end, is the army to be seduced from its discipline and its fidelity, first, by every kind of debauchery, and then by the terrible precedent of a donative in the encrease of pay? Are the curates to be seduced from their bishops, by

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of our liberty not only from invasion but from decay and corruption, was our best wisdom and our first duty. Still, I regarded that treasure as a possession to be secured rather than as a prize to be fought for. I did not see how the present time came to be so very favorable to all *exertions* in the cause of freedom.

The present [80] time differs from any other only in what is being done in France. If the example of that nation is to have an influence on this one, I can easily understand why some of their proceedings, which have an unpleasant look and are not quite reconcilable with humanity, generosity, good faith, and justice, are excused with so much milky good nature toward the actors, and borne with so much heroic fortitude toward the sufferers. It is certainly not prudent to discredit the authority of an example we mean to follow.

But granting this, we are led to a very natural question: What is that cause of liberty, and what are those exertions in its favor, to which the example of France is so singularly auspicious? Is our monarchy to be annihilated, with all the laws, all the courts, and all the ancient corporations of the kingdom? Is every landmark of the country to be done away with in favor of a geometrical and arithmetical constitution? Is the House of Lords to be voted useless? Is episcopacy to be abolished? Are the church lands to be sold to Jews and stockjobbers, or given away to bribe newly invented municipal republics into a share in sacrilege?

Are all the taxes to be voted grievances, and the revenue reduced to a patriotic contribution, or patriotic gifts? Are silver shoe buckles to be substituted for the land tax and the malt tax, for the support of the naval strength of this kingdom? Are all orders, ranks, and distinctions to be jumbled together, so that out of universal anarchy, joined to national bankruptcy, [81] three or four thousand democracies may be formed into eighty-three, and that they may all, by some unknown power of attraction, be organized into one?

For this great end, is the army to be seduced from its discipline and its loyalty, first by every kind of debauchery, and then by the terrible precedent of a donative in the form of increased pay? Are the parish priests to be seduced from their bishops by

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holding out to them the delusive hope of a dole out of the spoils of their own order? Are the citizens of London to be drawn from their allegiance, by feeding them at the expence of their fellow-subjects? Are all the public revenues levied in their city to be put under their administration?

Is what remains of the plundered stock of public revenue to be employed in the wild project of maintaining two armies to watch over and to fight with each other?—If these are the ends and means of the Revolution Society, I admit they are well adapted to each other; and France may furnish them for both with precedents in point.

I see that your example is held out to shame us. I know that we are supposed a dull sluggish race, rendered passive by finding our situation tolerable; and prevented by a mediocrity of freedom from ever attaining to its full perfection. Your leaders in France began by affecting to admire, almost to adore, the British constitution; but as they advanced they came to look upon it with a sovereign contempt. The friends of your National Assembly amongst us have full as mean an opinion [82] of what was formerly thought the glory of their country. The Revolution Society has discovered that the English nation is not free.

p. 82 They are convinced that the inequality in our representation is a "defect in our constitution so *gross and palpable,* as to make it excellent chiefly in *form* and *theory*[2]." That a representation in the legislature of a kingdom is not only the basis of all constitutional liberty in it, but of "*all legitimate government*; that without it a *government* is nothing but an *usurpation*;" —that "when the representation is *partial,* the kingdom possesses liberty only *partially*; and if extremely partial it gives only a *semblance*; and if not only extremely partial, but corruptly chosen, it becomes a *nuisance.*" Dr.

Price considers this inadequacy of representation as our *fundamental grievance*; and though, as to the corruption of this semblance of representation, he hopes it is not yet arrived to its full perfection of depravity;

he fears that "nothing will be done towards gaining for us this *essential blessing,* until some

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holding out to them the delusive hope of a handout from the spoils of their own order? Are the citizens of London to be drawn from their allegiance by being fed at the expense of their fellow subjects? Are all the public revenues collected in their city to be put under their administration?[28]

Is what remains of the plundered stock of public revenue to be spent on the wild project of maintaining two armies to watch over and fight each other?—If these are the ends and means of the Revolution Society, I admit they are well suited to each other; and France can supply them with precedents in point for both.[29]

I see that your example is held up to shame us. I know that we are supposed to be a dull, sluggish race, made passive by finding our situation tolerable, and kept by a middling degree of freedom from ever attaining its full perfection. Your leaders in France began by professing to admire, almost to adore, the British constitution; but as they went on they came to look on it with sovereign contempt. The friends of your National Assembly among us have just as low an opinion [82] of what was once thought the glory of their country. The Revolution Society has discovered that the English nation is not free.

They are convinced that the inequality in our representation is a "defect in our constitution so *gross and palpable,* as to make it excellent chiefly in *form* and *theory*[2]." That representation in the legislature of a kingdom is the basis not only of all constitutional liberty in it, but of "*all legitimate government*; that without it a *government* is nothing but an *usurpation*"; —that "when the representation is *partial,* the kingdom possesses liberty only *partially*; and if extremely partial it gives only a *semblance*; and if not only extremely partial, but corruptly chosen, it becomes a *nuisance.*" Dr.

Price considers this inadequacy of representation our *fundamental grievance*; and though, as to the corruption of this semblance of representation, he hopes it has not yet reached its full perfection of depravity,

he fears that "nothing will be done towards gaining for us this *essential blessing,* until some *great ab-*

28 A "donative" was the cash bounty Roman emperors gave the soldiers to buy their support.

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great abuse of power again provokes our resentment, or some *great calamity* again alarms our fears, or perhaps till the acquisition of a *pure and equal representation by other countries,* whilst we are *mocked* with the *shadow,* kindles our shame." To this he subjoins a note in these words. "A representation, chosen chiefly by the Treasury, and a *few* thousands [83] of the *dregs* of the people, who are generally paid for their votes."	*use of power* again provokes our resentment, or some *great calamity* again alarms our fears, or perhaps till the acquisition of a *pure and equal representation by other countries,* whilst we are *mocked* with the *shadow,* kindles our shame." To this he adds a note in these words: "A representation, chosen chiefly by the Treasury, and a *few* thousands [83] of the *dregs* of the people, who are generally paid for their votes."
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p. 83 You will smile here at the consistency of those democratists, who, when they are not on their guard, treat the humbler part of the community with the greatest contempt, whilst, at the same time, they pretend to make them the depositories of all power. It would require a long discourse to point out to you the many fallacies that lurk in the generality and equivocal nature of the terms "inadequate representation." I shall only say here,	You will smile here at the consistency of these democrats, who, when they are off their guard, treat the humbler part of the community with the greatest contempt, while at the same time they pretend to make them the depositories of all power. It would take a long discourse to point out to you the many fallacies that lurk in the vagueness and ambiguity of the term "inadequate representation." I shall only say here,
in justice to that old-fashioned constitution, under which we have long prospered, that our representation has been found perfectly adequate to all the purposes for which a representation of the people can be desired or devised. I defy the enemies of our constitution to shew the contrary.	in justice to that old-fashioned constitution under which we have long prospered, that our representation has been found perfectly adequate to all the purposes for which a representation of the people can be desired or devised. I defy the enemies of our constitution to show the contrary.
To detail the particulars in which it is found so well to promote its ends, would demand a treatise on our practical constitution. I state here the doctrine of the Revolutionists, only that you and others may see, what an opinion these gentlemen entertain of the constitution of their country, and why they seem to think that some great abuse of power, or some great calamity, as giving a chance for the blessing of a constitution according to their ideas, would be much palliated to their feelings; you see *why they* are so much enamoured of your fair and equal representation, which being once obtained, the same effects might follow.	To set out in detail the particulars in which it is found to serve its ends so well would require a treatise on our constitution in practice. I state the doctrine of the Revolutionists here only so that you and others may see what an opinion these gentlemen hold of the constitution of their country, and why they seem to think that some great abuse of power, or some great calamity, as offering a chance for the blessing of a constitution after their own ideas, would be much softened to their feelings; you see *why they* are so much in love with your fair and equal representation, which, once obtained, might produce the same effects here.
You see they consider our house of commons as only "a semblance," "a form," [84] "a theory," "a shadow," "a mockery," perhaps "a nuisance."	You see they regard our House of Commons as only "a semblance," "a form," [84] "a theory," "a shadow," "a mockery," perhaps "a nuisance."
p. 84 These gentlemen value themselves on being systematic; and not without reason. They must	These gentlemen pride themselves on being systematic, and not without reason. They must there-

29 The two armies are the regular royal army and the new National Guard.
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[2] Discourse on the Love of our Country, 3d edit. p. 39.

[2] *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, 3rd ed., p. 39.

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therefore look on this gross and palpable defect of representation, this fundamental grievance (so they call it) as a thing not only vicious in itself, but as rendering our whole government absolutely *illegitimate,* and not at all better than a downright *usurpation.* Another revolution, to get rid of this illegitimate and usurped government, would of course be perfectly justifiable, if not absolutely necessary.

Indeed their principle, if you observe it with any attention, goes much further than to an alteration in the election of the house of commons; for, if popular representation, or choice, is necessary to the *legitimacy* of all government, the house of lords is, at one stroke, bastardized and corrupted in blood. That house is no representative of the people at all, even in "semblance or in form." The case of the crown is altogether as bad. In vain the crown may endeavour to screen itself against these gentlemen by the authority of the establishment made on the Revolution. The Revolution which is resorted to for a title, on their system, wants a title itself.

The Revolution is built, according to their theory, upon a basis not more solid than our present formalities, as it was made by an house of lords not representing any one but themselves; and by an house of commons exactly [85] such as the present, that is, as they term it, by a mere "shadow and mockery" of representation.

p. 85

Some of them are so heated with their particular religious theories, that they give more than hints that the fall of the civil powers, with all the dreadful consequences of that fall, provided they might be of service to their theories, would not be unacceptable to them, or very remote from their wishes. A man amongst them of great authority,

and certainly of great talents, speaking of a supposed alliance between church and state, says, "perhaps *we must wait for the fall of the civil powers* before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Calamitous no doubt will that time be. But what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an effect?"

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fore look on this gross and palpable defect of representation, this fundamental grievance (as they call it), as a thing not only vicious in itself but as rendering our whole government absolutely *illegitimate,* and no better than a downright *usurpation.* Another revolution, to get rid of this illegitimate and usurped government, would of course be perfectly justifiable, if not absolutely necessary.

Indeed their principle, if you look at it with any attention, goes much further than a change in the election of the House of Commons; for if popular representation, or choice, is necessary to the *legitimacy* of all government, the House of Lords is at one stroke bastardized and corrupted in blood. That house is no representative of the people at all, even "in semblance or in form." The case of the crown is every bit as bad. In vain may the crown try to shield itself against these gentlemen by the authority of the settlement made at the Revolution. The Revolution, which is appealed to for a title, itself lacks a title on their system.[31]

The Revolution, according to their theory, is built on a foundation no more solid than our present formalities, since it was made by a House of Lords representing no one but themselves, and by a House of Commons exactly [85] like the present one —that is, as they put it, by a mere "shadow and mockery" of representation.

Some of them are so heated by their particular religious theories that they give more than hints that the fall of the civil powers, with all the dreadful consequences of that fall, would not be unwelcome to them, or very far from their wishes, provided it might serve their theories. A man among them of great authority,

and certainly of great talents, speaking of a supposed alliance between church and state, says: "perhaps *we must wait for the fall of the civil powers* before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Calamitous no doubt will that time be. But what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an effect?"[32]

31 "Corruption of blood" was the legal penalty by which an attainted person lost the power to inherit or transmit titles and estates.
32 The writer is Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), the Dissenting minister and chemist, in his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782).

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You see with what a steady eye these gentlemen are prepared to view the greatest calamities which can befall their country!

It is no wonder therefore, that with these ideas of everything in their constitution and government at home, either in church or state, as illegitimate and usurped, or, at best as a vain mockery, they look abroad with an eager and passionate enthusiasm. Whilst they are possessed by these notions, it is vain to talk to them of the practice of their ancestors, the fundamental laws of their country, the fixed form of a constitution, whose merits are confirmed by the solid test of long experience, and an increasing public strength and national prosperity.

p. 86 They despise experience as the wisdom of unlettered men; and as for the rest, they have wrought under-ground a mine that will blow up at one grand explosion all examples of antiquity, all precedents, charters, and acts of parliament. They have "the rights of men." Against these there can be no prescription; against these no agreement is binding: these admit no temperament, and no compromise: any thing withheld from their full demand is so much of fraud and injustice. Against these their rights of men let no government look for security in the length of its continuance, or in the justice and lenity of its administration.

The objections of these speculatists, if its forms do not quadrate with their theories, are as valid against such an old and beneficent government as against the most violent tyranny, or the greenest usurpation. They are always at issue with governments, not on a question of abuse, but a question of competency, and a question of title. I have nothing to say to the clumsy subtilty of their political metaphysics. Let them be their amusement in the schools.— "*Illa* se jactet in aula —Aeolus, et clauso ventorum carcere regnet." — But let them not break prison to burst like a *Levanter,* to sweep the earth with their hurricane, and to break up the fountains of the great deep to overwhelm us.

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You see with what a steady eye these gentlemen are prepared to view the greatest calamities that can befall their country!

It is no wonder, then, that holding these ideas of everything in their constitution and government at home, in church or state, as illegitimate and usurped, or at best as an empty mockery, they look abroad with an eager and passionate enthusiasm. While they are possessed by these notions, it is useless to talk to them of the practice of their ancestors, the fundamental laws of their country, the fixed form of a constitution whose merits are confirmed by the solid test of long experience and by growing public strength and national prosperity.

They despise experience as the wisdom of unlettered men; and as for the rest, they have dug a mine underground that will blow up, in one grand explosion, all the examples of antiquity, all precedents, charters, and acts of Parliament. They have "the rights of men." Against these there can be no prescription; against these no agreement is binding; these admit no moderation and no compromise; anything withheld from their full demand is so much fraud and injustice. Against these, their rights of men, let no government look for security in the length of its continuance, or in the justice and mildness of its administration.

The objections of these theorists, if its forms do not square with their theories, are as valid against such an old and beneficent government as against the most violent tyranny or the newest usurpation. They are always at odds with governments, not on a question of abuse, but on a question of competence and a question of title. I have nothing to say to the clumsy subtlety of their political metaphysics. Let it be their amusement in the schools.— "In *that* hall let Aeolus swagger—and rule in the closed prison of the winds." —But let them not break out of prison to burst forth like a *Levanter,* to sweep the earth with their hurricane, and to break up the fountains of the great deep to overwhelm us.[33]

33 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.140–41, where Neptune confines Aeolus, god of the winds, to his own cave. A Levanter is the violent easterly wind of the Mediterranean; "the fountains of the great deep" echoes the Flood in Genesis 7:11.

THE REAL RIGHTS OF MEN

Burke sets the real rights of men in civil society against abstract metaphysical rights.

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Far am I from denying in theory; full as far is my heart from witholding in practice (if I were of power to give or to withold) the *real* rights of men. In denying their false claims [87] of right, I do not mean to injure those which are real, and are such as their pretended rights would totally destroy. If civil society be made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right. It is an institution of beneficence; and law itself is only beneficence acting by a rule.

p. 87 Men have a right to live by that rule; they have a right to justice; as between their fellows, whether their fellows are in politic function or in ordinary occupation. They have a right to the fruits of their industry; and to the means of making their industry fruitful. They have a right to the acquisitions of their parents; to the nourishment and improvement of their offspring; to instruction in life, and to consolation in death. Whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combinations of skill and force, can do in his favour.

But as to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society; for I have in my contemplation the civil social man, and no other. It is a thing to be settled by convention.

If civil society be the offspring of convention, that convention must be its law. That convention must limit and modify all the descriptions of constitution which are formed under it. Every sort of legislative, judicial, or executory power are its creatures. [88] They can have no being in any other state of things; and how can any man claim, under the conventions of civil society, rights which do not so much as suppose its existence? Rights which are absolutely repugnant to it?

p. 88 One of the first motives to civil society, and which becomes one of its fundamental rules, is, *that no*

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Far am I from denying in theory, and just as far is my heart from withholding in practice (if it were in my power to give or withhold), the *real* rights of men. In denying their false claims [87] of right, I do not mean to injure the rights that are real, which are exactly the ones their pretended rights would totally destroy. If civil society is made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right. It is an institution of beneficence, and law itself is only beneficence acting by a rule.

Men have a right to live by that rule. They have a right to justice between themselves and their fellows, whether those fellows hold political office or follow ordinary occupations. They have a right to the fruits of their industry, and to the means of making their industry fruitful. They have a right to what their parents acquired; to the nourishment and improvement of their children; to instruction in life, and to consolation in death. Whatever each man can do separately, without trespassing on others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all that society, with all its combinations of skill and force, can do on his behalf.

But as for the share of power, authority, and direction that each individual ought to have in managing the state, that I must deny is among the direct original rights of man in civil society, for I have in view man in civil society, and no other. It is a thing to be settled by convention.

If civil society is the offspring of convention, that convention must be its law. That convention must limit and modify every kind of constitution formed under it. Every sort of legislative, judicial, or executive power is its creature. [88] They can have no existence in any other state of things. How can anyone claim, under the conventions of civil society, rights that do not even presuppose its existence? Rights that are flatly contrary to it?

One of the first motives for civil society, and one that becomes among its fundamental rules, is *that*

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man should be judge in his own cause. By this each person has at once divested himself of the first fundamental right of uncovenanted man, that is, to judge for himself, and to assert his own cause. He abdicates all right to be his own governor. He inclusively, in a great measure, abandons the right of self-defence, the first law of nature. Men cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil and of a civil state together. That he may obtain justice he gives up his right of determining what it is in points the most essential to him.

That he may secure some liberty, he makes a surrender in trust of the whole of it.

Government is not made in virtue of natural rights, which may and do exist in total independence of it; and exist in much greater clearness, and in a much greater degree of abstract perfection: but their abstract perfection is their practical defect. By having a right to every thing they want every thing. Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human *wants.* Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom. Among these wants is to be reckoned the want, out of civil society, of a sufficient restraint upon their passions.

Society requires not [89] only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done *by a power out of themselves*; and not, in the exercise of its function, subject to that will and to those passions which it is its office to bridle and subdue. In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.

p. 89 But as the liberties and the restrictions vary with times and circumstances, and admit of infinite modifications, they cannot be settled upon any abstract rule; and nothing is so foolish as to discuss them upon that principle.

The moment you abate any thing from the full rights of men, each to govern himself, and suffer any artificial positive limitation upon those rights, from that moment the whole organization

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no man should be judge in his own cause. By this each person at once divests himself of the first fundamental right of uncovenanted man, which is to judge for himself and to assert his own cause. He abdicates all right to be his own governor. By implication he largely abandons the right of self-defense, the first law of nature. Men cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil and of a civil state at once. To obtain justice, he gives up his right to determine what justice is in the points most essential to him.

To secure some liberty, he surrenders the whole of it in trust.

Government is not made by virtue of natural rights, which can and do exist wholly independent of it, and exist with much greater clearness and in a much greater degree of abstract perfection. But their abstract perfection is their practical defect. By having a right to everything, they want everything. Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human *wants.* Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom. Among these wants must be counted the want, outside civil society, of a sufficient restraint upon their passions.[34]

Society requires not [89] only that the passions of individuals be subdued, but that, in the mass and body as well as in individuals, men's inclinations should often be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done *by a power outside themselves,* one that is not, in the exercise of its function, subject to the very will and passions it is its office to bridle and subdue. In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be counted among their rights.

But since the liberties and the restrictions vary with times and circumstances, and admit of infinite modifications, they cannot be settled by any abstract rule, and nothing is so foolish as to discuss them on that principle.

The moment you subtract anything from the full rights of men, each to govern himself, and allow any artificial, positive limitation on those rights, from that moment the whole organization of gov-

34 "Want" here has its old sense of lack or need, as in "human wants."

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of government becomes a consideration of convenience. This it is which makes the constitution of a state, and the due distribution of its powers, a matter of the most delicate and complicated skill. It requires a deep knowledge of human nature and human necessities, and of the things which facilitate or obstruct the various ends which are to be pursued by the mechanism of civil institutions. The state is to have recruits to its strength, and remedies to its distempers.

What is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or to medicine? The question is upon the method of procuring [90] and administering them. In that deliberation I shall always advise to call in the aid of the farmer and the physician, rather than the professor of metaphysics.

p. 90 The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *à priori.* Nor is it a short experience that can instruct us in that practical science; because the real effects of moral causes are not always immediate; but that which in the first instance is prejudicial may be excellent in its remoter operation; and its excellence may arise even from the ill effects it produces in the beginning. The reverse also happens; and very plausible schemes, with very pleasing commencements, have often shameful and lamentable conclusions.

In states there are often some obscure and almost latent causes, things which appear at first view of little moment, on which a very great part of its prosperity or adversity may most essentially depend. The science of government being therefore so practical in itself, and intended for such practical purposes, a matter which requires experience,

and even more experience than any person can gain in his whole life, however sagacious and observing he may be, it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society, or of building it up again, without having models and patterns of approved utility before his eyes.

These metaphysic rights entering into common [91] life, like rays of light which pierce into a dense medium, are, by the laws of nature, refracted from their strait line. Indeed in the gross and

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ernment becomes a matter of convenience. This is what makes the constitution of a state, and the proper distribution of its powers, a matter of the most delicate and complicated skill. It requires a deep knowledge of human nature and human necessities, and of the things that help or hinder the various ends to be pursued by the machinery of civil institutions. The state must have reinforcements for its strength and remedies for its ailments.

What is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or to medicine? The question is how to procure [90] and administer them. In that deliberation I shall always advise calling in the farmer and the physician rather than the professor of metaphysics.

The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *a priori.* Nor can a short experience instruct us in that practical science, because the real effects of moral causes are not always immediate. What is harmful at first may be excellent in its remoter workings, and its excellence may even arise from the bad effects it produces at the beginning. The reverse also happens: very plausible schemes, with very pleasing beginnings, often have shameful and lamentable endings.

In states there are often obscure and almost hidden causes, things that seem at first sight of little importance, on which a very great part of a state's prosperity or adversity may most essentially depend. The science of government, then, being so practical in itself and meant for such practical purposes, is a matter that requires experience,

and even more experience than anyone can gain in his whole life, however shrewd and observant he may be. So it is only with infinite caution that anyone ought to venture to pull down a building that has served, to any tolerable degree, the common purposes of society for ages, or to build it up again without having models and patterns of proven usefulness before his eyes.

These metaphysical rights, entering into common [91] life like rays of light piercing a dense medium, are by the laws of nature refracted from their straight line. Indeed, in the gross and complicated

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complicated mass of human passions and concerns, the primitive rights of men undergo such a variety of refractions and reflections, that it becomes absurd to talk of them as if they continued in the simplicity of their original direction. The nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature, or to the quality of his affairs.

p. 91 When I hear the simplicity of contrivance aimed at and boasted of in any new political constitutions, I am at no loss to decide that the artificers are grossly ignorant of their trade, or totally negligent of their duty. The simple governments are fundamentally defective, to say no worse of them. If you were to contemplate society in but one point of view, all these simple modes of polity are infinitely captivating. In effect each would answer its single end much more perfectly than the more complex is able to attain all its complex purposes.

But it is better that the whole should be imperfectly and anomalously answered, than that, while some parts are provided for with great exactness, others might be totally neglected, or perhaps materially injured, by the over-care of a favourite member.

The pretended rights of these theorists are all extremes; and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically [92] false. The rights of men are in a sort of *middle,* incapable of definition, but not impossible to be discerned. The rights of men in governments are their advantages; and these are often in balances between differences of good; in compromises sometimes between good and evil, and sometimes, between evil and evil. Political reason is a computing principle; adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally and not metaphysically or mathematically, true moral denominations.

p. 92 By these theorists the right of the people is almost always sophistically confounded with their power. The body of the community, whenever it can come to act, can meet with no effectual resistance; but till power and right are the same, the whole body of them has no right inconsistent with virtue, and the first of all virtues, prudence.

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mass of human passions and concerns, the primitive rights of men undergo such a variety of refractions and reflections that it becomes absurd to talk of them as if they kept the simplicity of their original direction. The nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and therefore no simple arrangement or direction of power can suit either man's nature or the character of his affairs.

When I hear simplicity of design aimed at and boasted of in any new political constitution, I have no trouble deciding that its builders are grossly ignorant of their trade or totally negligent of their duty. Simple governments are fundamentally defective, to say nothing worse of them. If you looked at society from only one point of view, all these simple forms of polity would be infinitely captivating. In fact each would serve its single end far more perfectly than the more complex one can achieve all its complex purposes.

But it is better that the whole should be served imperfectly and irregularly than that some parts should be provided for with great exactness while others are totally neglected, or perhaps seriously injured, by over-attention to a favorite member.

The pretended rights of these theorists are all extremes, and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically [92] false. The rights of men lie in a sort of *middle,* incapable of definition but not impossible to discern. The rights of men in governments are their advantages, and these are often found in balances between different goods; sometimes in compromises between good and evil, and sometimes between evil and evil. Political reason is a computing principle: adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing true moral denominations, morally and not metaphysically or mathematically.

These theorists almost always sophistically confuse the right of the people with their power. The body of the community, whenever it can come to act, can meet with no effective resistance. But until power and right are the same, the whole body of them has no right inconsistent with virtue, and with the first of all virtues, prudence.

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Men have no right to what is not reasonable, and to what is not for their benefit; for though a pleasant writer said, *Liceat perire poetis,* when one of them, in cold blood, is said to have leaped into the flames of a volcanic revolution, *Ardentem frigidus Aetnam insiluit,* I consider such a frolic rather as an unjustifiable poetic licence, than as one of the franchises of Parnassus; and whether he were poet, or divine, or politician that chose to exercise this kind of right, I think that more wise, because more charitable thoughts would urge me rather to save the man, than to preserve his brazen slippers as the monuments of his folly.

p. 93 The kind of anniversary sermons, to which a great part of what I write refers, if men are not shamed out of their present course, in commemorating the fact, will cheat many out of the principles, and deprive them of the benefits of the Revolution they commemorate. I confess to you, Sir, I never liked this continual talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread. It renders the habit of society dangerously valetudinary: it is taking periodical doses of mercury sublimate, and swallowing down repeated provocatives of cantharides to our love of liberty.

This distemper of remedy, grown habitual, relaxes and wears out, by a vulgar and prostituted use, the spring of that spirit which is to be exerted on great occasions. It was in the most patient period of Roman servitude that themes of tyrannicide made the ordinary exercise of boys at school—*cum perimit saevos classis numerosa tyrannos.* In the ordinary state of things, it produces in a country like ours the worst effects, even on the cause of that liberty which it abuses with the dissoluteness of an extravagant speculation.

Almost all the high-bred republicans of my time have, after a short space, become the most decided, thorough-paced courtiers; they soon left the business of a tedious, moderate, but practical resistance to those of us whom, in the pride and

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Men have no right to what is not reasonable and what is not for their benefit. A witty writer said, *"Let poets have the right to perish,"* when one of them is said to have leaped in cold blood into the flames of a volcanic revolution—*"coolly he leaped into burning Etna."* But I consider such a frolic an unjustifiable poetic license rather than one of the privileges of Parnassus; and whether it was a poet, a clergyman, or a politician who chose to exercise this kind of right, I think wiser, because more charitable, thoughts would urge me to save the man rather than preserve his bronze slippers as monuments of his folly.[35]

The kind of anniversary sermons to which much of what I write refers will, if men are not shamed out of their present course, cheat many out of the principles of the Revolution they commemorate, even while commemorating the event, and deprive them of its benefits. I confess to you, Sir, I never liked this constant talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread. It makes the condition of society dangerously sickly. It is like taking periodic doses of corrosive mercury, and swallowing repeated stimulants of Spanish fly to excite our love of liberty.[36]

This disease of remedy, once habitual, slackens and wears out, through vulgar and prostituted use, the spring of that spirit which is meant to be exerted on great occasions. It was in the most submissive period of Roman servitude that tyrannicide was the ordinary theme of schoolboy exercises—*"when the crowded class slays cruel tyrants."* In the ordinary state of things, in a country like ours, it produces the worst effects, even on the cause of the very liberty it abuses with the dissoluteness of extravagant speculation.[37]

Almost all the high-bred republicans of my time have, after a short while, become the most decided, out-and-out courtiers. They soon left the business of a tedious, moderate, but practical res-

35 Horace, *Ars Poetica* 465–66, on the philosopher Empedocles, who was said to have leaped into Mount Etna; legend held that the volcano threw back one of his bronze sandals.
36 The anniversary sermons are those preached to the Revolution Society on the anniversary of 1688, like Price's. Corrosive sublimate of mercury was a harsh medicine; cantharides (Spanish fly) was a notorious aphrodisiac.
37 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.151, on schoolboys declaiming set speeches against tyrants.

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intoxication of their theories, they have slighted, as not much better than tories. Hypocrisy, of course, delights in the [94] most sublime speculations; for, never intending to go beyond speculation, it costs nothing to have it magnificent. But even in cases where rather levity than fraud was to be suspected in these ranting speculations, the issue has been much the same.

p. 94 These professors, finding their extreme principles not applicable to cases which call only for a qualified, or, as I may say, civil and legal resistance, in such cases employ no resistance at all. It is with them a war or a revolution, or it is nothing. Finding their schemes of politics not adapted to the state of the world in which they live, they often come to think lightly of all public principle;

and are ready, on their part, to abandon for a very trivial interest what they find of very trivial value. Some indeed are of more steady and persevering natures; but these are eager politicians out of parliament, who have little to tempt them to abandon their favourite projects.

They have some change in the church or state, or both, constantly in their view. When that is the case, they are always bad citizens, and perfectly unsure connexions. For, considering their speculative designs as of infinite value, and the actual arrangement of the state as of no estimation, they are at best indifferent about it. They see no merit in the good, and no fault in the vicious management of public affairs; they rather rejoice in the latter, as more propitious to revolution.

They see no merit or demerit in any man, or any action, or any political principle, any further than as they may forward or retard their design [95] of change: they therefore take up, one day, the most violent and stretched prerogative, and another time the wildest democratic ideas of freedom, and pass from the one to the other without any sort of regard to cause, to person, or to party.

p. 95 In France you are now in the crisis of a revolution, and in the transit from one form of government to another—you cannot see that character of men exactly in the same situation in which we see it in this country. With us it is militant; with you it is triumphant; and you know

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istance to those of us whom, in the pride and intoxication of their theories, they had slighted as little better than Tories. Hypocrisy, of course, delights in the [94] most sublime speculations, for, never intending to go beyond speculation, it costs nothing to make it magnificent. But even in cases where levity rather than fraud was to be suspected in these ranting speculations, the outcome has been much the same.

These professors, finding their extreme principles inapplicable to cases that call only for a qualified—or, as I may say, a civil and legal—resistance, offer no resistance at all in such cases. With them it is war or revolution, or it is nothing. Finding their political schemes unsuited to the state of the world they live in, they often come to think lightly of all public principle,

and are ready, for their part, to abandon for a very trivial interest what they find of very trivial value. Some, indeed, are of steadier and more persevering natures; but these are eager politicians outside parliament, who have little to tempt them to abandon their favorite projects.

They constantly have some change in church or state, or both, in view. When that is the case, they are always bad citizens and utterly unreliable allies. For, regarding their speculative designs as of infinite value and the actual arrangement of the state as worth nothing, they are at best indifferent to it. They see no merit in good management of public affairs and no fault in bad; they rather rejoice in the bad, as more favorable to revolution.

They see no merit or demerit in any man, any action, or any political principle, except insofar as it may advance or delay their design [95] of change. So one day they take up the most violent and overstretched prerogative, and another time the wildest democratic ideas of freedom, and pass from one to the other without any regard to cause, person, or party.

In France you are now in the crisis of a revolution, in the passage from one form of government to another, so you cannot see that type of man in exactly the situation in which we see it in this country. With us it is militant; with you it is triumphant; and you know how it can act when its

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how it can act when its power is commensurate to its will. I would not be supposed to confine those observations to any description of men, or to comprehend all men of any description within them—No! far from it.

I am as incapable of that injustice, as I am of keeping terms with those who profess principles of extremes; and who under the name of religion teach little else than wild and dangerous politics. The worst of these politics of revolution is this; they temper and harden the breast, in order to prepare it for the desperate strokes which are sometimes used in extreme occasions. But as these occasions may never arrive, the mind receives a gratuitous taint; and the moral sentiments suffer not a little, when no political purpose is served by their depravation. This sort of people are so taken up with their theories about the rights of man, that they have totally forgot his nature.

Without opening one new avenue to the understanding, they have succeeded in stopping up those that lead to the heart. They have perverted [96] in themselves, and in those that attend to them, all the well-placed sympathies of the human breast.

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power matches its will. I would not be thought to confine these observations to any one class of men, or to include all men of any class within them—No! Far from it.

I am as incapable of that injustice as I am of staying on terms with those who profess principles of extremes, and who, under the name of religion, teach little but wild and dangerous politics. The worst of these politics of revolution is this: they temper and harden the heart, to prepare it for the desperate strokes sometimes used on extreme occasions. But since these occasions may never arrive, the mind takes on a gratuitous taint, and the moral sentiments suffer not a little when their corruption serves no political purpose. People of this sort are so taken up with their theories about the rights of man that they have totally forgotten his nature.

Without opening one new avenue to the understanding, they have succeeded in blocking those that lead to the heart. They have perverted [96] in themselves, and in those who listen to them, all the well-placed sympathies of the human breast.

October 1789 and the Age of Chivalry

The king and queen led captive to Paris, the Queen of France, and the passing of the age of chivalry; prejudice defended.

PRICE'S "NUNC DIMITTIS"

Burke condemns Price for greeting the king's forced journey to Paris with the song of Simeon.

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p. 96 This famous sermon of the Old Jewry breathes nothing but this spirit through all the political part. Plots, massacres, assassinations, seem to some people a trivial price for obtaining a revolution. A cheap, bloodless reformation, a guiltless liberty, appear flat and vapid to their taste. There must be a great change of scene; there must be a magnificent stage effect;	This famous sermon of the Old Jewry breathes nothing but this spirit through all its political part. Plots, massacres, assassinations seem to some people a trivial price for obtaining a revolution. A cheap, bloodless reformation, a guiltless liberty, seem flat and stale to their taste. There must be a great change of scene; there must be a magnificent stage effect;
there must be a grand spectacle to rouze the imagination, grown torpid with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years security, and the still unanimating repose of public prosperity. The Preacher found them all in the French revolution. This inspires a juvenile warmth through his whole frame. His enthusiasm kindles as he advances; and when he arrives at his peroration, it is in a full blaze.	there must be a grand spectacle to rouse the imagination, grown torpid with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years' security and the still, unexciting repose of public prosperity. The Preacher found all of these in the French revolution. It sends a youthful warmth through his whole frame. His enthusiasm kindles as he goes on, and by the time he reaches his peroration it is in a full blaze.
Then viewing, from the Pisgah of his pulpit, the free, moral, happy, flourishing, and glorious state of France, as in a bird-eye landscape of a promised land, he breaks out into the following rapture:	Then, viewing from the Pisgah of his pulpit the free, moral, happy, flourishing, and glorious state of France, as in a bird's-eye landscape of a promised land, he breaks out into the following rapture:[1]
"What an eventful period is this! I am *thankful* that I have lived to it; I could almost say, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*—I have lived to see a *diffusion* of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error.—I have lived to see *the rights of men* better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty which seemed to have lost the idea of it.—I have lived to see *Thirty Millions* [97] *of People,* indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice. *Their King led in triumph, and*	"What an eventful period is this! I am *thankful* that I have lived to it; I could almost say, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*—I have lived to see a *diffusion* of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error.—I have lived to see *the rights of men* better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty which seemed to have lost the idea of it.—I have lived to see *Thirty Millions* [97] *of People,* indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice.

1 Pisgah: the mountain from which Moses was shown the Promised Land before he died (Deuteronomy 34).

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an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects[1]."	*Their King led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects*[1]."[2]
3	
p. 97 Before I proceed further, I have to remark, that Dr. Price seems rather to over-value the great acquisitions of light which he has obtained and diffused in this age. The last century appears to me to have been quite as much enlightened. It had, though in a different place, a triumph as memorable as that of Dr. Price; and some of the great preachers of that period partook of it as eagerly as he has done in the triumph of France. On the trial of the Rev.	Before I go further, I must remark that Dr. Price seems rather to overvalue the great gains in enlightenment which he has acquired and spread in this age. The last century seems to me to have been quite as enlightened. It had, though in a different place, a triumph as memorable as Dr. Price's; and some of the great preachers of that period shared in it as eagerly as he has in the triumph of France. At the trial of the Rev.
Hugh Peters for high treason, it was deposed, that when King Charles was brought to London for his trial, the Apostle of Liberty in that day conducted the *triumph.* "I saw," says the witness, "his majesty in the coach with six horses, and Peters riding before the king *triumphing*." Dr. Price, when he talks as if he had made a discovery, only follows a precedent; for, after the commencement of the king's trial, this precursor, the same Dr.	Hugh Peters for high treason, it was sworn in evidence that when King Charles was brought to London for his trial, the Apostle of Liberty of that day conducted the *triumph.* "I saw," says the witness, "his majesty in the coach with six horses, and Peters riding before the king *triumphing*." Dr. Price, when he talks as if he had made a discovery, is only following a precedent; for after the king's trial had begun, this forerunner, the same Dr.
Peters, concluding a long prayer at the royal chapel at Whitehall, [98] (he had very triumphantly chosen his place) said, "I have prayed and preached these twenty years; and now I may say with old Simeon, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*[2]." Peters had not the fruits of his prayer; for he neither departed so soon as he wished, nor in peace. He became (what I heartily hope none of his followers may be in this country) himself a sacrifice to the triumph which he led as Pontiff. They dealt at the Restoration, perhaps, too hardly with this poor good man.	Peters, concluding a long prayer at the royal chapel at Whitehall, [98] (he had chosen his place very triumphantly) said, "I have prayed and preached these twenty years; and now I may say with old Simeon, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*[2]." Peters did not enjoy the fruits of his prayer; for he departed neither as soon as he wished, nor in peace. He became (what I heartily hope none of his followers in this country may become) himself a sacrifice to the triumph he had led as high priest. At the Restoration they dealt, perhaps, too harshly with this poor good man.
p. 98 But we owe it to his memory and his sufferings, that he had as much illumination, and as much zeal, and had as effectually undermined all *the superstition and error* which might impede the great business he was engaged in, as any who follow and repeat after him, in this age, which	But we owe it to his memory and his sufferings to say that he had as much illumination and as much zeal, and had as effectively undermined all *the superstition and error* that might obstruct the great business he was engaged in, as any of those who

2 Price quotes the song of Simeon, the "Nunc dimittis" (Luke 2:29–30).

3

[1] Another of these reverend gentlemen, who was witness to some of the spectacles which Paris has lately exhibited—expresses himself thus, "*A king dragged in submissive triumph by his conquering subjects* is one of those appearances of grandeur which seldom rise in the prospect of human affairs, and which, during the remainder of my life, I shall think of with wonder and gratification." These gentlemen agree marvellously in their feelings.

[1] Another of these reverend gentlemen, who witnessed some of the spectacles Paris has lately put on display, expresses himself thus: "*A king dragged in submissive triumph by his conquering subjects* is one of those appearances of grandeur which seldom rise in the prospect of human affairs, and which, during the remainder of my life, I shall think of with wonder and gratification." These gentlemen agree marvelously in their feelings.

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would assume to itself an exclusive title to the knowledge of the rights of men, and all the glorious consequences of that knowledge.

4

After this sally of the preacher of the Old Jewry, which differs only in place and time, but agrees perfectly with the spirit and letter of the rapture of 1648, the Revolution Society, the fabricators of governments, the heroic band of *cashierers* of *monarchs,* electors of sovereigns, and leaders of kings in triumph, strutting with a proud consciousness of the diffusion of knowledge, of which every member had obtained so large a share in the donative, were in haste to make a generous diffusion of the knowledge [99] they had thus gratuitously received. To make this bountiful communication, they adjourned from the church in the Old Jewry, to the London Tavern; where the same Dr.

p. 99 Price, in whom the fumes of his oracular tripod were not entirely evaporated, moved and carried the resolution, or address of congratulation, transmitted by Lord Stanhope to the National Assembly of France.

I find a preacher of the gospel prophaning the beautiful and prophetic ejaculation, commonly called "*nunc dimittis,*" made on the first presentation of our Saviour in the Temple, and applying it, with an inhuman and unnatural rapture, to the most horrid, atrocious, and afflicting spectacle, that perhaps ever was exhibited to the pity and indignation of mankind. This "*leading in triumph,*" a thing in its best form unmanly and irreligious, which fills our Preacher with such unhallowed transports, must shock, I believe, the moral taste of every well-born mind. Several English were the stupified and indignant spectators of that triumph.

It was (unless we have been strangely deceived) a spectacle more resembling a procession of American *[Indigenous warriors],* entering into Onondaga, after some of their murders called victories, and leading into hovels hung round

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follow him and repeat after him in this age—an age that would claim for itself an exclusive title to the knowledge of the rights of men, and to all the glorious consequences of that knowledge.

After this outburst of the preacher of the Old Jewry—which differs only in place and time, but agrees perfectly in spirit and letter with the rapture of 1648—the Revolution Society, those fabricators of governments, that heroic band of *cashierers* of *monarchs,* electors of sovereigns, and leaders of kings in triumph, strutting with a proud consciousness of the diffusion of knowledge, of which every member had received so large a share in the handout, were in haste to make a generous diffusion of the knowledge [99] they had thus received free of charge. To make this bountiful communication, they adjourned from the church in the Old Jewry to the London Tavern, where the same Dr.

Price, in whom the fumes of his oracular tripod had not entirely evaporated, moved and carried the resolution, or address of congratulation, sent by Lord Stanhope to the National Assembly of France.[5]

I find a preacher of the gospel profaning the beautiful and prophetic utterance commonly called the "*nunc dimittis,*" spoken at the first presentation of our Savior in the Temple, and applying it, with an inhuman and unnatural rapture, to the most horrid, atrocious, and afflicting spectacle that perhaps was ever exhibited to the pity and indignation of mankind. This "*leading in triumph,*" a thing unmanly and irreligious even in its best form, which fills our Preacher with such unholy transports, must shock, I believe, the moral taste of every well-born mind. Several English people were the stunned and indignant spectators of that triumph.

It was (unless we have been strangely deceived) a spectacle that much more resembled a procession of American Indigenous warriors entering Onondaga after some of their murders called victories, leading their captives into hovels hung round with

4

[2] State Trials, vol. ii. p. 360. p. 363. | [2] State Trials, vol. ii, p. 360, p. 363.

5 The tripod was the seat of the priestess of Apollo at Delphi, who prophesied amid vapors.

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with scalps, their captives, overpowered with the scoffs and buffets of women as ferocious as themselves, much more than it resembled the triumphal pomp of a civilized martial nation;—if a civilized nation, or any men who had a sense of generosity, were capable of a personal triumph over the fallen and afflicted.

p. 100 This, my dear Sir, was not the triumph of France. I must believe that, as a nation, it overwhelmed you with shame and horror. I must believe that the National Assembly find themselves in a state of the greatest humiliation, in not being able to punish the authors of this triumph, or the actors in it; and that they are in a situation in which any enquiry they may make upon the subject, must be destitute even of the appearance of liberty or impartiality. The apology of that Assembly is found in their situation; but when we approve what they *must* bear, it is in us the degenerate choice of a vitiated mind.

With a compelled appearance of deliberation, they vote under the dominion of a stern necessity. They sit in the heart, as it were, of a foreign republic: they have their residence in a city whose constitution has emanated neither from the charter of their king, nor from their legislative power. There they are surrounded by an army not raised either by the authority of their crown, or by their command; and which, if they should order to dissolve itself, would instantly dissolve them.

There they sit, after a gang of assassins had driven away all the men of moderate minds and moderating authority amongst them, and left them as a sort of dregs and refuse, under the apparent lead of those in whom they do not so much as pretend to have any confidence. There they sit, in mockery of legislation, repeating in resolutions the words of those whom they detest and despise. Captives themselves, they compel a captive king to issue as royal edicts, at third hand, the polluted nonsense [101] of their most licentious and giddy coffee-houses. It is notorious, that all their measures are decided before they are debated.

p. 101 It is beyond doubt, that under the terror of the bayonet, and the lamp-post, and the torch to their

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scalps, overwhelmed by the jeers and blows of women as ferocious as themselves, than it resembled the triumphal pomp of a civilized martial nation—if a civilized nation, or any men with a sense of generosity, were capable of a personal triumph over the fallen and afflicted.[6]

This, my dear Sir, was not the triumph of France. I must believe that, as a nation, it overwhelmed you with shame and horror. I must believe that the National Assembly find themselves in the deepest humiliation at being unable to punish the authors of this triumph or the actors in it, and that they are in a situation in which any inquiry they might make into the matter must lack even the appearance of liberty or impartiality. The excuse for that Assembly lies in their situation; but when we approve what they *must* endure, it is in us the degenerate choice of a corrupted mind.

With a forced show of deliberation, they vote under the rule of a stern necessity. They sit, as it were, in the heart of a foreign republic: they reside in a city whose constitution has come neither from the charter of their king nor from their own legislative power. There they are surrounded by an army raised neither by the authority of their crown nor by their command—an army which, if they ordered it to dissolve itself, would instantly dissolve them.

There they sit, after a gang of assassins has driven away all the men of moderate minds and moderating authority among them, leaving them as a kind of dregs and refuse, under the apparent lead of men in whom they do not even pretend to have any confidence. There they sit, in mockery of legislation, repeating in resolutions the words of those whom they detest and despise. Captives themselves, they compel a captive king to issue as royal edicts, at third hand, the polluted nonsense [101] of their most licentious and giddy coffeehouses. It is notorious that all their measures are decided before they are debated.

It is beyond doubt that, under the terror of the bayonet, the lamp-post, and the torch to their

6 Onondaga: the chief town of the Onondaga nation and council seat of the Iroquois Confederacy, in present-day New York State.

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houses, they are obliged to adopt all the crude and desperate measures suggested by clubs composed of a monstrous medley of all conditions, tongues, and nations. Among these are found persons, in comparison of whom Catiline would be thought scrupulous, and Cethegus a man of sobriety and moderation. Nor is it in these clubs alone that the publick measures are deformed into monsters. They undergo a previous distortion in academies, intended as so many seminaries for these clubs, which are set up in all the places of publick resort.

In these meetings of all sorts, every counsel, in proportion as it is daring, and violent, and perfidious, is taken for the mark of superior genius. Humanity and compassion are ridiculed as the fruits of superstition and ignorance. Tenderness to individuals is considered as treason to the public. Liberty is always to be estimated perfect as property is rendered insecure. Amidst assassination, massacre, and confiscation, perpetrated or meditated, they are forming plans for the good order of future society. Embracing in their arms the carcases of base criminals, and promoting their relations on the title of their offences, they drive hundreds of virtuous persons to the same end, by forcing them to subsist by beggary or by crime.

p. 102 The Assembly, their organ, acts before them the farce of deliberation with as little decency as liberty. They act like the comedians of a fair before a riotous audience; they act amidst the tumultuous cries of a mixed mob of ferocious men, and of women lost to shame, who, according to their insolent fancies, direct, control, applaud, explode them; and sometimes mix and take their seats amongst them; domineering over them with a strange mixture of servile petulance and proud presumptuous authority. As they have inverted order in all things, the gallery is in the place of the house.

This Assembly, which overthrows kings and kingdoms, has not even the physiognomy and aspect of a grave legislative body—*nec color imperii, nec frons erat ulla senatus.* They have a power given to them, like that of the evil principle, to subvert and destroy; but none to

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houses, they are obliged to adopt all the crude and desperate measures proposed by clubs made up of a monstrous medley of all conditions, tongues, and nations. Among these are persons beside whom Catiline would be thought scrupulous, and Cethegus a man of sobriety and moderation. Nor is it in these clubs alone that public measures are deformed into monsters. They undergo a prior distortion in academies, meant as so many training schools for these clubs, which are set up in every place of public resort.[7]

In these meetings of every sort, each proposal is taken as a mark of superior genius in proportion as it is daring, violent, and treacherous. Humanity and compassion are ridiculed as the fruits of superstition and ignorance. Tenderness to individuals is regarded as treason to the public. Liberty is always to be reckoned perfect in proportion as property is made insecure. Amid assassination, massacre, and confiscation, carried out or contemplated, they are drawing up plans for the good order of future society. Embracing the carcasses of base criminals, and promoting their relatives on the strength of their crimes, they drive hundreds of virtuous people to the same end, by forcing them to live by beggary or by crime.

The Assembly, their mouthpiece, performs before them the farce of deliberation with as little decency as liberty. They act like players at a fair before a riotous audience; they act amid the tumultuous cries of a mixed mob of ferocious men and of women lost to shame, who, as their insolent fancies take them, direct, control, applaud, or hiss them off—and sometimes mingle with them and take their seats among them, domineering over them with a strange mixture of servile petulance and proud, presumptuous authority. As they have inverted order in everything, the gallery is in the place of the house.

This Assembly, which overthrows kings and kingdoms, has not even the features and aspect of a grave legislative body—*it had neither the color of empire nor any countenance of a senate.* They have been given a power, like that of the evil principle, to

7 Catiline led a conspiracy against the Roman Republic in 63 BC; Cethegus was his most violent associate.

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construct, except such machines as may be fitted for further subversion and further destruction.

Who is it that admires, and from the heart is attached to national representative assemblies, but must turn with horror and disgust from such a profane burlesque, and abominable perversion of that sacred institute? Lovers of monarchy, lovers of republicks, must alike abhor it. The members of your Assembly must themselves groan under the tyranny of which they have all the shame, none of the direction, and little of the profit. I am sure many of the members who compose even the majority of that body, must feel as I do, notwithstanding the applauses of the Revolution Society. [103] Miserable king! miserable Assembly!

p. 103 How must that assembly be silently scandalized with those of their members, who could call a day which seemed to blot the sun out of Heaven, "un beau jour[3]!" How must they be inwardly indignant at hearing others, who thought fit to declare to them, "that the vessel of the state would fly forward in her course towards regeneration with more speed than ever," from the stiff gale of treason and murder, which preceded our Preacher's triumph! What must they have felt, whilst with outward patience and inward indignation they heard of the slaughter of innocent gentlemen in their houses, that "the blood spilled was not the most pure?"

What must they have felt, when they were besieged by complaints of disorders which shook their country to its foundations, at being compelled coolly to tell the complainants, that they were under the protection of the law, and that they would address the king (the captive king) to cause the laws to be enforced for their protection; when the enslaved ministers of that captive king had formally notified to them, that there were neither law, nor authority, nor power left to protect?

What must they have felt at being obliged, as a felicitation on the present new year, to request their captive king to forget the stormy period of the last, on account of the great good which *he*

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subvert and destroy; but none to construct, except such machines as may be fitted for further subversion and further destruction.[8]

Who that admires national representative assemblies, and is attached to them from the heart, must not turn with horror and disgust from such a profane burlesque, such an abominable perversion of that sacred institution? Lovers of monarchy and lovers of republics must alike abhor it. The members of your Assembly must themselves groan under a tyranny of which they have all the shame, none of the direction, and little of the profit. I am sure that many of the members who make up even the majority of that body must feel as I do, notwithstanding the applause of the Revolution Society. [103] Miserable king! miserable Assembly!

How silently scandalized that assembly must be by those of its members who could call a day that seemed to blot the sun out of heaven "a fine day[3]!" How inwardly indignant they must be at hearing others, who saw fit to declare to them "that the vessel of the state would fly forward in her course towards regeneration with more speed than ever," driven by the stiff gale of treason and murder that preceded our Preacher's triumph! What must they have felt when, with outward patience and inward indignation, they heard it said of the slaughter of innocent gentlemen in their own houses that "the blood spilled was not the most pure"?[9]

What must they have felt when, besieged by complaints of disorders that shook their country to its foundations, they were compelled coolly to tell the complainants that they were under the protection of the law, and that the Assembly would petition the king (the captive king) to have the laws enforced for their protection—when the enslaved ministers of that captive king had formally informed them that there was neither law, nor authority, nor power left to protect anyone?

What must they have felt at being obliged, by way of greeting for the present new year, to ask their captive king to forget the stormy period of the last, on account of the great good which *he* was likely to

8 Lucan, *Pharsalia*, book 9.

9 "Un beau jour" ("a fine day") was the phrase of Bailly, mayor of Paris, greeting the king on his forced arrival in the city.

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was likely to produce to his people; to the complete attainment of which good they adjourned [104] the practical demonstrations of their loyalty, assuring him of their obedience, when he should no longer possess any authority to command?

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p. 104 This address was made with much good-nature and affection, to be sure. But among the revolutions in France, must be reckoned a considerable revolution in their ideas of politeness. In England we are said to learn manners at second-hand from your side of the water, and that we dress our behaviour in the frippery of France.

If so, we are still in the old cut; and have not so far conformed to the new Parisian mode of good-breeding, as to think it quite in the most refined strain of delicate compliment (whether in condolence or congratulation) to say, to the most humiliated creature that crawls upon the earth, that great public benefits are derived from the murder of his servants, the attempted assassination of himself and of his wife, and the mortification, disgrace, and degradation, that he has personally suffered. It is a topic of consolation which our ordinary of Newgate would be too humane to use to a criminal at the foot of the gallows.

I should have thought that the hangman of Paris, now that he is liberalized by the vote of the National Assembly, and is allowed his rank and arms in the Herald's College of the rights of men, would be too generous, too gallant a man, too full of the sense of his new dignity, to employ that cutting consolation to any of the persons whom the *leze nation* might bring under the administration of his *executive powers.*

A man is fallen indeed, when he is thus flattered. [105] The anodyne draught of oblivion, thus drugged, is well calculated to preserve a galling wakefulness, and to feed the living ulcer of a corroding memory. Thus to administer the opiate

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bring about for his people—postponing until that good was completely attained [104] the practical demonstrations of their loyalty, and assuring him of their obedience once he should no longer possess any authority to command?

This address was made with much good nature and affection, to be sure. But among the revolutions in France must be counted a considerable revolution in their ideas of politeness. In England we are said to learn our manners secondhand from your side of the water, and to dress our behavior in the frippery of France.

If so, we are still in the old cut; we have not yet conformed so far to the new Parisian fashion in good breeding as to think it quite the most refined strain of delicate compliment (whether in condolence or congratulation) to tell the most humiliated creature that crawls upon the earth that great public benefits are derived from the murder of his servants, the attempted assassination of himself and his wife, and the mortification, disgrace, and degradation he has personally suffered. It is a topic of consolation that our chaplain of Newgate would be too humane to use to a criminal at the foot of the gallows.[11]

I should have thought that the hangman of Paris, now that he has been raised to gentility by the vote of the National Assembly and allowed his rank and coat of arms in the Heralds' College of the rights of men, would be too generous, too gallant a man, too full of the sense of his new dignity, to offer that cutting consolation to any of the persons whom the *crime against the nation* might bring under the administration of his *executive powers.*[12]

A man is fallen indeed when he is flattered like this. [105] The soothing draught of oblivion, drugged in this way, is well suited to keep up a galling wakefulness and to feed the living ulcer of a corroding memory. To administer the opiate potion of

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[3] 6th of October 1789. | [3] 6th of October 1789.

11 The Ordinary of Newgate was the chaplain of London's chief prison, who attended the condemned at their execution.

12 In December 1789 the Assembly declared executioners eligible for civil rights. The Heralds' College (College of Arms) grants English coats of arms; "lèse-nation," treason against the nation, was the revolutionary counterpart of lèse-majesté.

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potion of amnesty, powdered with all the ingredients of scorn and contempt, is to hold to his lips, instead of "the balm of hurt minds," the cup of human misery full to the brim, and to force him to drink it to the dregs.	amnesty in this way, powdered with every ingredient of scorn and contempt, is to hold to his lips, instead of "the balm of hurt minds," the cup of human misery full to the brim, and to force him to drink it to the dregs.[13]

THE SIXTH OF OCTOBER

Burke recounts the attack on Versailles and the royal family's forced procession to Paris.

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p. 105 Yielding to reasons, at least as forcible as those which were so delicately urged in the compliment on the new year, the king of France will probably endeavour to forget these events, and that compliment. But history, who keeps a durable record of all our acts, and exercises her awful censure over the proceedings of all sorts of sovereigns, will not forget, either those events, or the aera of this liberal refinement in the intercourse of mankind.	Yielding to reasons at least as forceful as those so delicately urged in the New Year's compliment, the king of France will probably try to forget these events, and that compliment. But history, who keeps a lasting record of all our acts and exercises her awful censure over the proceedings of every kind of sovereign, will not forget either those events or the era of this liberal refinement in the dealings of mankind.
History will record, that on the morning of the 6th of October 1789, the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled melancholy repose. From this sleep the queen was first startled by the voice of the centinel at her door, who cried out to her, to save herself by flight— that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give—that they were upon him, and he was dead. Instantly he was cut down.	History will record that on the morning of the 6th of October 1789, the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite and troubled, melancholy repose. From this sleep the queen was first startled by the voice of the sentinel at her door, who cried out to her to save herself by flight—that this was the last proof of loyalty he could give—that they were upon him, and he was dead. Instantly he was cut down.[14]
A band of cruel russians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced [106] with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked, and through ways unknown to the murderers had escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment.	A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the queen's chamber and pierced [106] with a hundred strokes of bayonets and daggers the bed from which this persecuted woman had barely had time to fly, almost naked. By passages unknown to the murderers she had escaped, to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband who could not count on his own life for a moment.
p. 106 This king, to say no more of him, and this queen, and their infant children (who once would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people) were then forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the	This king, to say no more of him, and this queen, and their infant children (who once would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people) were then forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the world,

13 "Balm of hurt minds": Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 2, scene 2, of sleep.
14 On October 5–6, 1789, a Paris crowd, followed by the National Guard under Lafayette, marched on Versailles. Lafayette had assured the royal family of their safety before the palace was broken into at dawn.

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world, which they left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcases. Thence they were conducted into the capital of their kingdom. Two had been selected from the unprovoked, unresisted, promiscuous slaughter, which was made of the gentlemen of birth and family who composed the king's body guard.

These two gentlemen, with all the parade of an execution of justice, were cruelly and publickly dragged to the block, and beheaded in the great court of the palace. Their heads were stuck upon spears, and led the procession; whilst the royal captives who followed in the train were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women.

After they had been made to taste, drop by drop, more than the bitterness of death, in the slow torture of a journey of twelve [107] miles, protracted to six hours, they were, under a guard, composed of those very soldiers who had thus conducted them through this famous triumph, lodged in one of the old palaces of Paris, now converted into a Bastile for kings.

p. 107 Is this a triumph to be consecrated at altars? to be commemorated with grateful thanksgiving? to be offered to the divine humanity with fervent prayer and enthusiastick ejaculation? — These Theban and Thracian Orgies, acted in France, and applauded only in the Old Jewry, I assure you, kindle prophetic enthusiasm in the minds but of very few people in this kingdom;

although a saint and apostle, who may have revelations of his own, and who has so completely vanquished all the mean superstitions of the heart, may incline to think it pious and decorous to compare it with the entrance into the world of the Prince of Peace, proclaimed in an holy temple by a venerable sage, and not long before not worse announced by the voice of angels to the quiet innocence of shepherds.

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which they left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewn with scattered limbs and mutilated corpses. From there they were led into the capital of their kingdom. Two had been singled out from the unprovoked, unresisted, indiscriminate slaughter of the gentlemen of birth and family who made up the king's bodyguard.

These two gentlemen, with all the parade of an execution of justice, were cruelly and publicly dragged to the block and beheaded in the great court of the palace. Their heads were stuck upon spears and led the procession, while the royal captives who followed in the train were moved slowly along amid the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous insults, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women.[15]

After they had been made to taste, drop by drop, more than the bitterness of death, in the slow torture of a journey of twelve [107] miles drawn out to six hours, they were lodged in one of the old palaces of Paris, now converted into a Bastille for kings. Their guard was made up of the very soldiers who had conducted them through this famous triumph.[16]

Is this a triumph to be consecrated at altars? to be commemorated with grateful thanksgiving? to be offered to the divine humanity with fervent prayer and enthusiastic exclamation?—These Theban and Thracian orgies, acted in France and applauded only in the Old Jewry, kindle prophetic enthusiasm, I assure you, in the minds of very few people in this kingdom;[17]

although a saint and apostle, who may have revelations of his own, and who has so completely vanquished all the low superstitions of the heart, may be inclined to think it pious and fitting to compare it with the entrance into the world of the Prince of Peace, proclaimed in a holy temple by a venerable sage, and announced not long before, no less worthily, by the voice of angels to the quiet innocence of shepherds.

15 Burke's account is heightened here. Two of the guards were killed in the assault on the palace, and their heads were carried on pikes toward Paris.

16 The Tuileries, where the royal family was kept from October 1789.

17 Theban and Thracian orgies: the frenzied rites of Dionysus, in which (as in Euripides' *Bacchae*) a king is torn apart by maddened women.

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At first I was at a loss to account for this fit of unguarded transport. I knew, indeed, that the sufferings of monarchs make a delicious repast to some sort of palates. There were reflexions which might serve to keep this appetite within some bounds of temperance. But when I took one circumstance into my consideration, I was obliged to confess, that much allowance ought to be made for the Society, and that the temptation was too strong for common discretion;

I mean, the circumstance of the Io [108] Paean of the triumph, the animating cry which called "for *all* the BISHOPS to be hanged on the lamp-posts[4]," might well have brought forth a burst of enthusiasm on the foreseen consequences of this happy day.

p. 108 I allow to so much enthusiasm some little deviation from prudence. I allow this prophet to break forth into hymns of joy and thanksgiving on an event which appears like the precursor of the Millenium, and the projected fifth monarchy, in the destruction of all church establishments. There was, however (as in all human affairs there is) in the midst of this joy something to exercise the patience of these worthy gentlemen, and to try the long-suffering of their faith. The actual murder of the king and queen, and their child, was wanting to the other auspicious circumstances of this "*beautiful day.*" The actual murder of the bishops, though called for by so many holy ejaculations, was also wanting.

A groupe of regicide and sacrilegious slaughter, was indeed boldly sketched, but it was only sketched. It unhappily was left unfinished, in this great history-piece of the massacre of innocents. What hardy pencil of a great master, from the school of the rights of men, will finish it, is to be seen hereafter.

The age has not yet the compleat benefit of that diffusion of knowledge that has undermined superstition and error; and the king of France wants another object or two, to consign to oblivion, [109] in consideration of all the good which is to arise from his own sufferings, and the patriotic crimes of an enlightened age[5] echappant par miracle à vingt assassins, qui

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At first I was at a loss to explain this fit of unguarded rapture. I knew, indeed, that the sufferings of monarchs make a delicious meal for some kinds of palate. There were considerations that might serve to keep this appetite within some bounds of temperance. But when I took one circumstance into account, I was obliged to admit that much allowance ought to be made for the Society, and that the temptation was too strong for ordinary discretion;

I mean the Io [108] Paean of the triumph: the rousing cry that called "for *all* the BISHOPS to be hanged on the lamp-posts[4]" might well have brought forth a burst of enthusiasm over the foreseen consequences of this happy day.[18]

I allow such enthusiasm some slight departure from prudence. I allow this prophet to break forth into hymns of joy and thanksgiving over an event that looks like the forerunner of the Millennium, and of the projected Fifth Monarchy, in the destruction of all church establishments. There was, however (as there is in all human affairs), something in the midst of this joy to exercise the patience of these worthy gentlemen and to try the long-suffering of their faith. The actual murder of the king and queen, and their child, was missing from the other auspicious circumstances of this "*beautiful day.*" The actual murder of the bishops was also missing, though so many holy exclamations had called for it.[19]

A group of regicide and sacrilegious slaughter was indeed boldly sketched, but it was only sketched. Unhappily it was left unfinished, in this great history painting of the massacre of the innocents. What bold brush of a great master, from the school of the rights of men, will finish it remains to be seen.

The age does not yet enjoy the complete benefit of that diffusion of knowledge which has undermined superstition and error. The king of France needs another object or two to consign to oblivion, [109] in consideration of all the good that is to arise from his own sufferings and the patriotic crimes of an enlightened age.[5] … escaping by a miracle

18 Io Paean: the ancient Greek and Roman shout of triumph.
19 The Fifth Monarchy Men were seventeenth-century English millenarians awaiting Christ's reign on earth.

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avoient voulu faire de sa tete un trophée de plus. Voila ce qui me fit jurer de ne plus mettre le pied *dans cette caverne d'Antropophages* [the National Assembly] où je n'avois plus de force d'élever la voix, ou depuis six semaines je l'avois elevée en vain.

p. 109 Moi, Mounier, et tous les honnêtes gens, ont le dernier effort à faire pour le bien étoit d'en sortir. Aucune idée de crainte ne s'est approchée de moi. Je rougirois de m'en defendre. J'avois encore reçû sur la route de la part de ce peuple, moins coupable que ceux qui l'ont enivré de fureur, des acclamations, et des applaudissements, dont d'autres auroient été flattés, et qui m'ont fait fremir. C'est à l'indignation, c'est à l'horreur. C'est aux convulsions physiques, que le seul aspect du sang me fait eprouver que j'ai cedé. On brave une seule mort; on la brave plusieurs fois, quand elle peut être utile.

Mais aucune puissance sous le Ciel, mais aucune opinion publique ou privée n'ont le droit de me condamner à souffrir inutilement mille supplices par minute, et à perir de désespoir, de rage, au milieu des *triomphes,* du crime que je n'ai pu arrêter. Ils me proscriront, ils confisqueront mes biens. Je labourerai la terre, et je ne les verrai plus.—Voila ma justification. Vous pourez la lire, la montrer, la laisser copier; tant pis pour ceux qui ne la comprendront pas; ce ne sera alors moi qui auroit eut tort de la leur donner. This military man had not so good nerves as the peaceable gentleman of the Old Jewry.—See Mons.

Mounier's narrative of these transactions; a man also of honour and virtue, and talents, and therefore a fugitive..

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from twenty assassins, who had wanted to make his head one more trophy. That is what made me swear never again to set foot *in that cave of cannibals* [the National Assembly], where I no longer had the strength to raise my voice, where for six weeks I had raised it in vain.[20]

For me, for Mounier, and for all honest men, the last effort left to make for the good was to get out of it. No thought of fear came near me. I would blush to defend myself against such a charge. Even on the road I had received, from this people (less guilty than those who have made them drunk with fury), cheers and applause by which others would have been flattered, and which made me shudder. It was to indignation, it was to horror, it was to the physical convulsions that the mere sight of blood brings on in me, that I gave way. One faces a single death; one faces it several times, when it can be of use.

But no power under heaven, no opinion public or private, has the right to condemn me to suffer a thousand tortures a minute to no purpose, and to perish of despair and rage amid the *triumphs* of a crime I could not stop. They will proscribe me; they will confiscate my property. I will plow the earth, and I will see them no more.—That is my justification. You may read it, show it, let it be copied. So much the worse for those who do not understand it; it will not then be I who was wrong to give it to them. This military man did not have such good nerves as the peaceable gentleman of the Old Jewry.—See Monsieur

Mounier's narrative of these events; he too is a man of honor, and virtue, and talents, and therefore a fugitive.[21]

20 From "escaping by a miracle" to the end of chunk 357, the text is part of the French extract from Lally-Tollendal's letter that Burke quotes in note [5]. It is given here in English. The man escaping is Mounier.

21 Jean-Joseph Mounier, leader of the moderate constitutional monarchists and president of the Assembly in October 1789, withdrew after the October Days and soon left France. He published a defense of his conduct.

23

[4] Tous les Eveques à la lanterne. | [4] "All the bishops to the lamp-post."[22]

22 French in the original: "Tous les Eveques à la lanterne."

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Although this work of our new light and knowledge, did not go to the length, that in all probability it was intended it should be carried; yet I must think, that such treatment of any human creatures must be shocking to any but those [111] who are made for accomplishing Revolutions. But I cannot stop here.

Influenced by the inborn feelings of my nature, and not being illuminated by a single ray of this new-sprung modern light, I confess to you, Sir, that the exalted rank of the persons suffering, and particularly the sex, the beauty, and the amiable qualities of the descendant of so many kings and emperors, with the tender age of royal infants, insensible only through infancy and innocence of the cruel outrages to which their parents were exposed, instead of being a subject of exultation, adds not a little to my sensibility on that most melancholy occasion.

I hear that the august person, who was the principal object of our preacher's triumph, though he supported himself, felt much on that shameful occasion. As a man, it became him to feel for his wife and his children, and the faithful guards of his person, that were massacred in cold blood about him; as a prince, it became him to feel for the strange and frightful transformation of his civilized subjects, and to be more grieved for them, than sollicitous for himself. It derogates little from his fortitude, while it adds infinitely to the honour of his humanity.

I am very sorry to say it, very sorry indeed, that such personages are in a situation in which it is not unbecoming to praise the virtues of the great.

I hear, and I rejoice to hear, that the great lady, the other object of the triumph, has borne that day

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This work of our new light and knowledge did not go as far as it was in all probability meant to be carried. Even so, I must think that such treatment of any human creatures must be shocking to any but those [111] who are made for accomplishing Revolutions. But I cannot stop here.

Moved by the inborn feelings of my nature, and not illuminated by a single ray of this new-sprung modern light, I confess to you, Sir, that the exalted rank of the persons suffering—and particularly the sex, the beauty, and the amiable qualities of the descendant of so many kings and emperors, with the tender age of royal infants, insensible only through infancy and innocence of the cruel outrages to which their parents were exposed—far from being a subject of exultation, adds not a little to my feeling on that most melancholy occasion.

I hear that the august person who was the principal object of our preacher's triumph, though he bore himself up, felt much on that shameful occasion. As a man, it became him to feel for his wife and his children, and for the faithful guards of his person who were massacred in cold blood around him. As a prince, it became him to feel for the strange and frightful transformation of his civilized subjects, and to be more grieved for them than anxious for himself. It takes little from his fortitude, while it adds infinitely to the honor of his humanity.

I am very sorry to say it, very sorry indeed, that such personages are in a situation in which it is not unbecoming to praise the virtues of the great.

I hear, and I rejoice to hear, that the great lady, the other object of the triumph, has borne that day

24

[5] It is proper here to refer to a letter written upon this subject by an eye-witness. That eye-witness was one of the most honest, intelligent, and eloquent members of the National Assembly, one of the most active and zealous reformers of the state. He was obliged to secede from the assembly; and he afterwards became a voluntary exile, on account of the horrors of this pious triumph, and the dispositions of men, who, profiting of crimes, if not causing them, have taken the lead in public affairs.

[5] It is proper here to refer to a letter written on this subject by an eyewitness. That eyewitness was one of the most honest, intelligent, and eloquent members of the National Assembly, and one of the most active and zealous reformers of the state. He was obliged to withdraw from the Assembly, and he afterward became a voluntary exile. The cause was the horrors of this pious triumph, and the dispositions of men who, profiting from crimes if not causing them, have taken the lead in public affairs.

25 Trophime-Gérard, marquis de Lally-Tollendal, was a liberal noble deputy who left the Assembly after the October Days and went into exile in Switzerland.

26

EXTRACT of M. de Lally Tollendal's Second Letter to a Friend.

EXTRACT of M. de Lally-Tollendal's Second Letter to a Friend. [25]

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(one is interested that beings made for suffering should suffer well) and that she bears [112] all the succeeding days, that she bears the imprisonment of her husband, and her own captivity, and the exile of her friends, and the insulting adulation of addresses, and the whole weight of her accumulated wrongs, with a serene patience, in a manner suited to her rank and race, and becoming the offspring of a sovereign distinguished for her piety and her courage;

that like her she has lofty sentiments; that she feels with the dignity of a Roman matron; that in the last extremity she will save herself from the last disgrace, and that if she must fall, she will fall by no ignoble hand.

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(one cares that beings made for suffering should suffer well). I hear that she bears [112] all the days that have followed, that she bears the imprisonment of her husband, and her own captivity, and the exile of her friends, and the insulting flattery of addresses, and the whole weight of her accumulated wrongs, with a serene patience. She bears them in a manner suited to her rank and race, and becoming the daughter of a sovereign distinguished for her piety and her courage;[27]

that like her she has lofty sentiments; that she feels with the dignity of a Roman matron; that in the last extremity she will save herself from the last disgrace; and that if she must fall, she will fall by no ignoble hand.

THE QUEEN OF FRANCE AND THE AGE OF CHIVALRY

Burke remembers Marie Antoinette at Versailles and mourns the passing of the age of chivalry.

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p. 112 It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendor, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall!

Little did I dream that, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge [113] even a look that threatened her with insult.—But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.

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It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she was just beginning to move in—glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendor, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall![28]

Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom. Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fall upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honor and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge [113] even a look that threatened her with insult.—But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.[29]

27 Marie Antoinette was the daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria.
28 Burke saw Marie Antoinette at Versailles in 1773, three years after her marriage to the future Louis XVI.
29 Sophisters: sophists, specious reasoners. Economists: the French Physiocrats (Quesnay, Turgot and their school), whom Burke calls "oeconomists."

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p. 113 Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.	Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.
This mixed system of opinion and sentiment had its origin in the antient chivalry; and the principle, though varied in its appearance by the varying state of human affairs, subsisted and influenced through a long succession of generations, even to the time we live in. If it should ever be totally extinguished, the loss I fear will be great. It is this which has given its character to modern Europe. It is this which has distinguished it under all its forms of government, and distinguished it to its advantage, from the states of Asia, and possibly from those states which flourished in the most brilliant periods of the antique world.	This mixed system of opinion and sentiment had its origin in the ancient chivalry. The principle, though varied in its appearance by the varying state of human affairs, survived and exerted its influence through a long succession of generations, even to the time we live in. If it should ever be totally extinguished, the loss, I fear, will be great. It is this which has given its character to modern Europe. It is this which has distinguished it under all its forms of government, and distinguished it to its advantage, from the states of Asia, and possibly from those states which flourished in the most brilliant periods of the ancient world.
It was this, which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations [114] of social life. It was this opinion which mitigated kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force, or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power; it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners.	It was this which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations [114] of social life. It was this opinion which softened kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power. It obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and caused a power that could overcome laws to be subdued by manners.
p. 114 But now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the	But now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions which made power gentle and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments that beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart

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wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.

On this scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex in general as such, and without distinct views, is to be regarded as romance and folly. Regicide, and parricide, and sacrilege, are but fictions of superstition, corrupting jurisprudence by destroying [115] its simplicity. The murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, are only common homicide;

and if the people are by any chance, or in any way gainers by it, a sort of homicide much the most pardonable, and into which we ought not to make too severe a scrutiny.

p. 115 On the scheme of this barbarous philosophy, which is the offspring of cold hearts and muddy understandings, and which is as void of solid wisdom, as it is destitute of all taste and elegance, laws are to be supported only by their own terrors, and by the concern, which each individual may find in them, from his own private speculations, or can spare to them from his own private interests. In the groves of *their* academy, at the end of every visto, you see nothing but the gallows. Nothing is left which engages the affections on the part of the commonwealth.

On the principles of this mechanic philosophy, our institutions can never be embodied, if I may use the expression, in persons; so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration, or attachment. But that sort of reason which banishes the affections is incapable of filling their place. These public affections, combined with manners, are required sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law. The precept given by a wise man, as well as a great critic, for the construction of poems, is equally true as to states. *Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunto.* There ought to be a system of manners in

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owns and the understanding ratifies as necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.

On this scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex in general as such, and without any particular object in view, is to be regarded as romance and folly. Regicide, and parricide, and sacrilege are but fictions of superstition, corrupting jurisprudence by destroying [115] its simplicity. The murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, is only common homicide;

and if the people are by any chance, or in any way, gainers by it, a sort of homicide much the most pardonable, and one into which we ought not to inquire too severely.

On the scheme of this barbarous philosophy, which is the offspring of cold hearts and muddy understandings, and which is as void of solid wisdom as it is destitute of all taste and elegance, laws are to be upheld only by their own terrors, and by the concern that each individual may find in them from his own private speculations, or can spare for them from his own private interests. In the groves of *their* academy, at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows. Nothing is left that engages the affections on the part of the commonwealth.[30]

On the principles of this mechanical philosophy, our institutions can never be embodied, if I may use the expression, in persons, so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration, or attachment. But the kind of reason that banishes the affections cannot fill their place. These public affections, combined with manners, are needed sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law. The rule that a wise man, who was also a great critic, gave for the making of poems is just as true of states: *It is not enough for poems to be beautiful; they must also be charming.* There ought to be a system of manners in every nation that a

30 "The groves of academy" echoes Horace (*Epistles* 2.2.45), on seeking truth among the trees of Plato's Academy.

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every nation which a well-formed [116] mind would be disposed to relish.	well-formed [116] mind would be disposed to relish.[31]
p. 116 To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely.	To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely.
But power, of some kind or other, will survive the shock in which manners and opinions perish; and it will find other and worse means for its support. The usurpation which, in order to subvert antient institutions, has destroyed antient principles, will hold power by arts similar to those by which it has acquired it.	But power of one kind or another will survive the shock in which manners and opinions perish, and it will find other and worse means to support itself. The usurpation which, in order to overthrow ancient institutions, has destroyed ancient principles, will hold power by arts like those by which it acquired it.
When the old feudal and chivalrous spirit of *Fealty,* which, by freeing kings from fear, freed both kings and subjects from the precautions of tyranny, shall be extinct in the minds of men, plots and assassinations will be anticipated by preventive murder and preventive confiscation, and that long roll of grim and bloody maxims, which form the political code of all power, not standing on its own honour, and the honour of those who are to obey it. Kings will be tyrants from policy when subjects are rebels from principle.	When the old feudal and chivalrous spirit of *Fealty*, which, by freeing kings from fear, freed both kings and subjects from the precautions of tyranny, is extinct in the minds of men, plots and assassinations will be forestalled by preventive murder and preventive confiscation, and by that long roll of grim and bloody maxims that make up the political code of all power that does not stand on its own honor and on the honor of those who are to obey it. Kings will be tyrants from policy when subjects are rebels from principle.
When antient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us; nor can we know distinctly to what port we steer. Europe undoubtedly, taken in a mass, was in a flourishing condition the day on which your Revolution was compleated. How much of that prosperous state was owing to the spirit of our old manners and opinions is not easy to say; but as such causes cannot be indifferent in their operation, we must presume, that, on the whole, their operation was beneficial.	When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to guide us, nor can we know clearly to what port we are steering. Europe, taken as a whole, was undoubtedly in a flourishing condition on the day your Revolution was completed. How much of that prosperity was owing to the spirit of our old manners and opinions is not easy to say; but since such causes cannot be indifferent in their effects, we must presume that, on the whole, their effects were beneficial.
p. 117 We are but too apt to consider things in the state in which we find them, without sufficiently adverting to the causes by which they have been produced, and possibly may be upheld. Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners, and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles;	We are all too apt to take things in the state in which we find them, without paying enough attention to the causes that produced them and that may perhaps keep them up. Nothing is more certain than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things connected with manners and with civilization have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages on two principles;
and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of	and were indeed the result of both combined. I mean the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of re-

31 Horace, *Ars Poetica* 99.

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religion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions, and whilst governments were rather in their causes than formed.

Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood; and paid it with usury, by enlarging their ideas, and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.

If, as I suspect, modern letters owe more than they are always willing to own to ancient manners, so do other interests which we value full as much as they are worth. Even commerce, and trade, and manufacture, the gods of our oeconomical politicians, are themselves perhaps but [118] creatures; are themselves but effects, which, as first causes, we choose to worship. They certainly grew under the same shade in which learning flourished. They too may decay with their natural protecting principles. With you, for the present at least, they all threaten to disappear together.

p. 118 Where trade and manufactures are wanting to a people, and the spirit of nobility and religion remains, sentiment supplies, and not always ill supplies their place; but if commerce and the arts should be lost in an experiment to try how well a state may stand without these old fundamental principles, what sort of a thing must be a nation of gross, stupid, ferocious, and at the same time, poor and sordid barbarians, destitute of religion, honour, or manly pride, possessing nothing at present, and hoping for nothing hereafter.

I wish you may not be going fast, and by the shortest cut, to that horrible and disgustful situation. Already there appears a poverty of conception, a coarseness and vulgarity in all the proceedings of the assembly and of all their instructors. Their liberty is not liberal. Their science is presumptuous ignorance. Their humanity is savage and brutal.

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ligion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning alive even in the midst of arms and confusion, and while governments were still in their causes rather than formed.

Learning paid back what it had received to nobility and to priesthood, and paid it back with interest, by enlarging their ideas and furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been content to remain the instructor, and had not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.

If, as I suspect, modern letters owe more than they are always willing to admit to ancient manners, so do other interests that we value fully as much as they are worth. Even commerce, and trade, and manufacture, the gods of our political economists, are themselves perhaps only [118] creatures; are themselves only effects, which we choose to worship as first causes. They certainly grew up under the same shade in which learning flourished. They too may decay along with their natural protecting principles. With you, for the present at least, they all threaten to disappear together.

Where a people lacks trade and manufactures, but the spirit of nobility and religion remains, sentiment supplies their place, and not always badly; but if commerce and the arts should be lost in an experiment to see how well a state can stand without these old fundamental principles, what sort of thing must a nation be of gross, stupid, ferocious, and at the same time poor and sordid barbarians, destitute of religion, honor, or manly pride, possessing nothing at present and hoping for nothing hereafter?

I hope you are not heading fast, and by the shortest route, to that horrible and disgusting condition. Already there appears a poverty of conception, a coarseness and vulgarity, in all the proceedings of the Assembly and of all their instructors. Their liberty is not liberal. Their science is presumptuous ignorance. Their humanity is savage and brutal.

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It is not clear, whether in England we learned those grand and decorous principles, and manners, of which considerable traces yet remain, from you, or whether you took them from us. But to you, I think, we trace them best. You seem to me to be—*gentis incunabula nostrae.* France has always more or less influenced manners in England; and when your fountain is choaked up and polluted, [119] the stream will not run long, or not run clear with us, or perhaps with any nation. This gives all Europe, in my opinion, but too close and connected a concern in what is done in France.

p. 119 Excuse me, therefore, if I have dwelt too long on the atrocious spectacle of the sixth of October 1789, or have given too much scope to the reflexions which have arisen in my mind on occasion of the most important of all revolutions, which may be dated from that day, I mean a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions. As things now stand, with every thing respectable destroyed without us, and an attempt to destroy within us, every principle of respect, one is almost forced to apologize for harbouring the common feelings of men.

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It is not clear whether we in England learned those grand and decorous principles and manners, of which considerable traces still remain, from you, or whether you took them from us. But to you, I think, we trace them best. You seem to me to be—*the cradle of our race.* France has always more or less influenced manners in England; and when your fountain is choked up and polluted, [119] the stream will not run long, or not run clear, with us, or perhaps with any nation. This gives all Europe, in my opinion, an all too close and connected concern in what is done in France.[32]

Forgive me, then, if I have dwelt too long on the atrocious spectacle of the sixth of October 1789, or have given too much room to the reflections that arose in my mind on the occasion of the most important of all revolutions, which may be dated from that day: I mean a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions. As things now stand, with everything worthy of respect destroyed outside us, and an attempt being made to destroy every principle of respect within us, one is almost forced to apologize for harboring the common feelings of men.

WHY BURKE FEELS AS HE DOES

Burke defends his feelings as natural and the English as men of untaught, traditional sentiments.

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Why do I feel so differently from the Reverend Dr. Price, and those of his lay flock, who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his discourse?— For this plain reason—beause it is *natural* I should; because we are so made as to be affected at such spectacles with melancholy sentiments upon the unstable condition of mortal prosperity, and the tremendous uncertainty of human greatness;

because in those natural feelings we learn great lessons; because in events like these our passions instruct our reason; because when kings are hurl'd from their thrones by the Supreme Director of this great drama, and become the objects of insult to the base, and of pity to the good, we behold such disasters in the moral, as we should behold a miracle in the physical order of things.

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Why do I feel so differently from the Reverend Dr. Price, and from those of his lay flock who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his sermon? For this plain reason—because it is *natural* that I should; because we are so made as to be moved, at such spectacles, to melancholy thoughts on the unstable condition of mortal prosperity and the tremendous uncertainty of human greatness;

because in those natural feelings we learn great lessons; because in events like these our passions instruct our reason; because when kings are hurled from their thrones by the Supreme Director of this great drama, and become objects of insult to the base and of pity to the good, we look on such disasters in the moral order as we should look on a miracle in the physical order of things.

32 Adapted from Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.105 ("gentis cunabula nostrae"), said there of Crete.

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We are alarmed into [120] reflexion; our minds (as it has long since been observed) are purified by terror and pity; our weak unthinking pride is humbled, under the dispensations of a mysterious wisdom.—	We are startled into [120] reflection; our minds (as was observed long ago) are purified by terror and pity; our weak, unthinking pride is humbled under the dispensations of a mysterious wisdom.—[33]
Some tears might be drawn from me, if such a spectacle were exhibited on the stage. I should be truly ashamed of finding in myself that superficial, theatric sense of painted distress, whilst I could exult over it in real life. With such a perverted mind, I could never venture to shew my face at a tragedy. People would think the tears that Garrick formerly, or that Siddons not long since, have extorted from me, were the tears of hypocrisy; I should know them to be the tears of folly.	Some tears might be drawn from me if such a spectacle were put on the stage. I should be truly ashamed to find in myself that superficial, theatrical feeling for painted distress while I could exult over the same thing in real life. With so perverted a mind, I could never dare to show my face at a tragedy. People would think the tears that Garrick in former days, or Siddons not long ago, wrung from me were the tears of hypocrisy; I should know them to be the tears of folly.[34]
p. 120 Indeed the theatre is a better school of moral sentiments than churches, where the feelings of humanity are thus outraged. Poets, who have to deal with an audience not yet graduated in the school of the rights of men, and who must apply themselves to the moral constitution of the heart, would not dare to produce such a triumph as a matter of exultation. There, where men follow their natural impulses, they would not bear the odious maxims of a Machiavelian policy, whether applied to the attainment of monarchical or democratic tyranny.	Indeed the theater is a better school of moral sentiments than churches where the feelings of humanity are outraged in this way. Poets, who have to deal with an audience not yet graduated in the school of the rights of men, and who must address themselves to the moral constitution of the heart, would not dare to present such a triumph as a cause for exultation. There, where men follow their natural impulses, they would not tolerate the odious maxims of a Machiavellian policy, whether applied to gaining a monarchical or a democratic tyranny.
They would reject them on the modern, as they once did on the antient stage, where they could not bear even the hypothetical proposition of such wickedness in the mouth of a personated tyrant, though suitable to the character he sustained. No theatric audience in Athens would bear what has been [121] borne, in the midst of the real tragedy of this triumphal day; a principal actor weighing, as it were in scales hung in a shop of horrors,—so much actual crime against so much contingent advantage,—and after putting in and out weights, declaring that the balance was on the side of the advantages.	They would reject them on the modern stage, as they once did on the ancient, where audiences could not bear even the hypothetical proposal of such wickedness in the mouth of a tyrant played by an actor, though it suited the character he represented. No theater audience in Athens would tolerate what has been [121] tolerated in the midst of the real tragedy of this triumphal day: a principal actor weighing, as it were in scales hung in a shop of horrors,—so much actual crime against so much possible advantage,—and, after putting weights in and taking them out, declaring that the balance lay on the side of the advantages.
p. 121 They would not bear to see the crimes of new democracy posted as in a ledger against the crimes of old despotism, and the book-keepers of politics finding democracy still in debt, but by no means unable or unwilling to pay the balance. In	They would not bear to see the crimes of the new democracy entered as in a ledger against the crimes of the old despotism, and the bookkeepers of politics finding democracy still in debt, but by no means unable or unwilling to pay the balance.

33 Aristotle's account of tragedy in the *Poetics*, which purges the emotions through pity and fear.
34 David Garrick (1717–1779) and Sarah Siddons (1755–1831), the great tragic actors of the London stage.

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the theatre, the first intuitive glance, without any elaborate process of reasoning, would shew, that this method of political computation, would justify every extent of crime. They would see, that on these principles, even where the very worst acts were not perpetrated, it was owing rather to the fortune of the conspirators than to their parsimony in the expenditure of treachery and blood. They would soon see, that criminal means once tolerated are soon preferred.

They present a shorter cut to the object than through the highway of the moral virtues. Justifying perfidy and murder for public benefit, public benefit would soon become the pretext, and perfidy and murder the end; until rapacity, malice, revenge, and fear more dreadful than revenge, could satiate their insatiable appetites. Such must be the consequences of losing in the splendour of these triumphs of the rights of men, all natural sense of wrong and right.

But the Reverend Pastor exults in this "leading [122] in triumph," because truly Louis XVIth was "an arbitrary monarch;" that is, in other words, neither more nor less, than because he was Louis the XVIth, and because he had the misfortune to be born king of France, with the prerogatives of which, a long line of ancestors, and a long acquiescence of the people, without any act of his, had put him in possession. A misfortune it has indeed turned out to him, that he was born king of France. But misfortune is not crime, nor is indiscretion always the greatest guilt.

p. 122 I shall never think that a prince, the acts of whose whole reign were a series of concessions to his subjects, who was willing to relax his authority, to remit his prerogatives, to call his people to a share of freedom, not known, perhaps not desired by their ancestors;

such a prince, though he should be subject to the common frailties attached to men and to princes, though he should have once thought it necessary to provide force against the desperate designs manifestly carrying on against his person, and the remnants of his authority; though all this should be taken into consideration, I shall be led with great difficulty to think he deserves the cruel and insulting triumph of Paris, and of Dr. Price.

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In the theater, the first intuitive glance, without any elaborate process of reasoning, would show that this method of political accounting would justify crime to any extent. The audience would see that on these principles, even where the very worst acts were not committed, this was owing to the luck of the conspirators rather than to their thrift in spending treachery and blood. They would soon see that criminal means, once tolerated, are soon preferred.

They offer a shorter cut to the goal than the highway of the moral virtues. Once perfidy and murder are justified for the public benefit, the public benefit would soon become the pretext, and perfidy and murder the end, until rapacity, malice, revenge, and fear more dreadful than revenge could satisfy their insatiable appetites. Such must be the consequences of losing, in the splendor of these triumphs of the rights of men, all natural sense of wrong and right.

But the Reverend Pastor exults in this "leading [122] in triumph" because, if you please, Louis XVI was "an arbitrary monarch"; that is, in other words, neither more nor less than because he was Louis XVI, and because he had the misfortune to be born king of France, with the prerogatives that a long line of ancestors and a long acquiescence of the people, without any act of his own, had put in his possession. It has indeed turned out to be a misfortune for him that he was born king of France. But misfortune is not crime, nor is indiscretion always the greatest guilt.

I shall never think that a prince the acts of whose whole reign were a series of concessions to his subjects, who was willing to relax his authority, to give up his prerogatives, to call his people to a share of freedom not known, perhaps not desired, by their ancestors;

such a prince, even if he were subject to the common frailties of men and of princes, even if he had once thought it necessary to provide force against the desperate designs plainly being carried on against his person and the remnants of his authority; even taking all this into consideration, I shall find it very hard to think that he deserves the cruel and insulting triumph of Paris, and of Dr. Price.

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I tremble for the cause of liberty, from such an example to kings. I tremble for the cause of humanity, in the unpunished outrages of the most wicked of mankind. But there are some people of that low and degenerate fashion of mind, that they look up with a sort of complacent awe and admiration to kings, who know [123] to keep firm in their seat,	I tremble for the cause of liberty, given such an example to kings. I tremble for the cause of humanity, given the unpunished outrages of the most wicked of mankind. But there are some people of that low and degenerate cast of mind who look up with a sort of complacent awe and admiration to kings who know how [123] to keep firm in their seats,
to hold a strict hand over their subjects, to assert their prerogative, and by the awakened vigilance of a severe despotism, to guard against the very first approaches of freedom. Against such as these they never elevate their voice. Deserters from principle, listed with fortune, they never see any good in suffering virtue, nor any crime in prosperous usurpation.	to hold a strict hand over their subjects, to assert their prerogative, and, by the wakeful vigilance of a severe despotism, to guard against the very first approaches of freedom. Against such kings as these they never raise their voices. Deserters from principle, enlisted with fortune, they never see any good in suffering virtue, nor any crime in prosperous usurpation.
p. 123 If it could have been made clear to me, that the king and queen of France (those I mean who were such before the triumph) were inexorable and cruel tyrants, that they had formed a deliberate scheme for massacring the National Assembly (I think I have seen something like the latter insinuated in certain publications) I should think their captivity just. If this be true, much more ought to have been done, but done, in my opinion, in another manner. The punishment of real tyrants is a noble and awful act of justice;	If it could have been made clear to me that the king and queen of France (I mean those who were such before the triumph) were inexorable and cruel tyrants, that they had formed a deliberate scheme to massacre the National Assembly (I think I have seen something like this last insinuated in certain publications), I should think their captivity just. If this is true, much more ought to have been done—but done, in my opinion, in another manner. The punishment of real tyrants is a noble and awful act of justice;
and it has with truth been said to be consolatory to the human mind. But if I were to punish a wicked king, I should regard the dignity in avenging the crime.	and it has been said with truth to be a consolation to the human mind. But if I were to punish a wicked king, I should have regard to dignity in avenging the crime.
Justice is grave and decorous, and in its punishments rather seems to submit to a necessity, than to make a choice. Had Nero, or Agrippina, or Louis the eleventh, or Charles the ninth, been the subject; if Charles the twelfth of Sweden, after the murder of Patkul, or his predecessor Christina, after the murder of Monaldeschi, had fallen into your hands, Sir, or into mine, I am sure our conduct would have been different.	Justice is grave and decorous, and in its punishments seems rather to submit to a necessity than to make a choice. Had Nero, or Agrippina, or Louis XI, or Charles IX been the subject; if Charles XII of Sweden after the murder of Patkul, or his predecessor Christina after the murder of Monaldeschi, had fallen into your hands, Sir, or into mine, I am sure our conduct would have been different.[35]
p. 124 If the French King, or King of the French, (or by whatever name he is known in the new vocabulary of your constitution) has in his own person, and that of his queen, really deserved	If the French King, or King of the French (or whatever name he goes by in the new vocabulary of your constitution), has in his own person, and in that of his queen, really deserved these unac-

35 Johann Patkul, a Livonian noble, was executed on Charles XII's orders in 1707; Gian Rinaldo Monaldeschi, Queen Christina's equerry, was killed at her command at Fontainebleau in 1657.

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these unavowed but unavenged murderous attempts, and those subsequent indignities more cruel than murder, such a person would ill deserve even that subordinate executory trust, which I understand is to be placed in him; nor is he fit to be called chief in a nation which he has outraged and oppressed. A worse choice for such an office in a new commonwealth, than that of a deposed tyrant, could not possibly be made.

But to degrade and insult a man as the worst of criminals, and afterwards to trust him in your highest concerns, as a faithful, honest, and zealous servant, is not consistent in reasoning, nor prudent in policy, nor safe in practice. Those who could make such an appointment must be guilty of a more flagrant breach of trust than any they have yet committed against the people. As this is the only crime in which your leading politicians could have acted inconsistently, I conclude that there is no sort of ground for these horrid insinuations. I think no better of all the other calumnies.

In England, we give no credit to them. We are generous enemies: We are faithful allies. We spurn from us with disgust and indignation the slanders of those who bring us their anecdotes with the attestation of the flower-de-luce on their shoulder. We have Lord George Gordon fast in Newgate; and neither his being a public proselyte [125] to Judaism, nor his having, in his zeal against Catholick priests and all sort of ecclesiastics, raised a mob (excuse the term, it is still in use here) which pulled down all our prisons, have preserved to him a liberty, of which he did not render himself worthy by a virtuous use of it. We have rebuilt Newgate, and tenanted the mansion.

p. 125 We have prisons almost as strong as the Bastile, for those who dare to libel the queens of France. In this spiritual retreat, let the noble libeller remain. Let him there meditate on his Thalmud, until he learns a conduct more becoming his birth and parts, and not so disgraceful to the ancient religion to which he has become a proselyte; or until some persons from your side of the water, to please your new Hebrew brethren,

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knowledged but unavenged attempts at murder, and the indignities that followed, more cruel than murder, such a person would hardly deserve even that subordinate executive trust which I understand is to be placed in him; nor is he fit to be called chief of a nation he has outraged and oppressed. A worse choice for such an office in a new commonwealth than a deposed tyrant could not possibly be made.[36]

But to degrade and insult a man as the worst of criminals, and afterward to trust him with your highest concerns as a faithful, honest, and zealous servant, is not consistent in reasoning, nor prudent in policy, nor safe in practice. Those who could make such an appointment must be guilty of a more flagrant breach of trust than any they have yet committed against the people. Since this is the only crime in which your leading politicians could have acted inconsistently, I conclude that there is no ground whatever for these horrid insinuations. I think no better of all the other slanders.

In England we give them no credit. We are generous enemies; we are faithful allies. We spurn with disgust and indignation the slanders of those who bring us their anecdotes vouched for by the fleur-de-lis branded on their shoulder. We have Lord George Gordon fast in Newgate. Neither his being a public convert [125] to Judaism, nor his having raised a mob (excuse the term, it is still in use here) which, in his zeal against Catholic priests and every sort of clergy, pulled down all our prisons, has preserved for him a liberty he did not make himself worthy of by a virtuous use of it. We have rebuilt Newgate, and given the mansion its tenant.[37]

We have prisons almost as strong as the Bastille for those who dare to libel the queens of France. In this spiritual retreat let the noble libeler remain. Let him meditate there on his Talmud until he learns a conduct more becoming his birth and talents, and less disgraceful to the ancient religion he has converted to. Or let him stay until some persons from your side of the water, to please your

36 "King of the French" was the title the National Assembly gave Louis XVI in place of "King of France."
37 French criminals were branded with the fleur-de-lis. Burke means Jeanne de La Motte, branded for the Diamond Necklace affair, who published libels on Marie Antoinette from London. Lord George Gordon led the anti-Catholic riots of 1780, in which Newgate was burned; he later converted to Judaism and was imprisoned in 1788 for libeling the French queen.

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shall ransom him. He may then be enabled to purchase, with the old hoards of the synagogue, and a very small poundage, on the long compound interest of the thirty pieces of silver (Dr.

Price has shewn us what miracles compound interest will perform in 1790 years) the lands which are lately discovered to have been usurped by the Gallican church. Send us your popish Archbishop of Paris, and we will send you our protestant Rabbin. We shall treat the person you send us in exchange like a gentleman and an honest man, as he is; but pray let him bring with him the fund of his hospitality, bounty, and charity; and, depend upon it, we shall never confiscate a shilling of that honourable and pious fund, nor think of enriching the treasury with the spoils of the poor-box.

To tell you the truth, my dear Sir, I think the 126
honour of our nation to be somewhat concerned in the disclaimer of the proceedings of this society of the Old Jewry and the London Tavern. I have no man's proxy. I speak only from myself; when I disclaim, as I do with all possible earnestness, all communion with the actors in that triumph, or with the admirers of it.

p. 126 When I assert any thing else, as concerning the people of England, I speak from observation not from authority; but I speak from the experience I have had in a pretty extensive and mixed communication with the inhabitants of this kingdom, of all descriptions and ranks, and after a course of attentive observation, began early in life, and continued for near forty years. I have often been astonished, considering that we are divided from you but by a slender dyke of about twenty-four miles, and that the mutual intercourse between the two countries has lately been very great, to find how little you seem to know of us.

I suspect that this is owing to your forming a judgment of this nation from certain publications, which do, very erroneously, if they do at all, represent the opinions and dispositions

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new Hebrew brethren, ransom him. He may then be able to buy, with the old hoards of the synagogue and a very small percentage on the long compound interest of the thirty pieces of silver (Dr.[38]

Price has shown us what miracles compound interest will perform in 1,790 years) the lands which have lately been discovered to have been usurped by the Gallican church. Send us your popish Archbishop of Paris, and we will send you our Protestant rabbi. We shall treat the man you send us in exchange like a gentleman and an honest man, as he is. But please let him bring with him the fund of his hospitality, bounty, and charity; and, depend upon it, we shall never confiscate a shilling of that honorable and pious fund, nor think of enriching the treasury with the spoils of the poor-box.[39]

To tell you the truth, my dear Sir, I think the 126
honor of our nation is somewhat at stake in disowning the proceedings of this society of the Old Jewry and the London Tavern. I hold no man's proxy. I speak only for myself when I disclaim, as I do with all possible earnestness, all fellowship with the actors in that triumph, or with its admirers.[40]

When I assert anything else about the people of England, I speak from observation, not from authority. But I speak from the experience I have had in a fairly extensive and mixed acquaintance with the inhabitants of this kingdom, of all descriptions and ranks, and after a course of attentive observation begun early in life and continued for nearly forty years. We are divided from you by only a slender ditch of about twenty-four miles, and the traffic between the two countries has lately been very great. Considering this, I have often been astonished to find how little you seem to know of us.

I suspect this comes from your judging this nation by certain publications, which represent the opinions and dispositions generally prevailing in England very wrongly, if they represent them at all.

38 In January 1790 the National Assembly had granted citizenship to the Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux and Avignon.
39 Price had calculated that a penny put out at compound interest at the birth of Christ would by now be worth an immense mass of gold. The Archbishop of Paris, Leclerc de Juigné, was famed for his charity and had fled France in 1789.
40 The London Tavern was where the Revolution Society held its dinner after Price's sermon.

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generally prevalent in England. The vanity, restlessness, petulance, and spirit of intrigue of several petty cabals, who attempt to hide their total want of consequence in bustle and noise, and puffing, and mutual quotation of each other, makes you imagine that our contemptuous neglect of their abilities is a mark of general acquiescence in their opinions. No such thing, I assure you.	Several petty cabals try to hide their utter lack of importance in bustle and noise, and puffing, and quoting one another. Their vanity, restlessness, petulance, and spirit of intrigue make you imagine that our contemptuous neglect of their abilities is a sign of general agreement with their opinions. No such thing, I assure you.
Because half a dozen grashoppers under a fern make the field ring [127] with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine, that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.	Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring [127] with their importunate chirping, while thousands of great cattle, resting beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are anything but the little shriveled, meager, hopping, though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour.
p. 127 I almost venture to affirm, that not one in a hundred amongst us participates in the "triumph" of the Revolution Society. If the king and queen of France, and their children, were to fall into our hands by the chance of war, in the most acrimonious of all hostilities (I deprecate such an event, I deprecate such hostility) they would be treated with another sort of triumphal entry into London. We formerly have had a king of France in that situation;	I almost venture to affirm that not one in a hundred of us shares in the "triumph" of the Revolution Society. Suppose the king and queen of France and their children were to fall into our hands by the chance of war, in the most bitter of all hostilities (God forbid such an event, God forbid such hostility). They would then be treated to another sort of triumphal entry into London. We once had a king of France in that situation;[41]
you have read how he was treated by the victor in the field; and in what manner he was afterwards received in England. Four hundred years have gone over us; but I believe we are not materially changed since that period.	you have read how he was treated by the victor in the field, and how he was afterward received in England. Four hundred years have passed over us; but I believe we have not materially changed since then.
Thanks to our sullen resistance to innovation, thanks to the cold sluggishness of our national character, we still bear the stamp of our forefathers. We have not (as I conceive) lost the generosity and dignity of thinking of the fourteenth century; nor as yet have we subtilized ourselves into *[the uncivilized]*. We are not the converts of Rousseau; we are not the disciples of Voltaire; Helvetius has made no progress amongst us. Atheists are not our preachers; madmen are not our lawgivers.	Thanks to our sullen resistance to innovation, thanks to the cold sluggishness of our national character, we still bear the stamp of our forefathers. We have not, I believe, lost the generosity and dignity of thought of the fourteenth century; nor have we yet refined ourselves into the uncivilized. We are not the converts of Rousseau; we are not the disciples of Voltaire; Helvétius has made no progress among us. Atheists are not our preachers; madmen are not our lawgivers.
We [128] know that *we* have made no discoveries; and we think that no discoveries are to be made,	We [128] know that *we* have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in

41 John II of France, captured by Edward the Black Prince at Poitiers in 1356 and brought to London with every mark of honor.

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in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born, altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped its mould upon our presumption, and the silent tomb shall have imposed its law on our pert loquacity. In England we have not yet been completely embowelled of our natural entrails; we still feel within us, and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals.

p. 128 We have not been drawn and trussed, in order that we may be filled, like stuffed birds in a museum, with chaff and rags, and paltry, blurred shreds of paper about the rights of man. We preserve the whole of our feelings still native and entire, unsophisticated by pedantry and infidelity. We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms. We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility[6]. Why?

Because when such [129] ideas are brought before our minds, it is *natural* to be so affected; because all other feelings are false and spurious, and tend to corrupt our minds, to vitiate our primary morals, to render us unfit for rational liberty; and by teaching us a servile, licentious, and abandoned insolence, to be our low sport for a few holidays, to make us perfectly fit for, and justly deserving of slavery, through the whole course of our lives.

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morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped its earth upon our presumption, and the silent tomb has imposed its law on our pert loquacity. In England we have not yet been completely disemboweled of our natural entrails. We still feel within us, and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals.

We have not been drawn and trussed so that we may be filled, like stuffed birds in a museum, with chaff and rags and paltry, blurred shreds of paper about the rights of man. We still keep the whole of our feelings native and entire, uncorrupted by pedantry and infidelity. We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our breasts. We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility[6]. Why?

Because when such [129] ideas are brought before our minds, it is *natural* to be so affected. All other feelings are false and spurious. They tend to corrupt our minds, to vitiate our primary morals, and to make us unfit for rational liberty. They teach us a servile, licentious, and abandoned insolence, to be our low sport for a few holidays, and so make us perfectly fit for, and justly deserving of, slavery through the whole course of our lives.

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[6] The English are, I conceive, misrepresented in a Letter published in one of the papers, by a gentleman thought to be a dissenting minister.—When writing to Dr. Price, of the spirit which prevails at Paris, he says, "The spirit of the people in this place has abolished all the proud *distinctions* which the *king* and *nobles* had usurped in their minds;" whether they talk of "the king, the noble, or the priest, *their whole language is that of the most* enlightened and liberal amongst the English." If this gentleman means to confine the terms *enlightened and liberal* to one set of men in England, it may be true. It is not generally so.

[6] The English are, I believe, misrepresented in a letter published in one of the papers by a gentleman thought to be a Dissenting minister. Writing to Dr. Price about the spirit that prevails at Paris, he says: "The spirit of the people in this place has abolished all the proud *distinctions* which the *king* and *nobles* had usurped in their minds." Whether they talk of "the king, the noble, or the priest, *their whole language is that of the most* enlightened and liberal amongst the English." If this gentleman means to confine the terms *enlightened and liberal* to one set of men in England, it may be true. It is not generally so.

PREJUDICE

Burke defends prejudice as wisdom made habitual, against men who value only their own reason.

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p. 129 You see, Sir, that in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess, that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices;

and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages.

Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to [130] continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason;

because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence. Prejudice is of ready application in the emergency; it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, sceptical, puzzled and unresolved.

p. 130 Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit; and not a series of unconnected acts. Through just prejudice, his duty becomes a part of his nature.

Your literary men, and your politicians, and so do the whole clan of the enlightened among us, essentially differ in these points. They have no respect for the wisdom of others; but they pay it off by a very full measure of confidence in their own. With them it is a sufficient motive to destroy an old scheme of things, because it is an old one. As to the new, they are in no sort of fear with regard to the duration of a building run up in haste; because duration is no object to those who

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You see, Sir, that in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess that we are generally men of untaught feelings. Instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree; and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices;

and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to set men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason. We suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that individuals would do better to draw on the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.

Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom that prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it wiser to [130] continue the prejudice, with the reason wrapped up in it, than to cast away the coat of prejudice and leave nothing but the naked reason;

because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to set that reason in action, and an affection that will give it permanence. Prejudice is ready for use in an emergency. It engages the mind beforehand in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave a man hesitating at the moment of decision, skeptical, puzzled, and unresolved.

Prejudice makes a man's virtue his habit, and not a series of unconnected acts. Through just prejudice, his duty becomes a part of his nature.

Your literary men and your politicians, and the whole clan of the enlightened among us too, differ essentially on these points. They have no respect for the wisdom of others; but they make up for it with a very full measure of confidence in their own. With them it is reason enough to destroy an old scheme of things that it is an old one. As to the new, they have no fear at all about how long a building run up in haste will last. Duration is no object to those who think little or nothing was

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think little or nothing has been done before their time, and who place all their hopes in discovery.

They conceive, very systematically, that all things which give perpetuity are mischievous, and therefore they are at inexpiable war with all establishments. They think that government may vary like modes of dress, and with as little ill effect. That there needs no principle of attachment, except a sense [131] of present conveniency, to any constitution of the state. They always speak as if they were of opinion that there is a singular species of compact between them and their magistrates, which binds the magistrate, but which has nothing reciprocal in it, but that the majesty of the people has a right to dissolve it without any reason, but its will.

p. 131 Their attachment to their country itself, is only so far as it agrees with some of their fleeting projects; it begins and ends with that scheme of polity which falls in with their momentary opinion.

These doctrines, or rather sentiments, seem prevalent with your new statesmen. But they are wholly different from those on which we have always acted in this country.

I hear it is sometimes given out in France, that what is doing among you is after the example of England. I beg leave to affirm, that scarcely any thing done with you has originated from the practice or the prevalent opinions of this people, either in the act or in the spirit of the proceeding. Let me add, that we are as unwilling to learn these lessons from France, as we are sure that we never taught them to that nation. The cabals here who take a sort of share in your transactions as yet consist but of an handful of people.

If unfortunately by their intrigues, their sermons, their publications, and by a confidence derived from an expected union with the counsels and forces of the French nation, they should draw considerable numbers into their faction, [132] and in consequence should seriously attempt any thing here in imitation of what has been done with you, the event I dare venture to prophesy, will be, that, with some trouble to their country, they will soon accomplish their own destruction.

p. 132 This people refused to change their law in remote ages, from respect to the infallibility of popes;

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done before their time, and who place all their hopes in discovery.

They hold, very systematically, that everything which gives perpetuity is mischievous, and therefore they are at inexpiable war with all establishments. They think that government may change like fashions in dress, and with as little ill effect. They think no principle of attachment to any constitution of the state is needed, except a sense [131] of present convenience. They always speak as if they believed there were a peculiar species of compact between them and their magistrates. In their view it binds the magistrate but has nothing reciprocal in it, and the majesty of the people has a right to dissolve it without any reason but its will.

Their attachment to their country itself extends only so far as it agrees with some of their fleeting projects; it begins and ends with whatever scheme of polity falls in with their opinion of the moment.

These doctrines, or rather sentiments, seem to prevail among your new statesmen. But they are wholly different from those on which we have always acted in this country.

I hear it is sometimes given out in France that what is being done among you follows the example of England. I beg leave to affirm that scarcely anything done with you has originated from the practice or the prevailing opinions of this people, either in the act or in the spirit of the proceeding. Let me add that we are as unwilling to learn these lessons from France as we are sure that we never taught them to that nation. The cabals here who take a sort of share in your transactions still consist of only a handful of people.

They may, unfortunately, draw considerable numbers into their faction by their intrigues, their sermons, their publications, and a confidence drawn from an expected union with the counsels and forces of the French nation. [132] They may then make a serious attempt at something here in imitation of what has been done with you. If so, I dare venture to prophesy the outcome: with some trouble to their country, they will soon accomplish their own destruction.

This people refused to change their law in remote ages out of respect for the infallibility of popes.

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and they will not now alter it from a pious implicit faith in the dogmatism of philosophers; though the former was armed with the anathema and crusade, and though the latter should act with the libel and the lamp-iron.

Formerly your affairs were your own concern only. We felt for them as men; but we kept aloof from them, because we were not citizens of France. But when we see the model held up to ourselves, we must feel as Englishmen, and feeling, we must provide as Englishmen. Your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest; so far at least as to keep at a distance your panacea, or your plague. If it be a panacea, we do not want it. We know the consequences of unnecessary physic. If it be a plague; it is such a plague, that the precautions of the most severe quarantine ought to be established against it.

I hear on all hands that a cabal, calling itself philosophic, receives the glory of many of the late proceedings; and that their opinions and systems are the true actuating spirit of the whole of them. I have heard of no party in England, literary or political, at any time, known by such a description. It is not with you composed of those men, is it? whom the vulgar, in their blunt, [133] homely style, commonly call Atheists and Infidels? If it be, I admit that we too have had writers of that description, who made some noise in their day. At present they repose in lasting oblivion.

p. 133 Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what is become of all these lights of the world. In as few years their few successors will go to the family vault of "all the Capulets." But whatever they were, or are, with us, they were and are wholly unconnected individuals. With us they kept the common nature of their kind, and were not gregarious.

They never acted in corps, nor were known as a faction in the state, nor presumed to influence, in

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They will not alter it now out of a pious, implicit faith in the dogmatism of philosophers—though the former was armed with the anathema and the crusade, and though the latter should act with the libel and the lamp-iron.

Formerly your affairs were your own concern alone. We felt for them as men; but we kept aloof from them, because we were not citizens of France. But when we see the model held up to ourselves, we must feel as Englishmen, and, feeling, we must provide as Englishmen. Your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest, at least so far as to keep your panacea, or your plague, at a distance. If it is a panacea, we do not want it. We know the consequences of unnecessary medicine. If it is a plague, it is such a plague that the precautions of the strictest quarantine ought to be established against it.

I hear on all sides that a cabal calling itself philosophic receives the glory for many of the late proceedings, and that their opinions and systems are the true animating spirit of them all. I have never heard of any party in England, literary or political, at any time, known by such a description. It is not composed, with you, of those men, is it, whom the common people, in their blunt, [133] homely style, commonly call atheists and infidels? If it is, I admit that we too have had writers of that description, who made some noise in their day. At present they rest in lasting oblivion.

Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what has become of all these lights of the world. In as few years their few successors will go to the family vault of "all the Capulets." But whatever they were, or are, with us, they were and are wholly unconnected individuals. With us they kept the common nature of their kind, and were not gregarious.[43]

They never acted as a body. They were never known as a faction in the state, and never pre-

43 Anthony Collins, John Toland, Matthew Tindal, Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan were English deists of the early eighteenth century. Bolingbroke's philosophical works appeared posthumously in 1754. "All the Capulets" echoes the family vault in *Romeo and Juliet*.

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that name or character, or for the purposes of such a faction, on any of our public concerns. Whether they ought so to exist, and so be permitted to act, is another question. As such cabals have not existed in England, so neither has the spirit of them had any influence in establishing the original frame of our constitution, or in any one of the several reparations and improvements it has undergone. The whole has been done under the auspices, and is confirmed by the sanctions of religion and piety.

The whole has emanated from the simplicity of our national character, and from a sort of native plainness and directness of understanding, which for a long time characterized [134] those men who have successively obtained authority amongst us. This disposition still remains, at least in the great body of the people.

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sumed to influence any of our public affairs in that name or character, or for the purposes of such a faction. Whether they ought to exist in that way, and be permitted to act so, is another question. Such cabals have not existed in England. Nor has their spirit had any influence in establishing the original frame of our constitution, or in any one of the several repairs and improvements it has undergone. The whole has been done under the auspices, and is confirmed by the sanctions, of religion and piety.

The whole has flowed from the simplicity of our national character, and from a sort of native plainness and directness of understanding. For a long time this characterized [134] the men who have successively obtained authority among us. This disposition still remains, at least in the great body of the people.

Religion, the Church and the Seizure of Its Property

Religion as the basis of civil society, society as a partnership across generations, and the confiscation of the French Church's lands.

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1 Cicero, De Legibus 2.7.15–16, from the preamble to his laws on religion.

RELIGION, THE BASIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Burke declares religion the basis of civil society and explains why England consecrates the state through an established church.

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p. 134 We know, and what is better we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort[1]. In England we are so convinced of this, that there is no rust of superstition, with which the accumulated absurdity of the human mind might have crusted it over in the course of ages, that ninety-nine in an hundred of the people of England would not prefer to impiety. We shall never be such fools as to call in an enemy to the substance of any system to remove its corruptions, to supply its defects, or to perfect its construction.

If our religious tenets should ever want a further elucidation, we shall not call on atheism to explain them. We shall not light up our temple from that unhallowed fire. It will be illuminated with other lights. It will be perfumed with other incense, than the infectious stuff which is imported by the smugglers of adulterated metaphysics.

If our ecclesiastical establishment should want a revision, it is not avarice or rapacity, public or private, that we shall employ for the audit, or receipt, or application of its consecrated revenue. —Violently condemning neither [135] the Greek nor the Armenian, nor, since heats are subsided, the Roman system of religion, we prefer the Protestant; not because we think it has less of the Christian religion in it, but because, in our judgment, it has more. We are protestants, not from indifference but from zeal.

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p. 135 We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against, not only our reason but our instincts;

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We know, and what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society and the source of all good and of all comfort[1]. In England we are so convinced of this that there is no rust of superstition, with which the accumulated absurdity of the human mind might have crusted it over in the course of ages, that ninety-nine in a hundred of the people of England would not prefer to impiety. We shall never be such fools as to call in an enemy to the substance of any system to remove its corruptions, to supply its defects, or to perfect its construction.

If our religious tenets should ever need further elucidation, we shall not call on atheism to explain them. We shall not light up our temple from that unhallowed fire. It will be illuminated with other lights. It will be perfumed with other incense than the infectious stuff imported by the smugglers of adulterated metaphysics.

If our ecclesiastical establishment should need revision, it is not avarice or rapacity, public or private, that we shall employ to audit, receive, or apply its consecrated revenue.—Violently condemning neither [135] the Greek nor the Armenian, nor, now that passions have cooled, the Roman system of religion, we prefer the Protestant; not because we think it has less of the Christian religion in it, but because, in our judgment, it has more. We are Protestants, not from indifference but from zeal.

We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against not only our reason but our instincts;

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[1] Sit igitur hoc ab initio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores, deos; eaque, quae gerantur, eorum geri vi, ditione, ac numine; eosdemque optime de genere hominum mereri; et qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, qua mente, qua pietate colat religiones intueri: piorum et impiorum habere rationem. His enim rebus imbutae mentes haud sune abhorrebunt ab utili et a vera sententia. Cic. de Legibus, l. 2.

[1] Let this, then, be impressed upon citizens from the very beginning: that the gods are the lords and rulers of all things; that what is done is done by their power, authority, and divine will; that they deserve the very best of the human race; that they observe what sort of person each one is, what he does, what wrongs he allows himself, with what mind and what piety he keeps religious observances; and that they take account of the pious and the impious. For minds steeped in these things will hardly shrink from a useful and true opinion. Cicero, On the Laws, book 2.[1]

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and that it cannot prevail long. But if, in the moment of riot, and in a drunken delirium from the hot spirit drawn out of the alembick of hell, which in France is now so furiously boiling, we should uncover our nakedness by throwing off that Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us, and among many other nations, we are apprehensive (being well aware that the mind will not endure a void) that some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition, might take place of it.

For that reason, before we take from our establishment the natural human means of estimation, and give it up to contempt, as you have done, and in doing it have incurred the penalties you well deserve to suffer, we desire that some other may be presented to us in the place of it. We shall then form our judgment.

On these ideas, instead of quarrelling with establishments, as some do, who have made a philosophy and a religion of their hostility to such institutions, we cleave closely to them. We are resolved to keep an established church, an [136] established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater. I shall shew you presently how much of each of these we possess.

p. 136 It has been the misfortune (not as these gentlemen think it, the glory) of this age, that every thing is to be discussed, as if the constitution of our country were to be always a subject rather of altercation than enjoyment. For this reason, as well as for the satisfaction of those among you (if any such you have among you) who may wish to profit of examples, I venture to trouble you with a few thoughts upon each of these establishments. I do not think they were unwise in antient Rome, who, when they wished to new-model their laws, sent commissioners to examine the best constituted republics within their reach.

First, I beg leave to speak of our church establishment, which is the first of our prejudices, not a prejudice destitute of reason,

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and that it cannot prevail long. But if, in a moment of riot, in a drunken delirium from the hot spirit drawn out of the alembic of hell, which in France is now boiling so furiously, we should uncover our nakedness by throwing off that Christian religion which has until now been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization among us and among many other nations, we are afraid (knowing well that the mind will not endure a void) that some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition might take its place.[3]

For that reason, before we take from our establishment the natural human means of esteem and give it up to contempt, as you have done—and in doing so have incurred the penalties you well deserve to suffer—we ask that some other be presented to us in its place. We shall then form our judgment.

On these ideas, instead of quarreling with establishments, as some do who have made a philosophy and a religion of their hostility to such institutions, we cling closely to them. We are resolved to keep an established church, an [136] established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree in which it exists, and in no greater. I shall show you shortly how much of each of these we possess.

It has been the misfortune (not, as these gentlemen think it, the glory) of this age that everything is to be debated, as if the constitution of our country were always to be a subject of altercation rather than of enjoyment. For this reason, and also for the satisfaction of those among you (if you have any such among you) who may wish to profit from examples, I venture to trouble you with a few thoughts on each of these establishments. I do not think they were unwise in ancient Rome who, when they wished to remodel their laws, sent commissioners to examine the best-constituted republics within their reach.[4]

First, I beg leave to speak of our church establishment, which is the first of our prejudices—not a prejudice destitute of reason, but one involving

3 An alembic is a distilling apparatus.

4 Livy (3.31–33) relates that Rome sent envoys to Athens and other Greek cities before drawing up the Twelve Tables in the 450s BC.

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but involving in it profound and extensive wisdom. I speak of it first. It is first, and last, and midst in our minds. For, taking ground on that religious system, of which we are now in possession, we continue to act on the early received, and uniformly continued sense of mankind.

That sense not only, like a wise architect, hath built up the august fabric of states, but like a provident proprietor, to preserve the structure from prophanation and ruin, as a sacred temple, purged from all the impurities of fraud, and violence, and injustice, and tyranny, hath solemnly and for ever consecrated the commonwealth, and all that officiate in it.

This consecration is made, that all who administer [137] in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination; that their hope should be full of immortality; that they should not look to the paltry pelf of the moment, nor to the temporary and transient praise of the vulgar, but to a solid, permanent existence, in the permanent part of their nature, and to a permanent fame and glory, in the example they leave as a rich inheritance to the world.

p. 137 Such sublime principles ought to be infused into persons of exalted situations, and religious establishments provided, that may continually revive and enforce them. Every sort of moral, every sort of civil, every sort of politic institution, aiding the rational and natural ties that connect the human understanding and affections to the divine, are not more than necessary, in order to build up that wonderful structure, Man; whose prerogative it is, to be in a great degree a creature of his own making; and who when made as he ought to be made, is destined to hold no trivial place in the creation.

But whenever man is put over men, as the better nature ought ever to preside, in that case more particularly, he should as nearly as possible be approximated to his perfection.

The consecration of the state, by a state religious establishment, is necessary also to operate with an wholesome awe upon free citizens; because, in order to secure their freedom, they must enjoy some determinate portion of power. To [138] them

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profound and extensive wisdom. I speak of it first. It is first, and last, and midst in our minds. For, taking our ground on the religious system we now possess, we continue to act on the early received and uniformly continued sense of mankind.

That sense has not only, like a wise architect, built up the august fabric of states, but, like a provident proprietor, to preserve the structure from profanation and ruin, as a sacred temple purged of all the impurities of fraud and violence and injustice and tyranny, has solemnly and forever consecrated the commonwealth and all who officiate in it.

This consecration is made so that all who administer [137] in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination; that their hope should be full of immortality; that they should look not to the paltry pelf of the moment, nor to the temporary and transient praise of the crowd, but to a solid, permanent existence in the permanent part of their nature, and to a permanent fame and glory in the example they leave as a rich inheritance to the world.

Such sublime principles ought to be instilled into persons in exalted stations, and religious establishments provided that may continually revive and enforce them. Every sort of moral, every sort of civil, every sort of political institution, aiding the rational and natural ties that connect the human understanding and affections to the divine, is no more than necessary to build up that wonderful structure, Man; whose prerogative it is to be in great degree a creature of his own making, and who, when made as he ought to be made, is destined to hold no trivial place in the creation.

But whenever man is put over men, as the better nature ought always to preside, in that case more particularly he should be brought as near as possible to his perfection.

The consecration of the state by a religious establishment of the state is necessary also to work a wholesome awe upon free citizens, because, in order to secure their freedom, they must enjoy some definite portion of power. To [138] them, therefore, a

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therefore a religion connected with the state, and with their duty towards it, becomes even more necessary than in such societies, where the people by the terms of their subjection are confined to private sentiments, and the management of their own family concerns.	religion connected with the state, and with their duty toward it, becomes even more necessary than in societies where the people, by the terms of their subjection, are confined to private sentiments and the management of their own family concerns.
p. 138 All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awefully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great master, author and founder of society.	All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with the idea that they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great master, author, and founder of society.
This principle ought even to be more strongly impressed upon the minds of those who compose the collective sovereignty than upon those of single princes. Without instruments, these princes can do nothing. Whoever uses instruments, in finding helps, finds also impediments. Their power is therefore by no means compleat; nor are they safe in extreme abuse. Such persons, however elevated by flattery, arrogance, and self-opinion, must be sensible that, whether covered or not by positive law, in some way or other they are accountable even here for the abuse of their trust. If they are not cut off by a rebellion of their people, they may be strangled by the very Janissaries kept for their security against all other rebellion.	This principle ought to be impressed even more strongly on the minds of those who compose the collective sovereignty than on those of single princes. Without instruments, these princes can do nothing. Whoever uses instruments, in finding helps, finds also impediments. Their power is therefore by no means complete, nor are they safe in extreme abuse. Such persons, however elevated by flattery, arrogance, and self-conceit, must be aware that, whether or not positive law covers it, in some way or other they are accountable even here for the abuse of their trust. If they are not cut off by a rebellion of their people, they may be strangled by the very Janissaries kept to secure them against every other rebellion.[5]
Thus we have seen the king of France sold by his soldiers for an encrease of pay. But where popular authority is absolute and unrestrained, the people have an infinitely greater, because a far better founded confidence in their own power. They are themselves, in a great measure, [139] their own instruments. They are nearer to their objects. Besides, they are less under responsibility to one of the greatest controlling powers on earth, the sense of fame and estimamation. The share of infamy that is likely to fall to the lot of each individual in public acts, is small indeed; the operation of opinion being in the inverse ratio to the number of those who abuse power.	Thus we have seen the king of France sold by his soldiers for an increase of pay. But where popular authority is absolute and unrestrained, the people have an infinitely greater, because a far better founded, confidence in their own power. They are themselves, in great measure, [139] their own instruments. They are nearer to their objects. Besides, they are less answerable to one of the greatest controlling powers on earth, the sense of fame and esteem. The share of infamy likely to fall to each individual in public acts is small indeed, since the operation of opinion is in inverse ratio to the number of those who abuse power.[6]
p. 139 Their own approbation of their own acts has to them the appearance of a public judgment in their favour. A perfect democracy is therefore the most shameless thing in the world. As it is the most shameless, it is also the most fearless. No man apprehends in his person he can be made	Their own approval of their own acts has to them the appearance of a public judgment in their favor. A perfect democracy is therefore the most shameless thing in the world. As it is the most shameless, it is also the most fearless. No man fears that he

5 The Janissaries were the elite infantry of the Ottoman sultans, who more than once deposed or killed them.
6 Burke alludes to the defection of the French Guards and other troops to the Paris crowd in the summer of 1789.

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subject to punishment. Certainly the people at large never ought:

for as all punishments are for example towards the conservation of the people at large, the people at large can never become the subject of punishment by any human hand[2]. It is therefore of infinite importance that they should not be suffered to imagine that their will, any more than that of kings, is the standard of right and wrong.

They ought to be persuaded that they are full as little entitled, and far less qualified, with safety to themselves, to use any arbitrary power whatsoever; that therefore they are not, under a false shew of liberty, but, in truth, to exercise an unnatural inverted domination, tyrannically to exact, from those who officiate in the state, not an entire devotion to their interest, which is their right, [140] but an abject submission to their occasional will;

extinguishing thereby, in all those who serve them, all moral principle, all sense of dignity, all use of judgment, and all consistency of character, whilst by the very same process they give themselves up a proper, a suitable, but a most contemptible prey to the servile ambition of popular sycophants or courtly flatterers.

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p. 140 When the people have emptied themselves of all the lust of selfish will, which without religion it is utterly impossible they ever should, when they are conscious that they exercise, and exercise perhaps in an higher link of the order of delegation, the power, which to be legitimate must be according to that eternal immutable law, in which will and reason are the same, they will be more careful how they place power in base and incapable hands.

In their nomination to office, they will not appoint to the exercise of authority, as to a pitiful job, but as to an holy function; not according to

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can in his own person be made subject to punishment. Certainly the people at large never ought to be:

for as all punishments are by way of example, for the preservation of the people at large, the people at large can never become the object of punishment by any human hand[2]. It is therefore of infinite importance that they should not be allowed to imagine that their will, any more than that of kings, is the standard of right and wrong.

They ought to be persuaded that they are fully as little entitled, and far less qualified, with safety to themselves, to use any arbitrary power whatsoever; that therefore they are not—under a false show of liberty, but in truth exercising an unnatural, inverted domination—to exact tyrannically from those who officiate in the state not an entire devotion to their interest, which is their right, [140] but an abject submission to their passing will;

thereby extinguishing, in all who serve them, all moral principle, all sense of dignity, all use of judgment, and all consistency of character, while by the very same process they give themselves up as a proper, a suitable, but a most contemptible prey to the servile ambition of popular sycophants or courtly flatterers.

When the people have emptied themselves of all the lust of selfish will, which without religion it is utterly impossible they ever should; when they are conscious that they exercise—and exercise perhaps in a higher link of the order of delegation—the power which, to be legitimate, must accord with that eternal, immutable law in which will and reason are the same, they will be more careful how they place power in base and incapable hands.

In their nominations to office, they will appoint to the exercise of authority not as to a pitiful job but as to a holy function; not according to their sordid

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[2] Quicquid multis peccatur inultum. | [2] Whatever wrong is done by many goes unpunished.[7]

7 Lucan, Pharsalia 5.260.

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their sordid selfish interest, nor to their wanton caprice, nor to their arbitrary Will; but they will confer that power (which any man may well tremble to give or to receive) on those only, in whom they may discern that predominant proportion of active virtue and wisdom, taken together and fitted to the charge, such, as in the great and inevitable mixed mass of human imperfections and infirmities, is to be found.

When they are habitually convinced that no evil can be acceptable, either in the act or the permission, to him whose essence is good, they [141] will be better able to extirpate out of the minds of all magistrates, civil, ecclesiastical, or military, any thing that bears the least resemblance to a proud and lawless domination.

p. 141 But one of the first and most leading principles on which the commonwealth and the laws are consecrated, is left the temporary possessors and life-renters in it, unmindful of what they have received from their ancestors, or of what is due to their posterity, should act as if they were the entire masters; that they should not think it amongst their rights to cut off the entail, or commit waste on the inheritance, by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of their society; hazarding to leave to those who come after them, a ruin instead of an habitation—and teaching these successors as little to respect their contrivances, as they had themselves respected the institutions of their forefathers.

By this unprincipled facility of changing the state as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions, the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer.

And first of all the science of jurisprudence, the pride of the human intellect, which, with all its defects, redundancies, and errors, is the collected reason of ages, combining the principles of original justice with the infinite variety of human concerns, as a heap of old exploded errors, would be no longer studied. [142] Personal self-sufficiency

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selfish interest, nor their wanton caprice, nor their arbitrary Will; but they will confer that power (which any man may well tremble to give or to receive) only on those in whom they can discern that predominant proportion of active virtue and wisdom, taken together and fitted to the charge, that is to be found in the great and inevitable mixed mass of human imperfections and infirmities.

When they are habitually convinced that no evil can be acceptable, either in the doing or the permitting, to him whose essence is good, they [141] will be better able to root out of the minds of all magistrates, civil, ecclesiastical, or military, anything that bears the least resemblance to a proud and lawless domination.

But one of the first and most leading principles on which the commonwealth and the laws are consecrated is to prevent the temporary possessors and life-renters in it, unmindful of what they have received from their ancestors or of what is due to their posterity, from acting as if they were the entire masters, or thinking it among their rights to cut off the entail, or commit waste on the inheritance, by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of their society—risking leaving to those who come after them a ruin instead of a habitation, and teaching these successors as little to respect their contrivances as they themselves had respected the institutions of their forefathers.[9]

By this unprincipled readiness to change the state as often, as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions, the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with another. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer.

And first of all the science of jurisprudence, the pride of the human intellect, which, with all its defects, redundancies, and errors, is the collected reason of ages, combining the principles of original justice with the infinite variety of human concerns, would no longer be studied, as a heap of old exploded errors. [142] Personal self-sufficiency and

9 "Life-renters" hold property only for their lifetime; "waste" is the legal term for damage a tenant does to an estate he does not own outright.

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and arrogance (the certain attendants upon all those who have never experienced a wisdom greater than their own) would usurp the tribunal. Of course, no certain laws, establishing invariable grounds of hope and fear, would keep the actions of men in a certain course, or direct them to a certain end.

p. 142 Nothing stable in the modes of holding property, or exercising function, could form a solid ground on which any parent could speculate in the education of his offspring, or in a choice for their future establishment in the world. No principles would be early worked into the habits. As soon as the most able instructor had completed his laborious course of institution, instead of sending forth his pupil, accomplished in a virtuous discipline, fitted to procure him attention and respect, in his place in society, he would find every thing altered; and that he had turned out a poor creature to the contempt and derision of the world, ignorant of the true grounds of estimation.

Who would insure a tender and delicate sense of honour to beat almost with the first pulses of the heart, when no man could know what would be the test of honour in a nation, continually varying the standard of its coin? No part of life would retain its acquisitions. Barbarism with regard to science and literature, unskilfulness with regard to arts and manufactures, would infallibly succeed to the want of a steady education and settled principle; and thus the commonwealth itself would, in a few generations, crumble away, be disconnected into the [143] dust and powder of individuality, and at length dispersed to all the winds of heaven.

p. 143 To avoid therefore the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand times worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice, we have consecrated the state, that no man should approach to look into defects or corruptions but with due caution; that he should never dream of beginning its reformation by its subversion; that he should approach to the faults of the state as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling sollicitude.

By this wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes

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arrogance (the sure companions of all who have never experienced a wisdom greater than their own) would usurp the tribunal. Of course, no settled laws, establishing invariable grounds of hope and fear, would keep the actions of men in a certain course or direct them to a certain end.

Nothing stable in the ways of holding property or exercising office could form a solid ground on which any parent could plan the education of his children or a choice for their future establishment in the world. No principles would be worked early into the habits. As soon as the ablest teacher had completed his laborious course of instruction, instead of sending forth his pupil accomplished in a virtuous discipline, fitted to win him attention and respect in his place in society, he would find everything altered, and that he had turned out a poor creature to the contempt and derision of the world, ignorant of the true grounds of esteem.

Who would ensure that a tender and delicate sense of honor beats almost with the first pulses of the heart, when no man could know what the test of honor would be in a nation that is continually varying the standard of its coin? No part of life would keep its acquisitions. Barbarism in science and literature, unskillfulness in arts and manufactures, would infallibly follow the lack of a steady education and settled principle; and thus the commonwealth itself would, in a few generations, crumble away, be disconnected into the [143] dust and powder of individuality, and at length be dispersed to all the winds of heaven.

To avoid, therefore, the evils of inconstancy and fickleness, ten thousand times worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice, we have consecrated the state, so that no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution; that he should never dream of beginning its reformation by its subversion; that he should approach the faults of the state as he would the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude.

By this wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are quick to hack that aged parent rashly in pieces and put him into the magicians' kettle, in hopes

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that by their poisonous weeds, and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father's life.	that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations they may regenerate the paternal constitution and renew their father's life.[10]

SOCIETY AS A PARTNERSHIP OF THE GENERATIONS

Society is a contract and a partnership between the living, the dead, and those yet to be born.

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Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure—but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, callico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection.	Society is indeed a contract. Lesser contracts, for objects of merely occasional interest, may be dissolved at will—but the state ought not to be regarded as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade in pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, taken up for a little temporary interest and dissolved at the whim of the parties. It is to be looked on with a different reverence, because it is not a partnership in things that serve only the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection.
As the [144] ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primaeval contract of eternal society,	As the [144] ends of such a partnership cannot be attained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is only a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society,
linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place. This law is not subject to the will of those, who by an obligation above them, and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law.	linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and the invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath that holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place. This law is not subject to the will of those who, by an obligation above them and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law.
p. 144 The municipal corporations of that universal kingdom are not morally at liberty at their pleasure, and on their speculations of a contingent improvement, wholly to separate and tear asunder the bands of their subordinate community, and to dissolve it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles. It is the first and supreme necessity	The municipal corporations of that universal kingdom are not morally free, at their pleasure and on their speculations about some possible improvement, to separate wholly and tear apart the bonds of their subordinate community, and dissolve it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles. Only the first and supreme necessity—a necessity that is not chosen but

10 The allusion is to Medea, who persuaded the daughters of Pelias to cut up their father and boil him, promising to restore his youth (Ovid, Metamorphoses 7).

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only, a necessity that is not chosen but chooses, a necessity paramount to deliberation, that admits no discussion, and demands no evidence, which alone can justify a resort to anarchy.

This necessity is no exception to the rule; because this necessity itself is a part too of that moral and physical disposition of things to which man must be obedient by consent or force; but if that which is only submission to necessity should be made the object of choice, the law is [145] broken, nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast forth, and exiled, from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow.

p. 145 These, my dear Sir, are, were, and I think long will be the sentiments of not the least learned and reflecting part of this kingdom. They who are included in this description, form their opinions on such grounds as such persons ought to form them. The less enquiring receive them from an authority which those whom Providence dooms to live on trust need not be ashamed to rely on. These two sorts of men move in the same direction, tho' in a different place. They both move with the order of the universe.

They all know or feel this great antient truth: "Quod illi principi et praepotenti Deo qui omnem hunc mundum regit, nihil eorum quae quidem fiant in terris acceptius quam concilia et caetus hominum jure sociati quae civitates appellantur." They take this tenet of the head and heart, not from the great name which it immediately bears, nor from the greater from whence it is derived; but from that which alone can give true weight and sanction to any learned opinion, the common nature and common relation of men.

Persuaded that all things ought to be done with reference, and referring all to the point of reference to which all should be directed, they think themselves bound, not only as individuals in the sanctuary of the heart, or as congregated in that [146] personal capacity, to renew the memory of their high origin and cast; but also in their corporate character to perform their national homage to the institutor, and author and protector of civil society; without which civil

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chooses, a necessity above deliberation, that admits no discussion and demands no evidence—can justify a resort to anarchy.

This necessity is no exception to the rule, because this necessity is itself also part of that moral and physical order of things to which man must be obedient, by consent or by force. But if what is only submission to necessity should be made the object of choice, the law is [145] broken, nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast out, and exiled from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the opposing world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and fruitless sorrow.

These, my dear Sir, are, have been, and I think will long be the sentiments of not the least learned and reflective part of this kingdom. Those included in this description form their opinions on the grounds on which such persons ought to form them. The less inquiring receive them from an authority on which those whom Providence has destined to live on trust need not be ashamed to rely. These two sorts of men move in the same direction, though in a different place. Both move with the order of the universe.

They all know or feel this great ancient truth: "To that supreme and all-powerful God who rules this whole world, nothing that is done on earth is more acceptable than the councils and assemblies of men bound together by law, which are called states." They take this tenet of the head and heart not from the great name it immediately bears, nor from the greater one from which it is derived, but from what alone can give true weight and sanction to any learned opinion: the common nature and common relation of men.[11]

Persuaded that all things ought to be done with reference to something, and referring everything to that point of reference to which all should be directed, they think themselves bound not only as individuals in the sanctuary of the heart, or as gathered together in that [146] personal capacity, to renew the memory of their high origin and nature, but also in their corporate character to pay their national homage to the founder, author, and pro-

11 The Latin is from Cicero, "The Dream of Scipio" (*On the Republic* 6.13); the "greater" name behind it is presumably Plato.

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society man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable, nor even make a remote and faint approach to it.

p. 146 They conceive that He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection—He willed therefore the state—He willed its connexion with the source and original archetype of all perfection.

They who are convinced of this his will, which is the law of laws and the sovereign of sovereigns, cannot think it reprehensible, that this our corporate fealty and homage, that this our recognition of a signiory paramount, I had almost said this oblation of the state itself, as a worthy offering on the high altar of universal praise, should be performed as all publick solemn acts are performed, in buildings, in musick, in decoration, in speech, in the dignity of persons, according to the customs of mankind, taught by their nature; that is, with modest splendour, with unassuming state, with mild majesty and sober pomp.

For those purposes they think some part of the wealth of the country is as usefully employed as it can be, in fomenting the luxury of individuals. It is the publick ornament. It is the publick consolation. It nourishes the publick hope. The poorest man finds his own importance and dignity [147] in it, whilst the wealth and pride of individuals at every moment makes the man of humble rank and fortune sensible of his inferiority, and degrades and vilifies his condition.

p. 147 It is for the man in humble life, and to raise his nature, and to put him in mind of a state in which the privileges of opulence will cease, when he will be equal by nature, and may be more than equal by virtue, that this portion of the general wealth of his country is employed and sanctified.

I assure you I do not aim at singularity. I give you opinions which have been accepted amongst us, from very early times to this moment, with a continued and general approbation, and which indeed are so worked into my mind, that I am unable to distinguish what I have learned from others from the results of my own meditation.

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tector of civil society—without which civil society man could not possibly arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable, nor even make a remote and faint approach to it.

They believe that He who gave us our nature to be perfected by our virtue also willed the necessary means of its perfection—He therefore willed the state—He willed its connection with the source and original archetype of all perfection.

Those who are convinced of this will of his, which is the law of laws and the sovereign of sovereigns, cannot think it blameworthy that this corporate fealty and homage of ours, this recognition of a paramount lordship—I had almost said this offering up of the state itself, as a worthy offering on the high altar of universal praise—should be performed as all public solemn acts are performed: in buildings, in music, in decoration, in speech, in the dignity of persons, according to the customs of mankind, taught them by their nature; that is, with modest splendor, with unassuming state, with mild majesty and sober pomp.

For these purposes they think some part of the wealth of the country is employed as usefully as it could be in feeding the luxury of individuals. It is the public ornament. It is the public consolation. It nourishes the public hope. The poorest man finds his own importance and dignity [147] in it, while the wealth and pride of individuals at every moment make the man of humble rank and fortune conscious of his inferiority, and degrade and debase his condition.

It is for the man in humble life—to raise his nature, and to remind him of a state in which the privileges of wealth will cease, when he will be equal by nature and may be more than equal by virtue—that this portion of the general wealth of his country is employed and sanctified.

I assure you I am not aiming at originality. I am giving you opinions that have been accepted among us, from very early times to this moment, with continued and general approval, and that are indeed so worked into my mind that I cannot distinguish what I have learned from others from the results of my own reflection.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT

How the English bind church to state, educate through the clergy, and give bishops independent property and rank.

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It is on some such principles that the majority of the people of England, far from thinking a religious, national establishment unlawful, hardly think it lawful to be without one. In France you are wholly mistaken if you do not believe us above all other things attached to it, and beyond all other nations; and when this people has acted unwisely and unjustifiably in its favour (as in some instances they have done most certainly) in their very errors you will at least discover their zeal.

This principle runs through the whole system of their polity. They do not consider their church establishment as convenient, but as essential to their state; not as a thing heterogeneous and separable; something added for accommodation; [148] what they may either keep up or lay aside, according to their temporary ideas of convenience. They consider it as the foundation of their whole constitution, with which, and with every part of which, it holds an indissoluble union. Church and state are ideas inseparable in their minds, and scarcely is the one ever mentioned without mentioning the other.

p. 148 Our education is so formed as to confirm and fix this impression. Our education is in a manner wholly in the hands of ecclesiastics, and in all stages from infancy to manhood. Even when our youth, leaving schools and universities, enters that most important period of life which begins to link experience and study together, and when with that view they visit other countries, instead of old domestics whom we have seen as governors to principal men from other parts, three-fourths of those who go abroad with our young nobility and gentlemen are ecclesiastics; not as austere masters, nor as mere followers; but as friends and companions of a graver character, and not seldom persons as well born as themselves.

With them, as relations, they most commonly keep up a close connexion through life. By this connexion we conceive that we attach our gentlemen to the church; and we liberalize the

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It is on some such principles that the majority of the people of England, far from thinking a religious national establishment unlawful, hardly think it lawful to be without one. In France you are entirely mistaken if you do not believe us attached to it above all other things, and more than any other nation; and when this people has acted unwisely and unjustifiably in its favor (as in some instances it most certainly has), in its very errors you will at least discover its zeal.

This principle runs through the whole system of their polity. They do not regard their church establishment as convenient, but as essential to their state; not as something foreign and separable, something added for convenience, [148] which they may either keep up or set aside according to their passing ideas of convenience. They regard it as the foundation of their whole constitution, with which, and with every part of which, it holds an indissoluble union. Church and state are ideas inseparable in their minds, and the one is scarcely ever mentioned without the other.

Our education is so shaped as to confirm and fix this impression. Our education is in a way wholly in the hands of clergymen, at every stage from infancy to manhood. Even when our young people leave schools and universities and enter that most important period of life which begins to link experience and study together, and when with that aim they visit other countries, instead of the old household servants we have seen serving as tutors to men of rank from other parts, three-quarters of those who go abroad with our young nobility and gentlemen are clergymen—not as stern masters, nor as mere attendants, but as friends and companions of a graver character, and not seldom persons as well born as themselves.

With them, as with relatives, they most commonly keep up a close connection throughout life. By this connection we believe that we attach our gentlemen to the church; and we liberalize the church

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church by an intercourse with the leading characters of the country.

So tenacious are we of the old ecclesiastical modes and fashions of institution, that very little alteration has been made in them since the fourteenth or fifteenth century; adhering in this particular, [149] as in all things else, to our old settled maxim, never entirely nor at once to depart from antiquity. We found these old institutions, on the whole, favourable to morality and discipline; and we thought they were susceptible of amendment, without altering the ground. We thought that they were capable of receiving and meliorating, and above all of preserving the accessions of science and literature, as the order of Providence should successively produce them.

p. 149 And after all, with this Gothic and monkish education (for such it is in the ground-work) we may put in our claim to as ample and as early a share in all the improvements in science, in arts, and in literature, which have illuminated and adorned the modern world, as any other nation in Europe; we think one main cause of this improvement was our not despising the patrimony of knowledge which was left us by our forefathers.

It is from our attachment to a church establishment that the English nation did not think it wise to entrust that great fundamental interest of the whole to what they trust no part of their civil or military public service, that is to the unsteady and precarious contribution of individuals. They go further. They certainly never have suffered and never will suffer the fixed estate of the church to be converted into a pension, to depend on the treasury, and to be delayed, withheld, or perhaps to be extinguished by fiscal difficulties, which difficulties may sometimes be pretended for political purposes, and are in fact often brought on by the extravagance, [150] negligence, and rapacity of politicians.

p. 150 The people of England think that they have constitutional motives, as well as religious, against any project of turning their independent clergy into ecclesiastical pensioners of state. They tremble for their liberty, from the influence of a clergy dependent on the crown; they tremble for

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through its association with the leading figures of the country.

So tenacious are we of the old ecclesiastical modes and forms of instruction that very little change has been made in them since the fourteenth or fifteenth century—holding in this particular, [149] as in everything else, to our old settled maxim, never to depart from antiquity entirely or all at once. We found these old institutions, on the whole, favorable to morality and discipline; and we thought they could be amended without changing their foundation. We thought them capable of receiving and improving, and above all of preserving, the additions of science and literature as the order of Providence should successively produce them.

And after all, with this Gothic and monkish education (for that is what it is at bottom), we may claim as large and as early a share in all the improvements in science, in the arts, and in literature that have illuminated and adorned the modern world as any other nation in Europe; and we think one main cause of this improvement was that we did not despise the inheritance of knowledge left us by our forefathers.

It is from our attachment to a church establishment that the English nation did not think it wise to entrust that great fundamental interest of the whole to what they entrust no part of their civil or military public service—that is, to the unsteady and precarious contributions of individuals. They go further. They certainly have never allowed, and never will allow, the fixed estate of the church to be converted into a pension, to depend on the treasury, and to be delayed, withheld, or perhaps extinguished by fiscal difficulties—difficulties that may sometimes be pretended for political purposes, and are in fact often brought on by the extravagance, [150] negligence, and greed of politicians.

The people of England think they have constitutional motives, as well as religious ones, against any project of turning their independent clergy into ecclesiastical pensioners of the state. They tremble for their liberty from the influence of a clergy dependent on the crown; they tremble for

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the public tranquillity from the disorders of a factious clergy, if it were made to depend upon any other than the crown. They therefore made their church, like their king and their nobility, independent.

From the united considerations of religion and constitutional policy, from their opinion of a duty to make a sure provision for the consolation of the feeble and the instruction of the ignorant, they have incorporated and identified the estate of the church with the mass of *private property,* of which the state is not the proprietor, either for use or dominion, but the guardian only and the regulator. They have ordained that the provision of this establishment might be as stable as the earth on which it stands, and should not fluctuate with the Euripus of funds and actions.

The men of England, the men, I mean, of light and leading in England, whose wisdom (if they have any) is open and direct, would be ashamed, as of a silly deceitful trick, to profess any religion in name, which by their proceedings they appeared to contemn. If by their conduct (the only language that rarely lies) they seemed to regard the great ruling principle of the moral and the natural world,

as a mere invention to [151] keep the vulgar in obedience, they apprehend that by such a conduct they would defeat the politic purpose they have in view. They would find it difficult to make others to believe in a system to which they manifestly gave no credit themselves.

p. 151 The Christian statesmen of this land would indeed first provide for the *multitude*; because it is the *multitude*; and is therefore, as such, the first object in the ecclesiastical institution, and in all institutions. They have been taught, that the circumstance of the gospel's being preached to the poor, was one of the great tests of its true mission. They think,

therefore, that those do not believe it, who do not take care it should be preached to the poor. But as they know that charity is not confined to any one description, but ought to apply itself to all men who have wants, they are not deprived of a due

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public tranquillity from the disorders of a factious clergy, if it were made to depend on anything other than the crown. They therefore made their church, like their king and their nobility, independent.

From the combined considerations of religion and constitutional policy, and from their sense of a duty to make sure provision for the consolation of the weak and the instruction of the ignorant, they have incorporated and identified the estate of the church with the mass of *private property*, of which the state is not the owner, either for use or for dominion, but only the guardian and the regulator. They have ordained that the provision for this establishment should be as stable as the earth on which it stands, and should not ebb and flow with the Euripus of funds and shares.[12]

The men of England—the men, I mean, of light and leading in England, whose wisdom (if they have any) is open and direct—would be ashamed, as of a silly and deceitful trick, to profess in name any religion that by their actions they appeared to despise. If by their conduct (the only language that rarely lies) they seemed to regard the great ruling principle of the moral and the natural world

as a mere invention to [151] keep the common people in obedience, they fear that by such conduct they would defeat the political purpose they have in view. They would find it hard to make others believe in a system to which they plainly gave no credit themselves.

The Christian statesmen of this land would indeed provide first for the *multitude*, because it is the *multitude*, and is therefore, as such, the first object in the ecclesiastical institution, as in all institutions. They have been taught that the fact of the gospel's being preached to the poor was one of the great tests of its true mission. They think,

therefore, that those who do not take care that it is preached to the poor do not believe it. But as they know that charity is not confined to any one class, but ought to extend itself to all men who have wants, they are not without a due and anxious

12 The Euripus, the strait between Euboea and mainland Greece, was proverbial for its shifting currents; "actions" (French *actions*) are shares in stock.

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and anxious sensation of pity to the distresses of the miserable great.

They are not repelled through a fastidious delicacy, at the stench of their arrogance and presumption, from a medicinal attention to their mental blotches and running sores. They are sensible, that religious instruction is of more consequence to them than to any others; from the greatness of the temptation to which they are exposed; from the important consequences that attend their faults;

from the contagion of their ill example; from the necessity of bowing down the stubborn neck of their pride and ambition to the yoke of moderation and virtue; from a consideration of the fat stupidity and gross ignorance concerning [152] what imports men most to know, which prevails at courts, and at the head of armies, and in senates, as much as at the loom and in the field.

p. 152 The English people are satisfied, that to the great the consolations of religion are as necessary as its instructions. They too are among the unhappy. They feel personal pain and domestic sorrow. In these they have no privilege, but are subject to pay their full contingent to the contributions levied on mortality. They want this sovereign balm under their gnawing cares and anxieties, which being less conversant about the limited wants of animal life, range without limit, and are diversified by infinite combinations in the wild and unbounded regions of imagination.

Some charitable dole is wanting to these, our often very unhappy brethren, to fill the gloomy void which reigns in minds which have nothing on earth to hope or fear; something to relieve in the killing languor and over-laboured lassitude of those who have nothing to do; something to excite an appetite to existence in the palled satiety which attends on all pleasures which may be bought, where nature is not left to her own process, where even desire is anticipated, and therefore fruition defeated by meditated schemes and contrivances of delight; and no interval, no obstacle, is interposed between the wish and the accomplishment.

The people of England know how little influence the teachers of religion are likely to have [153] with the wealthy and powerful of long standing, and how much less with the newly fortunate, if they

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feeling of pity for the distresses of the miserable great.

They are not driven away by a fastidious delicacy, at the stench of their arrogance and presumption, from a healing attention to their mental blotches and running sores. They are aware that religious instruction matters more to them than to anyone else: from the greatness of the temptation to which they are exposed; from the serious consequences that follow their faults;

from the contagion of their bad example; from the necessity of bowing the stubborn neck of their pride and ambition to the yoke of moderation and virtue; from a consideration of the fat stupidity and gross ignorance about [152] what most concerns men to know, which prevails at courts, and at the head of armies, and in senates, as much as at the loom and in the field.

The English people are satisfied that to the great the consolations of religion are as necessary as its instructions. They too are among the unhappy. They feel personal pain and domestic sorrow. In these they have no privilege, but must pay their full share of the levies imposed on mortality. They need this sovereign balm for their gnawing cares and anxieties, which, being less concerned with the limited wants of animal life, range without limit and are varied by infinite combinations in the wild and unbounded regions of imagination.

Some charitable dole is needed for these often very unhappy brethren of ours, to fill the gloomy void that reigns in minds that have nothing on earth to hope or fear; something to relieve the killing languor and overworked weariness of those who have nothing to do; something to stir an appetite for existence in the jaded satiety that attends all pleasures that can be bought, where nature is not left to her own course, where even desire is anticipated, and enjoyment therefore defeated, by premeditated schemes and contrivances of delight, and no interval, no obstacle, is placed between the wish and its fulfillment.

The people of England know how little influence the teachers of religion are likely to have [153] with the wealthy and powerful of long standing, and how much less with the newly fortunate, if they

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appear in a manner no way assorted to those with whom they must associate, and over whom they must even exercise, in some cases,

something like an authority. What must they think of that body of teachers, if they see it in no part above the establishment of their domestic servants? If the poverty were voluntary, there might be some difference. Strong instances of self-denial operate powerfully on our minds; and a man who has no wants has obtained great freedom and firmness, and even dignity.

p. 153 But as the mass of any description of men are but men, and their poverty cannot be voluntary, that disrespect which attends upon all Lay poverty, will not depart from the Ecclesiastical. Our provident constitution has therefore taken care that those who are to instruct presumptuous ignorance, those who are to be censors over insolent vice, should neither incur their contempt, nor live upon their alms; nor will it tempt the rich to a neglect of the true medicine of their minds. For these reasons, whilst we provide first for the poor, and with a parental sollicitude, we have not relegated religion (like something we were ashamed to shew) to obscure municipalities or rustic villages. No!

We will have her to exalt her mitred front in courts and parliaments. We will have her mixed throughout the whole mass of life, and blended with all the classes of society. The people of England will shew to the haughty [154] potentates of the world, and to their talking sophisters, that a free, a generous, an informed nation, honours the high magistrates of its church;

that it will not suffer the insolence of wealth and titles, or any other species of proud pretension, to look down with scorn upon what they look up to with reverence; nor presume to trample on that acquired personal nobility, which they intend always to be, and which often is the fruit, not the reward, (for what can be the reward?)

p. 154 of learning, piety, and virtue. They can see, without pain or grudging, an Archbishop precede a Duke. They can see a Bishop of Durham, or a Bishop of Winchester, in possession of ten thousand pounds a year; and cannot conceive why it is in worse hands than estates to the like amount in the hands of this Earl, or that Squire; although it may be true, that so many dogs and

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appear in a manner in no way suited to those with whom they must associate, and over whom they must even exercise, in some cases,

something like authority. What must those people think of that body of teachers, if they see it in no respect above the level of their own household servants? If the poverty were voluntary, there might be some difference. Strong instances of self-denial work powerfully on our minds; and a man who has no wants has gained great freedom and firmness, and even dignity.

But as the bulk of any class of men are only men, and their poverty cannot be voluntary, the disrespect that attends all lay poverty will not leave clerical poverty alone. Our provident constitution has therefore taken care that those who are to instruct presumptuous ignorance, those who are to be censors over insolent vice, should neither incur their contempt nor live on their alms; nor will it tempt the rich to neglect the true medicine of their minds. For these reasons, while we provide first for the poor, and with a parental concern, we have not banished religion (like something we were ashamed to show) to obscure towns or country villages. No!

We will have her raise her mitered head in courts and parliaments. We will have her mixed throughout the whole mass of life, and blended with all the classes of society. The people of England will show the haughty [154] potentates of the world, and their talking sophists, that a free, a generous, an informed nation honors the high magistrates of its church;

that it will not allow the insolence of wealth and titles, or any other kind of proud pretension, to look down with scorn on what the nation looks up to with reverence; nor to presume to trample on that acquired personal nobility which they intend always to be, and which often is, the fruit, not the reward (for what could be the reward?),

of learning, piety, and virtue. They can see, without pain or grudging, an Archbishop take precedence over a Duke. They can see a Bishop of Durham, or a Bishop of Winchester, in possession of ten thousand pounds a year, and cannot see why it is in worse hands than estates of the same amount in the hands of this Earl or that Squire—though it may be true that the former do not keep

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horses are not kept by the former, and fed with the victuals which ought to nourish the children of the people. It is true, the whole church revenue is not always employed, and to every shilling, in charity; nor perhaps ought it; but something is generally so employed.

It is better to cherish virtue and humanity, by leaving much to free will, even with some loss to the object, than to attempt to make men mere machines and instruments of a political benevolence. The world on the whole will gain by a liberty, without which virtue cannot exist.

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so many dogs and horses, fed with the food that ought to nourish the children of the people. It is true that the whole church revenue is not always spent on charity, down to every shilling; nor perhaps ought it to be; but something generally is so spent.

It is better to cherish virtue and humanity by leaving much to free will, even at some loss to the object, than to try to make men mere machines and instruments of a political benevolence. The world on the whole will gain by a liberty without which virtue cannot exist.

THE CONFISCATION OF CHURCH PROPERTY

Burke condemns the French seizure of church estates as tyranny, comparing it with Roman proscriptions and Henry VIII.

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When once the commonwealth has established [155] the estates of the church as property, it can, consistently, hear nothing of the more or the less. Too much and too little are treason against property. What evil can arise from the quantity in any hand, whilst the supreme authority has the full, sovereign superintendance over this, as over all property, to prevent every species of abuse; and, whenever it notably deviates, to give to it a direction agreeable to the purposes of its institution.

p. 155 In England most of us conceive that it is envy and malignity towards those who are often the beginners of their own fortune, and not a love of the self-denial and mortification of the ancient church, that makes some look askance at the distinctions, and honours, and revenues, which, taken from no person, are set apart for virtue. The ears of the people of England are distinguishing. They hear these men speak broad. Their tongue betrays them. Their language is in the *patois* of fraud; in the cant and gibberish of hypocrisy.

The people of England must think so, when these praters affect to carry back the clergy to that primitive evangelic poverty which, in the spirit, ought always to exist in them (and in us too, however we may like it) but in the thing must be varied, when the relation of that body to the state is altered; when manners, when modes of life, when indeed the whole order of human affairs has undergone a total revolution. We shall believe

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Once the commonwealth has established [155] the estates of the church as property, it cannot consistently listen to any talk of more or less. Too much and too little are treason against property. What harm can come from the quantity in any one hand, so long as the supreme authority keeps full, sovereign supervision over this, as over all property, to prevent every kind of abuse, and, whenever it notably strays, to give it a direction suited to the purposes for which it was instituted?

In England most of us believe that it is envy and malice toward those who are often the founders of their own fortune, and not any love of the self-denial and mortification of the ancient church, that makes some people look askance at the distinctions, and honors, and revenues which, taken from no one, are set apart for virtue. The ears of the people of England are discerning. They catch the broad accent in these men's speech. Their tongue gives them away. Their language is the *patois* of fraud, the cant and gibberish of hypocrisy.

The people of England must think so when these chatterers pretend to bring the clergy back to that primitive evangelical poverty which, in spirit, ought always to exist in them (and in us too, however little we may like it), but which in substance must vary when the relation of that body to the state has changed—when manners, when ways of life, when indeed the whole order of human af-

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those reformers to be then honest enthusiasts, not as now we think them, [156] cheats and deceivers, when we see them throwing their own goods into common, and submitting their own persons to the austere discipline of the early church.

p. 156 With these ideas rooted in their minds, the commons of Great Britain, in the national emergencies, will never seek their resource from the confiscation of the estates of the church and poor. Sacrilege and proscription are not among the ways and means in our committee of supply. The Jews in Change Alley have not yet dared to hint their hopes of a mortgage on the revenues belonging to the see of Canterbury.

I am not afraid that I shall be disavowed, when I assure you that there is not *one* public man in this kingdom, whom you would wish to quote; no not one of any party or description, who does not reprobate the dishonest, perfidious and cruel confiscation which the national assembly has been compelled to make of that property which it was their first duty to protect.

It is with the exultation of a little natural pride I tell you, that those amongst us who have wished to pledge the societies of Paris in the cup of their abominations, have been disappointed. The robbery of your church has proved a security to the possessions of ours. It has roused the people. They see with horror and alarm that enormous and shameless act of proscription. It has opened,

and will more and more open their eyes upon the selfish enlargement of mind, and the narrow liberality of sentiment [157] of insidious men, which commencing in close hypocrisy and fraud have ended in open violence and rapine. At home we behold similar beginnings. We are on our guard against similar conclusions.

p. 157 I hope we shall never be so totally lost to all sense of the duties imposed upon us by the law of social union, as, upon any pretext of public service, to confiscate the goods of a single unoffending citizen. Who but a tyrant (a name expressive of every thing which can vitiate and degrade human

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fairs has undergone a total revolution. We shall believe these reformers to be honest enthusiasts, and not, as we now think them, [156] cheats and deceivers, when we see them throwing their own goods into a common stock and submitting their own persons to the austere discipline of the early church.

With these ideas rooted in their minds, the commons of Great Britain will never, in national emergencies, look for relief to the confiscation of the estates of the church and the poor. Sacrilege and proscription are not among the ways and means of our committee of supply. The Jews in Change Alley have not yet dared to hint at their hopes of a mortgage on the revenues belonging to the see of Canterbury.[13]

I am not afraid of being contradicted when I assure you that there is not *one* public man in this kingdom whom you would wish to quote—no, not one of any party or kind—who does not condemn the dishonest, treacherous, and cruel confiscation that the National Assembly has been compelled to make of the very property it was their first duty to protect.

It is with the exultation of a little natural pride that I tell you that those among us who wanted to pledge the societies of Paris in the cup of their abominations have been disappointed. The robbery of your church has proved a security for the possessions of ours. It has roused the people. They look with horror and alarm on that enormous and shameless act of proscription. It has opened,

and will more and more open, their eyes to the selfish enlargement of mind and the narrow liberality of sentiment [157] of insidious men, which, beginning in secret hypocrisy and fraud, have ended in open violence and plunder. At home we see similar beginnings. We are on our guard against similar conclusions.

I hope we shall never be so utterly lost to all sense of the duties laid on us by the law of social union as to confiscate, on any pretext of public service, the goods of a single unoffending citizen. Who but a tyrant (a name that expresses everything that

13 The committee of supply was the House of Commons committee that voted money for the government. Change Alley was the lane in the City of London where stocks were traded.

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nature) could think of seizing on the property of men, unaccused, unheard, untried, by whole descriptions, by hundreds and thousands together?

who that had not lost every trace of humanity could think of casting down men of exalted rank and sacred function, some of them of an age to call at once for reverence and compassion, of casting them down from the highest situation in the commonwealth, wherein they were maintained by their own landed property, to a state of indigence, depression and contempt?

The confiscators truly have made some allowance to their victims from the scraps and fragments of their own tables from which they have been so harshly driven, and which have been so bountifully spread for a feast to the harpies of usury. But to drive men from independence to live on alms is itself great cruelty. That which might be a tolerable condition to men in one state of life, and not habituated to other things, may, when all these circumstances are altered, be a [158] dreadful revolution; and one to which a virtuous mind would feel pain in condemning any guilt except that which would demand the life of the offender.

p. 158 But to many minds this punishment of *degradation* and *infamy* is worse than death. Undoubtedly it is an infinite aggravation of this cruel suffering, that the persons who were taught a double prejudice in favour of religion, by education and by the place they held in the administration of its functions, are to receive the remnants of their property as alms from the profane and impious hands of those who had plundered them of all the rest;

to receive, not from the charitable contributions of the faithful, but from the insolent tenderness of known and avowed Atheism, the maintenance of religion, measured out to them on the standard of the contempt in which it is held; and for the purpose of rendering those who receive the allowance vile and of no estimation in the eyes of mankind.

But this act of seizure of property, it seems, is a judgment in law, and not a confiscation. They have, it seems, found out in the academies of the *Palais Royale,* and the *Jacobins,* that certain men

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can corrupt and degrade human nature) could think of seizing the property of men unaccused, unheard, untried, by whole categories, by hundreds and thousands at a time?

Who that had not lost every trace of humanity could think of casting down men of exalted rank and sacred office, some of them of an age that calls at once for reverence and compassion—of casting them down from the highest station in the commonwealth, where they were supported by their own landed property, into a state of poverty, depression, and contempt?

The confiscators, to be sure, have made their victims some allowance from the scraps and fragments of the victims' own tables, from which they have been so harshly driven, and which have been so lavishly spread as a feast for the harpies of usury. But to drive men from independence to live on alms is itself great cruelty. What might be a tolerable condition for men in one station of life, and not used to anything else, may, when all these circumstances are changed, be a [158] dreadful revolution—one to which a virtuous mind would be pained to condemn any guilt short of what would demand the offender's life.

But to many minds this punishment of *degradation* and *infamy* is worse than death. It is undoubtedly an infinite aggravation of this cruel suffering that persons who were taught a double prejudice in favor of religion, by their education and by the place they held in the administration of its offices, should receive the remnants of their property as alms from the profane and impious hands of those who had robbed them of all the rest;

should receive, not from the charitable contributions of the faithful but from the insolent tenderness of known and avowed atheism, the maintenance of religion, measured out to them by the standard of the contempt in which it is held, and for the purpose of making those who receive the allowance vile and of no account in the eyes of mankind.

But this seizure of property, it seems, is a judgment at law, and not a confiscation. They have discovered, it seems, in the academies of the *Palais Royal* and the *Jacobins*, that certain men had no

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had no right to the possessions which they held under law, usage, the decisions of courts, and the accumulated prescription of a thousand years.

They say that ecclesiastics are fictitious persons, creatures of the state; whom at pleasure they may destroy, and of course limit and modify in every particular; that the goods they possess are not properly [159] theirs, but belong to the state which created the fiction; and we are therefore not to trouble ourselves with what they may suffer in their natural feelings and natural persons, on account of what is done towards them in this their constructive character.

p. 159 Of what import is it, under what names you injure men, and deprive them of the just emoluments of a profession, in which they were not only permitted but encouraged by the state to engage; and upon the supposed certainty of which emoluments they had formed the plan of their lives, contracted debts, and led multitudes to an entire dependence upon them?

You do not imagine, sir, that I am going to compliment this miserable distinction of persons with any long discussion. The arguments of tyranny are as contemptible as its force is dreadful. Had not your confiscators by their early crimes obtained a power which secures indemnity to all the crimes of which they have since been guilty, or that they can commit, it is not the syllogism of the logician but the lash of the executioner that would have refuted a sophistry which becomes an accomplice of theft and murder. The sophistick tyrants of Paris are loud in their declamations against the departed regal tyrants who in former ages have vexed the world.

They are thus bold, because they are safe from the dungeons and iron cages of their old masters. Shall we be more tender of the tyrants of our own time, when we see them acting worse tragedies [160] under our eyes? shall we not use the same liberty that they do, when we can use it with the same safety? when to speak honest truth only requires a contempt of the opinions of those whose actions we abhor?

p. 160 This outrage on all the rights of property was at first covered with what on the system of their

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right to the possessions they held under law, custom, the decisions of courts, and the accumulated prescription of a thousand years.[14]

They say that ecclesiastics are fictitious persons, creatures of the state, whom they may destroy at pleasure, and therefore limit and modify in every particular; that the goods they possess are not properly [159] theirs but belong to the state that created the fiction; and that we are therefore not to trouble ourselves about what they may suffer in their natural feelings and natural persons on account of what is done to them in this, their constructive character.

What does it matter under what names you injure men and deprive them of the just earnings of a profession which the state not only permitted but encouraged them to enter, and on the supposed certainty of whose earnings they had planned their lives, contracted debts, and led multitudes into entire dependence on them?

You do not imagine, sir, that I am going to pay this miserable distinction of persons the compliment of any long discussion. The arguments of tyranny are as contemptible as its force is dreadful. Had your confiscators not gained, by their early crimes, a power that secures impunity for all the crimes they have since committed or may yet commit, it is not the logician's syllogism but the executioner's lash that would have refuted a sophistry which makes itself an accomplice of theft and murder. The sophist tyrants of Paris are loud in their declamations against the departed royal tyrants who in former ages harassed the world.

They are this bold because they are safe from the dungeons and iron cages of their old masters. Shall we be more tender toward the tyrants of our own time when we see them acting worse tragedies [160] before our eyes? Shall we not use the same liberty they use, when we can use it with the same safety—when speaking honest truth requires only contempt for the opinions of those whose actions we abhor?

This outrage on all the rights of property was at first covered with what, given the whole system of

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conduct was the most astonishing of all pretexts—a regard to national faith. The enemies to property at first pretended a most tender, delicate, and scrupulous anxiety for keeping the king's engagements with the public creditor. These professors of the rights of men are so busy in teaching others, that they have not leisure to learn any thing themselves; otherwise they would have known that it is to the property of the citizen, and not to the demands of the creditor of the state, that the first and original faith of civil society is pledged.

The claim of the citizen is prior in time, paramount in title, superior in equity. The fortunes of individuals, whether possessed by acquisition, or by descent, or in virtue of a participation in the goods of some community, were no part of the creditor's security, expressed or implied. They never so much as entered into his head when he made his bargain. He well knew that the public, whether represented by a monarch, or by a senate, can pledge nothing but the public estate;

and it can have no public estate, except in what it derives from a just and proportioned imposition upon the citizens at large. This was engaged, [161] and nothing else could be engaged to the public creditor.

p. 161 No man can mortgage his injustice as a pawn for his fidelity.

It is impossible to avoid some observation on the contradictions caused by the extreme rigour and the extreme laxity of the new public faith, which influenced in this transaction, and which influenced not according to the nature of the obligation, but to the description of the persons to whom it was engaged. No acts of the old government of the kings of France are held valid in the National Assembly, except its pecuniary engagements; acts of all others of the most ambiguous legality. The rest of the acts of that royal government are considered in so odious a light, that to have a claim under its authority is looked on as a sort of crime.

A pension, given as a reward for service to the state, is surely as good a ground of property as any security for money advanced to the state. It is

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their conduct, was the most astonishing of all pretexts—a regard for national faith. The enemies of property at first professed a most tender, delicate, and scrupulous anxiety to keep the king's engagements with the public creditor. These professors of the rights of men are so busy teaching others that they have no leisure to learn anything themselves; otherwise they would have known that it is to the property of the citizen, and not to the demands of the state's creditor, that the first and original faith of civil society is pledged.

The citizen's claim is prior in time, paramount in title, superior in equity. The fortunes of individuals, whether held by acquisition, by inheritance, or by virtue of a share in the goods of some community, were no part of the creditor's security, expressed or implied. They never so much as entered his head when he made his bargain. He knew perfectly well that the public, whether represented by a monarch or by a senate, can pledge nothing but the public estate;

and it can have no public estate except what it derives from a just and proportioned levy on the citizens at large. This was pledged, [161] and nothing else could be pledged, to the public creditor.

No man can mortgage his injustice as a pawn for his fidelity.

It is impossible to avoid some comment on the contradictions produced by the extreme rigor and the extreme laxity of the new public faith that operated in this transaction—and that operated not according to the nature of the obligation but according to the kind of persons to whom it was owed. No acts of the old government of the kings of France are held valid in the National Assembly except its financial engagements—of all its acts, those of the most doubtful legality. The other acts of that royal government are regarded in so odious a light that to have a claim under its authority is looked on as a kind of crime.

A pension given as a reward for service to the state is surely as good a ground of property as any se-

14 The Palais Royal, the Duke of Orléans's Paris palace, whose gardens and cafés were a center of radical agitation; the Jacobins, the club that met in the former Dominican ("Jacobin") convent.

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a better; for money is paid, and well paid, to obtain that service. We have however seen multitudes of people under this description in France, who never had been deprived of their allowances by the most arbitrary ministers, in the most arbitrary times, by this assembly of the rights of men, robbed without mercy. They were told, in answer to their claim to the bread earned with their blood, that their services had not been rendered to the country that now exists.

This laxity of public faith is not confined to those unfortunate persons. The assembly, with [162] perfect consistency it must be owned, is engaged in a respectable deliberation how far it is bound by the treaties made with other nations under the former government, and their Committee is to report which of them they ought to ratify, and which not. By this means they have put the external fidelity of this virgin state on a par with its internal.

p. 162 It is not easy to conceive upon what rational principle the royal government should not, of the two, rather have possessed the power of rewarding service, and making treaties, in virtue of its prerogative, than that of pledging to creditors the revenue of the state actual and possible. The treasure of the nation, of all things, has been the least allowed to the prerogative of the king of France, or to the prerogative of any king in Europe. To mortgage the public revenue implies the sovereign dominion, in the fullest sense, over the public purse. It goes far beyond the trust even of a temporary and occasional taxation.

The acts however of that dangerous power (the distinctive mark of a boundless despotism) have been alone held sacred. Whence arose this preference given by a democratic assembly to a body of property deriving its title from the most critical and obnoxious of all the exertions of monarchical authority? Reason can furnish nothing to reconcile inconsistency; nor can partial favour be accounted for upon equitable principles. But the contradiction and partiality which admit no justification, are not the less [163] without an adequate cause; and that cause I do not think it difficult to discover.

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curity for money advanced to the state. It is a better one, for money is paid, and well paid, to obtain that service. Yet we have seen multitudes of people of this kind in France, who had never been deprived of their allowances by the most arbitrary ministers in the most arbitrary times, robbed without mercy by this assembly of the rights of men. In answer to their claim to the bread earned with their blood, they were told that their services had not been rendered to the country that now exists.

This laxity of public faith is not confined to those unfortunate people. The Assembly, with [162] perfect consistency, it must be admitted, is engaged in a respectable deliberation on how far it is bound by the treaties made with other nations under the former government, and its committee is to report which of them it ought to ratify and which not. In this way they have put the external fidelity of this virgin state on a par with its internal.

It is not easy to see on what rational principle the royal government should not, of the two, rather have possessed the power of rewarding service and making treaties by virtue of its prerogative than that of pledging to creditors the revenue of the state, actual and possible. The nation's treasure, of all things, has been the least conceded to the prerogative of the king of France, or to the prerogative of any king in Europe. To mortgage the public revenue implies sovereign dominion, in the fullest sense, over the public purse. It goes far beyond the trust even of a temporary and occasional taxation.

Yet the acts of that dangerous power (the distinctive mark of a boundless despotism) have alone been held sacred. Where did this preference come from—a preference given by a democratic assembly to a body of property that derives its title from the most critical and objectionable of all the exercises of monarchical authority? Reason can furnish nothing to reconcile inconsistency, nor can partial favor be explained on equitable principles. But the contradiction and partiality that admit no justification are not for that reason [163] without an adequate cause; and that cause I do not think it hard to discover.

THE MONIED INTEREST AND THE MEN OF LETTERS

The new monied interest and the political men of letters combine against the church and the old landed nobility.

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p. 163 By the vast debt of France a great monied interest had insensibly grown up, and with it a great power. By the ancient usages which prevailed in that kingdom, the general circulation of property, and in particular the mutual convertibility of land into money, and of money into land, had always been a matter of difficulty.

Family settlements, rather more general and more strict than they are in England, the *jus retractus,* the great mass of landed property held by the crown, and by a maxim of the French law held unalienably, the vast estates of the ecclesiastic corporations,—all these had kept the landed and monied interests more separated in France, less miscible, and the owners of the two distinct species of property not so well disposed to each other as they are in this country.

The monied property was long looked on with rather an evil eye by the people. They saw it connected with their distresses, and aggravating them. It was no less envied by the old landed interests, partly for the same reasons that rendered it obnoxious to the people, but much more so as it eclipsed, by the splendour of an ostentatious luxury, the unendowed pedigrees and naked titles of several among the nobility. Even when the nobility, which represented the more permanent landed interest, united themselves by marriage (which sometimes was the case) with the other description, the wealth which saved the family from ruin, [164] was supposed to contaminate and degrade it.

p. 164 Thus the enmities and heart-burnings of these parties were encreased even by the usual means by which discord is made to cease, and quarrels are turned into friendship. In the mean time, the pride of the wealthy men, not noble or newly noble, encreased with its cause. They felt with resentment an inferiority, the grounds of which they did not acknowledge. There was no measure to which they were not willing to lend themselves, in order to be revenged of the

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Through the vast debt of France a great monied interest had imperceptibly grown up, and with it a great power. Under the ancient customs that prevailed in that kingdom, the general circulation of property, and in particular the mutual convertibility of land into money and of money into land, had always been a matter of difficulty.

Family settlements, somewhat more general and more strict than they are in England; the *jus retractus*; the great mass of landed property held by the crown, and by a maxim of French law held inalienably; the vast estates of the ecclesiastical corporations—all these had kept the landed and monied interests more separate in France, less miscible, and the owners of the two distinct kinds of property not so well disposed to each other as they are in this country.[15]

The monied property was long looked on by the people with rather an evil eye. They saw it connected with their distresses and aggravating them. It was no less envied by the old landed interests, partly for the same reasons that made it odious to the people, but much more because it eclipsed, by the splendor of an ostentatious luxury, the unendowed pedigrees and bare titles of many among the nobility. Even when the nobility, who represented the more permanent landed interest, united themselves by marriage (which sometimes happened) with the other sort, the wealth that saved the family from ruin [164] was thought to contaminate and degrade it.

Thus the enmities and heartburnings of these parties were increased even by the usual means by which discord is ended and quarrels are turned into friendship. Meanwhile the pride of the wealthy men who were not noble, or only newly noble, increased with its cause. They felt with resentment an inferiority whose grounds they did not acknowledge. There was no measure they were not willing to lend themselves to, in order to be revenged for the insults of this rival pride and

15 *Jus retractus* ("right of buying back"): the right of a seller's kin to reclaim family land sold to an outsider by repaying the price (the French *retrait lignager*).

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outrages of this rival pride, and to exalt their wealth to what they considered as its natural rank and estimation. They struck at the nobility through the crown and the church.

They attacked them particularly on the side on which they thought them the most vulnerable, that is, the possessions of the church, which, through the patronage of the crown, generally devolved upon the nobility. The bishoprics, and the great commendatory abbies, were, with few exceptions, held by that order.

In this state of real, though not always perceived warfare between the noble ancient landed interest, and the new monied interest, the greatest because the most applicable strength was in the hands of the latter. The monied interest is in its nature more ready for any adventure; and its possessors more disposed to new enterprizes of any kind. Being of a recent acquisition, it falls in more naturally with any novelties. It is therefore the kind of wealth which will be resorted to by all who wish for change.

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Along with the monied interest, a new description of men had grown up, with whom that interest soon formed a close and marked union; I mean the political Men of Letters. Men of Letters, fond of distinguishing themselves, are rarely averse to innovation. Since the decline of the life and greatness of Lewis the XIVth, they were not so much cultivated either by him, or by the regent, or the successors to the crown; nor were they engaged to the court by favours and emoluments so systematically as during the splendid period of that ostentatious and not impolitic reign.

What they lost in the old court protection they endeavoured to make up by joining in a sort of incorporation of their own; to which the two academies of France, and afterwards the vast undertaking of the Encyclopaedia, carried on by a society of these gentlemen, did not a little contribute.

The literary cabal had some years ago formed something like a regular plan for the destruction

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to raise their wealth to what they considered its natural rank and estimation. They struck at the nobility through the crown and the church.

They attacked them particularly on the side where they thought them most vulnerable—that is, the possessions of the church, which, through the patronage of the crown, generally passed to the nobility. The bishoprics and the great commendatory abbeys were, with few exceptions, held by that order.[16]

In this state of real, though not always perceived, warfare between the noble ancient landed interest and the new monied interest, the greatest strength, because the most usable, was in the hands of the latter. The monied interest is by nature readier for any venture, and its possessors more disposed to new enterprises of any kind. Being of recent acquisition, it falls in more naturally with any novelty. It is therefore the kind of wealth that all who wish for change will turn to.

Along with the monied interest, a new kind of men had grown up, with whom that interest soon formed a close and marked union: I mean the political men of letters. Men of letters, fond of distinguishing themselves, are rarely averse to innovation. After the decline of the life and greatness of Louis XIV, they were not cultivated as much, whether by him, by the regent, or by his successors on the throne. Nor were they bound to the court by favors and salaries as systematically as during the splendid period of that ostentatious and not impolitic reign.[17]

What they lost in the old protection of the court they tried to make up by forming a sort of corporation of their own. The two academies of France contributed not a little to this, and so afterwards did the vast undertaking of the Encyclopedia, carried on by a society of these gentlemen.[18]

Some years ago the literary cabal had formed something like a regular plan for the destruction of the Christian religion. They pursued this object

16 Commendatory abbeys were held *in commendam*: their revenues went to an abbot, often a non-resident cleric of noble family, who did not govern the monastery himself.

17 The regent was Philippe, duke of Orléans, who governed for the young Louis XV from 1715 to 1723.

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of the Christian religion. This object they pursued with a degree of zeal which hitherto had been discovered only in the propagators of some system of piety. They were possessed with a spirit of proselytism in the most fanatical degree; and from thence, by an easy progress, with the spirit of persecution according to their means. What was not to be done towards their great end by any direct or immediate act, might be wrought by a longer process through the medium of opinion. To command that opinion, the first step is to establish a dominion over those who direct it.

They contrived to possess themselves, [166] with great method and perseverance, of all the avenues to literary fame. Many of them indeed stood high in the ranks of literature and science. The world had done them justice; and in favour of general talents forgave the evil tendency of their peculiar principles. This was true liberality;

which they returned by endeavouring to confine the reputation of sense, learning, and taste to themselves or their followers. I will venture to say that this narrow, exclusive spirit has not been less prejudicial to literature and to taste, than to morals and true philosophy. These Atheistical fathers have a bigotry of their own; and they have learnt to talk against monks with the spirit of a monk.

p. 166 But in some things they are men of the world. The resources of intrigue are called in to supply the defects of argument and wit. To this system of literary monopoly was joined an unremitting industry to blacken and discredit in every way, and by every means, all those who did not hold to their faction. To those who have observed the spirit of their conduct, it has long been clear that nothing was wanted but the power of carrying the intolerance of the tongue and of the pen into a persecution which would strike at property, liberty, and life.

The desultory and faint persecution carried on against them, more from compliance with form and decency than with serious resentment, neither weakened their strength, nor relaxed their efforts. The issue of the whole was, that what with opposition, and what with success, a violent

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with a degree of zeal that had until then been found only in the propagators of some system of piety. They were possessed by a spirit of proselytism in the most fanatical degree. From there, by an easy progress, they were possessed by the spirit of persecution, so far as their means allowed. What could not be done toward their great end by any direct or immediate act might be accomplished by a longer process, through the medium of opinion. To command that opinion, the first step is to establish dominion over those who direct it.

They contrived to take possession, [166] with great method and perseverance, of all the avenues to literary fame. Many of them did indeed stand high in the ranks of literature and science. The world had done them justice, and for the sake of their general talents it forgave the evil tendency of their particular principles. This was true liberality;

and they repaid it by trying to confine the reputation for sense, learning, and taste to themselves or their followers. I will venture to say that this narrow, exclusive spirit has done no less harm to literature and to taste than to morals and true philosophy. These atheistical fathers have a bigotry of their own, and they have learned to talk against monks with the spirit of a monk.

But in some things they are men of the world. The resources of intrigue are called in to make up for the defects of argument and wit. To this system of literary monopoly they joined an unremitting industry in blackening and discrediting, in every way and by every means, all those who did not hold to their faction. Those who have observed the spirit of their conduct have long seen that only one thing was lacking: the power to turn the intolerance of the tongue and the pen into a persecution that would strike at property, liberty, and life.

The desultory and feeble persecution carried on against them came more from compliance with form and decency than from serious resentment, and it neither weakened their strength nor relaxed their efforts. The upshot of it all was that, what with opposition and what with success, a violent

18 The Académie française and the Académie des sciences. The Encyclopédie, edited by Diderot and d'Alembert, appeared from 1751 to 1772.

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and malignant zeal, of a kind hitherto unknown in [167] the world, had taken an entire possession of their minds, and rendered their whole conversation, which otherwise would have been pleasing and instructive, perfectly disgusting. A spirit of cabal, intrigue, and proselytism, pervaded all their thoughts, words, and actions.

p. 167 And, as controversial zeal soon turns its thoughts on force, they began to insinuate themselves into a correspondence with foreign princes; in hopes, through their authority, which at first they flattered, they might bring about the changes they had in view. To them it was indifferent whether these changes were to be accomplished by the thunderbolt of despotism, or by the earthquake of popular commotion. The correspondence between this cabal, and the late king of Prussia, will throw no small light upon the spirit of all their proceedings.

For the same purpose for which they intrigued with princes, they cultivated, in a distinguished manner, the monied interest of France; and partly through the means furnished by those whose peculiar offices gave them the most extensive and certain means of communication, they carefully occupied all the avenues to opinion.

Writers, especially when they act in a body, and with one direction, have great influence on the public mind; the alliance therefore of these writers with the monied interest had no small effect in removing the popular odium and envy which attended that species of wealth. These writers, like the propagators of all novelties, pretended to a great zeal for the poor, and the lower orders, whilst in their satires they rendered hateful, by every exaggeration, the faults of courts, [168] of nobility, and of priesthood. They became a sort of demagogues. They served as a link to unite, in favour of one object, obnoxious wealth to restless and desperate poverty.

p. 168 As these two kinds of men appear principal leaders in all the late transactions, their junction and politics will serve to account, not upon any principles of law or of policy, but as a *cause,* for the general fury with which all the landed property of ecclesiastical corporations has been

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and malignant zeal, of a kind hitherto unknown in [167] the world, had taken entire possession of their minds. It made their whole conversation, which would otherwise have been pleasing and instructive, utterly disgusting. A spirit of cabal, intrigue, and proselytism pervaded all their thoughts, words, and actions.

And since controversial zeal soon turns its thoughts to force, they began to work their way into a correspondence with foreign princes. They hoped that through the authority of these princes, which at first they flattered, they might bring about the changes they had in view. It made no difference to them whether these changes were accomplished by the thunderbolt of despotism or by the earthquake of popular commotion. The correspondence between this cabal and the late king of Prussia will throw no small light on the spirit of all their proceedings.[19]

For the same purpose for which they intrigued with princes, they cultivated the monied interest of France with marked attention. Partly through the means supplied by those whose particular offices gave them the most extensive and certain means of communication, they carefully occupied all the avenues to opinion.

Writers have great influence on the public mind, especially when they act in a body and in one direction. The alliance of these writers with the monied interest therefore had no small effect in removing the popular hatred and envy that attended that kind of wealth. Like the propagators of all novelties, these writers professed a great zeal for the poor and the lower orders, while in their satires they used every exaggeration to make hateful the faults of courts, [168] of nobility, and of priesthood. They became a sort of demagogues. They served as a link to unite, in favor of one object, odious wealth with restless and desperate poverty.

These two kinds of men appear as the principal leaders in all the recent transactions, and so their junction and their politics will serve to account—not on any principles of law or of policy, but as a *cause*—for the general fury with which all the landed property of ecclesiastical corporations has

19 Frederick II (the Great), who died in 1786, corresponded at length with Voltaire, d'Alembert and other philosophes.

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attacked; and the great care which, contrary to their pretended principles, has been taken, of a monied interest originating from the authority of the crown. All the envy against wealth and power, was artificially directed against other descriptions of riches.

On what other principles than that which I have stated can we account for an appearance so extraordinary and unnatural as that of the ecclesiastical possessions, which had stood so many successions of ages and shocks of civil violences, and were guarded at once by justice, and by prejudice, being applied to the payment of debts, comparatively recent, invidious, and contracted by a decried and subverted government?

Was the public estate a sufficient stake for the public debts? Assume that it was not, and that a loss *must* be incurred somewhere—When the only estate lawfully possessed, and which the contracting parties had in contemplation at the time in which their bargain was made, happens to fail, who, according to the principles of natural and legal equity, ought to be the sufferer? Certainly it ought to be either the party who trusted;

or the party who persuaded him to trust; or both; [169] and not third parties who had no concern with the transaction. Upon any insolvency they ought to suffer who were weak enough to lend upon bad security, or they who fraudulently held out a security that was not valid.

p. 169 Laws are acquainted with no other rules of decision. But by the new institute of the rights of men, the only persons, who in equity ought to suffer, are the only persons who are to be saved harmless: those are to answer the debt who neither were lenders or borrowers, mortgagers or mortgagees.

What had the clergy to do with these transactions? What had they to do with any public engagement further than the extent of their own debt? To that, to be sure, their estates were bound to the last acre. Nothing can lead more to the true spirit of the assembly, which sits for public confiscation, with its new equity and its new morality, than an attention to their proceeding with regard to this debt of the clergy. The body of

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been attacked, and for the great care that, contrary to their professed principles, has been taken of a monied interest originating in the authority of the crown. All the envy against wealth and power was artificially directed against other kinds of riches.

The ecclesiastical possessions had withstood so many successive ages and so many shocks of civil violence, and were guarded at once by justice and by prejudice. Yet they have been applied to the payment of debts that were comparatively recent, invidious, and contracted by a discredited and overthrown government. On what principle other than the one I have stated can we account for so extraordinary and unnatural a spectacle?

Was the public estate a sufficient stake for the public debts? Assume that it was not, and that a loss *must* be incurred somewhere. The only estate lawfully possessed was the one the contracting parties had in mind when they made their bargain. When that estate happens to fail, who ought to bear the loss, according to the principles of natural and legal equity? Certainly it ought to be either the party who trusted,

or the party who persuaded him to trust, or both; [169] and not third parties who had nothing to do with the transaction. In any insolvency, those ought to suffer who were weak enough to lend on bad security, or those who fraudulently held out a security that was not valid.

The laws know no other rules of decision. But by the new institute of the rights of men, the only persons who in equity ought to suffer are the only persons who are to be held harmless. The debt is to be answered by those who were neither lenders nor borrowers, neither mortgagers nor mortgagees.

What had the clergy to do with these transactions? What had they to do with any public engagement beyond the extent of their own debt? To that debt, to be sure, their estates were bound to the last acre. This assembly sits for public confiscation, with its new equity and its new morality, and nothing shows its true spirit more clearly than its proceedings with regard to this debt of the clergy. The body of confiscators, true to that monied in-

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confiscators, true to that monied interest for which they were false to every other, have found the clergy competent to incur a legal debt.	terest for which they were false to every other, have found the clergy competent to incur a legal debt.[20]
Of course they declared them legally entitled to the property which their power of incurring the debt and mortgaging the estate implied; recognizing the rights of those persecuted citizens, in the very act in which they were thus grossly violated.	So of course they declared them legally entitled to the property that their power of incurring the debt and mortgaging the estate implied. They recognized the rights of those persecuted citizens in the very act in which they so grossly violated them.
If, as I said, any persons are to make good deficiencies to the public creditor, besides the public at large, they must be those who managed the agreement. Why therefore are not the estates of all the comptrollers general confiscated? 170 Why not those of the long succession of ministers, financiers,	As I said, if anyone besides the public at large is to make good deficiencies to the public creditor, it must be those who managed the agreement. Why, then, are the estates of all the comptrollers general not confiscated? 170 Why not those of the long succession of ministers, financiers,[21]
and bankers who have been enriched whilst the nation was impoverished by their dealings and their counsels? Why is not the estate of Mr. Laborde declared forfeited rather than of the archbishop of Paris, who has had nothing to do in the creation or in the jobbing of the public funds. Or, if you must confiscate old landed estates in favour of the money-jobbers, why is the penalty confined to one description?	and bankers who have grown rich while their dealings and their counsels impoverished the nation? Why is the estate of Mr. Laborde not declared forfeit, rather than that of the archbishop of Paris, who has had nothing to do with the creation or the jobbing of the public funds? Or, if you must confiscate old landed estates for the benefit of the money-jobbers, why is the penalty confined to one class of people?[22]
p. 170 I do not know whether the expences of the duke de Choiseul have left any thing of the infinite sums which he had derived from the bounty of his master, during the transactions of a reign which contributed largely, by every species of prodigality in war and peace, to the present debt of France. If any such remains, why is not this confiscated? I remember to have been in Paris during the time of the old government. I was there just after the duke d'Aiguillon had been snatched (as it was generally thought) from the block by the hand of a protecting despotism. He was a minister, and had some concern in the affairs of that prodigal period.	The duke de Choiseul received immense sums from his master's bounty during a reign that contributed largely, by every kind of prodigality in war and peace, to the present debt of France. I do not know whether his expenses have left anything of those sums. If anything remains, why is it not confiscated? I remember being in Paris under the old government. I was there just after the duke d'Aiguillon had been snatched from the block (as was generally thought) by the hand of a protecting despotism. He was a minister, and had some part in the affairs of that prodigal period.[23]
Why do I not see his estate delivered up to the municipalities in which it is situated? The noble family of Noailles have long been servants, (meritorious servants I admit) to the crown of	Why do I not see his estate handed over to the municipalities in which it lies? The noble family of Noailles have long been servants of the crown of France (meritorious servants, I admit), and have

20 The French clergy as a corporate body had borrowed heavily, chiefly to fund its "free gifts" to the crown. The Assembly took over this debt along with the church lands.

21 The comptroller general was the chief minister of finance under the old monarchy.

22 Jean-Joseph de Laborde (1724–1794), court banker to Louis XV, who made an immense fortune in state finance.

23 Choiseul was Louis XV's leading minister from 1758 to 1770. In 1770 the king halted the Parlement's proceedings against d'Aiguillon. Burke visited Paris in 1773.

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France, and have had of course some share in its bounties. Why do I hear nothing of the application of their estates to the public debt? Why is the estate of the duke de Rochefoucault more sacred than that of the cardinal de Rochefoucault?	naturally had some share in its bounties. Why do I hear nothing of their estates being applied to the public debt? Why is the estate of the duke de Rochefoucault more sacred than that of the cardinal de Rochefoucault?[24]
The former is, I doubt not, a worthy [171] person; and (if it were not a sort of profaneness to talk of the use, as affecting the title to property) he makes a good use of his revenues; but it is no disrespect to him to say, what authentic information well warrants me in saying, that the use made of a property equally valid, by his brother the cardinal archbishop of Rouen, was far more laudable and far more public-spirited. Can one hear of the proscription of such persons, and the confiscation of their effects, without indignation and horror? He is not a man who does not feel such emotions on such occasions.	The former is, I do not doubt, a worthy [171] person, and he makes good use of his revenues (if it were not a sort of profanity to speak of the use as affecting the title to property). But it is no disrespect to him to say what authentic information fully warrants me in saying: his brother the cardinal archbishop of Rouen made a far more laudable and far more public-spirited use of a property that was equally valid. Can one hear of the proscription of such persons, and the confiscation of their goods, without indignation and horror? He is not a man who does not feel such emotions on such occasions.
p. 171 He does not deserve the name of a free man who will not express them.	He does not deserve the name of a free man who will not express them.
Few barbarous conquerors have ever made so terrible a revolution in property. None of the heads of the Roman factions, when they established "*crudelem illam Hastam*" in all their auctions of rapine, have ever set up to sale the goods of the conquered citizen to such an enormous amount. It must be allowed in favour of those tyrants of antiquity, that what was done by them could hardly be said to be done in cold blood. Their passions were inflamed, their tempers soured, their understandings confused, with the spirit of revenge, with the innumerable reciprocated and recent inflictions and retaliations of blood and rapine.	Few barbarous conquerors have ever made so terrible a revolution in property. The heads of the Roman factions set up "*that cruel spear*" at all their auctions of plunder, yet none of them ever put up the goods of the conquered citizen for sale to so enormous an amount. It must be granted, in favor of those tyrants of antiquity, that what they did could hardly be said to be done in cold blood. Their passions were inflamed, their tempers soured, and their understandings confused by the spirit of revenge, and by the countless inflictions and retaliations of blood and plunder, recent and given back and forth.[25]
They were driven beyond all bounds of moderation by the apprehension of the return of power with the return of property to the families of those they had injured beyond all hope of forgiveness.	They were driven beyond all bounds of moderation by the fear that if property returned to the families of those they had injured beyond all hope of forgiveness, power would return with it.
These Roman confiscators, who were yet only [172] in the elements of tyranny, and were not instructed in the rights of men to exercise all sorts of cruelties on each other without	These Roman confiscators were still only [172] in the rudiments of tyranny. They had not been instructed in the rights of men to practice every kind of cruelty on one another without provocation, and

24 La Rochefoucauld: the duke, a liberal noble, sat in the Assembly. The cardinal, Dominique de La Rochefoucauld, was archbishop of Rouen and in fact a kinsman, not a brother.
25 Latin "crudelem illam hastam." A spear was planted at Roman public auctions of confiscated goods. The phrase echoes Cicero, De officiis 2.29 ("hastam illam cruentam," that bloody spear).

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provocation, thought it necessary to spread a sort of colour over their injustice. They considered the vanquished party as composed of traitors who had borne arms,	so they thought it necessary to put a sort of color over their injustice. They regarded the vanquished party as made up of traitors who had borne arms
or otherwise had acted with hostility against the commonwealth. They regarded them as persons who had forfeited their property by their crimes. With you, in your improved state of the human mind, there was no such formality. You seized upon five millions sterling of annual rent, and turned forty or fifty thousand human creatures out of their houses, because "such was your pleasure."	or had otherwise acted with hostility against the commonwealth. They regarded them as persons who had forfeited their property by their crimes. With you, in your improved state of the human mind, there was no such formality. You seized five million pounds sterling of annual rent, and turned forty or fifty thousand human creatures out of their houses, because "such was your pleasure."[26]
p. 172 The tyrant, Harry the Eighth of England, as he was not better enlightened than the Roman Marius's and Sylla's, and had not studied in your new schools, did not know what an effectual instrument of despotism was to be found in that grand magazine of offensive weapons, the rights of men. When he resolved to rob the abbies, as the club of the Jacobins have robbed all the ecclesiastics, he began by setting on foot a commission to examine into the crimes and abuses which prevailed in those communities. As it might be expected, his commission reported truths, exaggerations, and falshoods. But truly or falsely it reported abuses and offences.	The tyrant Henry the Eighth of England was no better enlightened than the Roman Mariuses and Sullas, and had not studied in your new schools. He therefore did not know what an effective instrument of despotism was to be found in that great arsenal of offensive weapons, the rights of men. When he resolved to rob the abbeys, as the club of the Jacobins have robbed all the clergy, he began by setting up a commission to examine the crimes and abuses that prevailed in those communities. As might be expected, his commission reported truths, exaggerations, and falsehoods. But truly or falsely, it reported abuses and offenses.[27]
However, as abuses might be corrected, as every crime of persons does not infer a forfeiture with regard to communities, and as property, in that dark age, was not discovered to be a creature of prejudice, all those abuses (and there were enough [173] of them) were hardly thought sufficient ground for such a confiscation as it was for his purposes to make. He therefore procured the formal surrender of these estates.	Still, abuses might be corrected, and not every crime of individuals implies a forfeiture on the part of communities. Nor had property, in that dark age, yet been discovered to be a creature of prejudice. So all those abuses (and there were enough [173] of them) were hardly thought sufficient ground for such a confiscation as suited his purposes. He therefore procured the formal surrender of these estates.
p. 173 All these operose proceedings were adopted by one of the most decided tyrants in the rolls of history, as necessary preliminaries, before he could venture, by bribing the members of his two servile houses with a share of the spoil, and holding out to them an eternal immunity from taxation, to demand a confirmation of his iniquitous proceedings by an act of parliament. Had fate reserved him to our times, four technical terms would have done his business, and saved	He was one of the most decided tyrants in the rolls of history, yet he adopted all these laborious proceedings as necessary preliminaries. Only after them would he venture to demand that an act of parliament confirm his iniquitous proceedings, and to do it he bribed the members of his two servile houses with a share of the spoil and held out to them an eternal exemption from taxation. Had fate reserved him for our times, four technic-

26 An ironic echo of the old royal formula "car tel est notre plaisir" (for such is our pleasure).
27 Marius and Sulla led the rival factions in Rome's civil wars of the 80s BC. Henry VIII's visitation of the monasteries (1535) preceded their dissolution.

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him all this trouble; he needed nothing more than one short form of incantation—"*Philosophy, Light, Liberality, the Rights of Men.*"

I can say nothing in praise of those acts of tyranny, which no voice has hitherto ever commended under any of their false colours; yet in these false colours an homage was paid by despotism to justice. The power which was above all fear and all remorse was not set above all shame. Whilst shame keeps its watch, Virtue is not wholly extinguished in the heart; nor will Moderation be utterly exiled from the minds of tyrants.

I believe every honest man sympathizes in his reflections with our political poet on that occasion, and will pray to avert the omen whenever these acts of rapacious despotism present themselves to his view or his imagination:

—"May no such storm
Fall on our times, where ruin must reform.
[174] Tell me (my muse) what monstrous, dire offence,
What crimes could any Christian king incense
To such a rage? Was't luxury, or lust?
Was *he* so temperate, so chaste, so just?
Were these their crimes? they were his own much more;
But wealth is crime enough to him that's poor."[3]

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al terms would have done his business and saved him all this trouble. He would have needed nothing more than one short formula of incantation —"*Philosophy, Light, Liberality, the Rights of Men.*"

I can say nothing in praise of those acts of tyranny, and no voice has ever yet commended them under any of their false colors. Yet in these false colors despotism paid a homage to justice. The power that was above all fear and all remorse was not set above all shame. While shame keeps its watch, Virtue is not wholly extinguished in the heart, nor will Moderation be utterly exiled from the minds of tyrants.

I believe every honest man shares the reflections of our political poet on that occasion. Whenever these acts of rapacious despotism present themselves to his sight or his imagination, he will pray to avert the omen:[28]

—"May no such storm
Fall on our times, where ruin must reform.
[174] Tell me (my muse) what monstrous, dire offense,
What crimes could any Christian king incense
To such a rage? Was't luxury, or lust?
Was *he* so temperate, so chaste, so just?
Were these their crimes? they were his own much more;
But wealth is crime enough to him that's poor."[3]

28 Sir John Denham (1615–1669), in his poem Cooper's Hill (1642), on the ruins of Chertsey Abbey.
30 "Styles" puns on pens and on royal titles: Henry kept the title "Defender of the Faith."

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This same wealth, which is at all times treason and *lese nation* to indigent and rapacious despotism, under all modes of polity, was your temptation to violate property, law, and religion, united in one object. But was the state of France so wretched and undone, that no other resource but rapine remained to preserve its existence? On this point I wish to receive some information. When the states met,

was the condition [175] of the finances of France such, that, after oeconomising (on principles of justice and mercy) through all departments, no

This same wealth, which under every form of polity is always treason and *lèse-nation* to an indigent and rapacious despotism, was your temptation to violate property, law, and religion, united in one object. But was the state of France so wretched and ruined that no resource but plunder remained to preserve its existence? On this point I would like some information. When the states met,[38]

was the condition [175] of the finances of France such that, after economizing (on principles of justice and mercy) through every department, no

32 From Aesop's fable of the frogs who asked for a king. Jupiter first gave them a log, which lay still, and then a stork, which ate them.

34 A calenture was a delirious tropical fever.

29

[3] The rest of the passage is this—

[3] The rest of the passage is this—

31

"Who having spent the treasures of his crown,
Condemns their luxury to feed his own.
And yet this act, to varnish o'er the shame
Of sacrilege, must bear devotion's name.
No crime so bold, but would be understood
A real, or at least a seeming good,
Who fears not to do ill, yet fears the name;
And, free from conscience, is a slave to fame.
Thus he the church at once protects, and spoils:
But princes' swords are sharper than their styles.
And thus to th' ages past he makes amends,
Their charity destroys, their faith defends.

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Condemns their luxury to feed his own.
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But princes' swords are sharper than their styles.
And thus to th' ages past he makes amends,
Their charity destroys, their faith defends.[30]

33

/ Then did religion in a lazy cell,
In empty aëry contemplations dwell;
And, like the block, unmoved lay: but ours,
As much too active, like the stork devours.
Is there no temp'rate region can be known,
Betwixt their frigid, and our torrid zone?
Could we not wake from that lethargic dream,

/ Then did religion in a lazy cell,
In empty airy contemplations dwell;
And, like the block, unmoved lay: but ours,
As much too active, like the stork devours.
Is there no temp'rate region can be known,
Betwixt their frigid, and our torrid zone?
Could we not wake from that lethargic dream,[32]

35

/ But to be restless in a worse extreme?
And for that lethargy was there no cure,
But to be cast into a calenture?
Can knowledge have no bound, but must advance
So far, to make us wish for ignorance?
And rather in the dark to grope our way,
Than, led by a false guide, to err by day?

/ But to be restless in a worse extreme?
And for that lethargy was there no cure,
But to be cast into a calenture?
Can knowledge have no bound, but must advance
So far, to make us wish for ignorance?
And rather in the dark to grope our way,
Than, led by a false guide, to err by day?[34]

36

/ Who sees these dismal heaps, but would demand,
What barbarous invader sack'd the land?
But when he hears, no Goth, no Turk did bring
This desolation, but a Christian king;
When nothing, but the name of zeal, appears
'Twixt our best actions, and the worst of theirs,
What does he think our sacrilege would spare,
When such th' effects of our devotion are?"

/ Who sees these dismal heaps, but would demand,
What barbarous invader sacked the land?
But when he hears, no Goth, no Turk did bring
This desolation, but a Christian king;
When nothing, but the name of zeal, appears
'Twixt our best actions, and the worst of theirs,
What does he think our sacrilege would spare,
When such th' effects of our devotion are?"

37

COOPER'S HILL, by Sir JOHN DENHAM.

Cooper's Hill, by Sir John Denham.

38 *Lèse-nation*: "injury to the nation," the revolutionary coinage modeled on *lèse-majesté* (treason against the sovereign).

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fair repartition of burthens upon all the orders could possibly restore them? If such an equal imposition would have been sufficient, you well know it might easily have been made. Mr.	fair distribution of burdens upon all the orders could possibly restore them? If such an equal levy would have been enough, you well know it could easily have been made. Mr.
p. 175 Neckar, in the budget which he laid before the Orders assembled at Versailles, made a detailed exposition of the state of the French nation[4].	Necker, in the budget he laid before the Orders assembled at Versailles, gave a detailed account of the state of the French nation[4].[39]

41

NECKER'S REPORT: NO NEED FOR CONFISCATION

Necker's own figures showed the deficit could be met without confiscation; the clergy had offered to pay.

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If we give credit to him, it was not necessary to have recourse to any new impositions whatsoever, to put the receipts of France on a balance with its expences. He stated the permanent charges of all descriptions, including the interest of a new loan of four hundred millions, [176] at 531,444,000 livres; the fixed revenue at 475,294,000, making the deficiency 56,150,000, or short of 2,200,000 sterling. But to balance it, he brought forward savings and improvements of revenue (considered as entirely certain) to rather more than the amount of that deficiency; and he concludes with these emphatical words (p.	If we believe him, there was no need to resort to any new taxes whatever to balance the receipts of France against its expenditures. He put the permanent charges of every kind, including the interest on a new loan of four hundred million, [176] at 531,444,000 livres, and the fixed revenue at 475,294,000. That made the deficit 56,150,000, or a little short of £2,200,000 sterling. But to balance it, he brought forward savings and improvements of revenue (regarded as entirely certain) amounting to rather more than that deficit; and he concludes with these emphatic words (p.
p. 176 39) "Quel pays, Messieurs, que celui, ou, *sans impots* et avec de simples objets *inappercus,* on peut faire disparoitre un deficit qui a fait tant de bruit en Europe." As to the re-imbursement, the sinking of debt, and the other great objects of public credit and political arrangement indicated in Mons. Necker's speech, no doubt could be entertained, but that a very moderate and proportioned assessment on the citizens without distinction would have provided for all of them to the fullest extent of their demand.	39): "What a country, gentlemen, is that in which, *without taxes* and with mere *unnoticed* items, one can make vanish a deficit that has caused so much stir in Europe!" As for repayment, the sinking of debt, and the other great objects of public credit and political arrangement indicated in M. Necker's speech, there could be no doubt that a very moderate and proportioned assessment on the citizens without distinction would have provided for all of them to the full extent of their demands.[42]
If this representation of Mons. Necker was false, then the assembly are in the highest degree	If this representation of M. Necker's was false, then the assembly are guilty in the highest degree.

39 Jacques Necker (1732–1804), Louis XVI's Genevan-born director general of finances, recalled in 1788.
41

[4] Rapport de Mons. le directeur général des finances, fait par ordre du Roi à Versailles. Mai 5, 1789.

[4] Report of the director general of finances, made by order of the King at Versailles, May 5, 1789.[40]

40 Burke cites the French title, *Rapport de Mons. le directeur général des finances*: Necker's address at the opening of the states general.

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culpable for having forced the king to accept as his minister, and since the king's deposition, for having employed as *their* minister, a man who had been capable of abusing so notoriously the confidence of his master and their own; in a matter too of the highest moment, and directly appertaining to his particular office. But if the representation was exact (as, having always, along with you, conceived a high degree of respect for Mr.	They forced the king to accept as his minister, and since the king's deposition they have employed as *their* minister, a man capable of abusing so notoriously the confidence of his master and their own, and in a matter of the highest importance, belonging directly to his own office. But if the representation was accurate (as, having always, like you, felt a high degree of respect for Mr.
Neckar, I make no doubt it was) then what can be said in favour of those, who, instead of moderate, reasonable, and general contribution, have in cold blood, and impelled by [177] no necessity, had recourse to a partial and cruel confiscation?	Necker, I have no doubt it was), then what can be said for those who, instead of a moderate, reasonable, and general contribution, have in cold blood, and driven by [177] no necessity, resorted to a partial and cruel confiscation?
p. 177 Was that contribution refused on a pretext of privilege, either on the part of the clergy or on that of the nobility? No certainly. As to the clergy, they even ran before the wishes of the third order. Previous to the meeting of the states, they had in all their instructions expressly directed their deputies to renounce every immunity, which put them upon a footing distinct from the condition of their fellow-subjects. In this renunciation the clergy were even more explicit than the nobility.	Was that contribution refused on a pretext of privilege, either by the clergy or by the nobility? Certainly not. As for the clergy, they even ran ahead of the wishes of the third order. Before the states met, they had in all their instructions expressly directed their deputies to renounce every immunity that set them on a footing distinct from that of their fellow subjects. In this renunciation the clergy were even more explicit than the nobility.[43]
But let us suppose that the deficiency had remained at the 56 millions, (or £. 2,200,000 sterling) as at first stated by Mr. Necker. Let us allow that all the resources he opposed to that deficiency were impudent and groundless fictions; and that the assembly (or their lords of articles[5] at the Jacobins) were from thence justified in laying the whole burthen of that deficiency on the clergy,—yet allowing all this, a necessity of £. 2,200,000 sterling will not support a confiscation to the amount of five millions. The imposition of £.	But let us suppose the deficit had remained at the 56 million (or £2,200,000 sterling), as Mr. Necker first stated it. Let us grant that all the resources he set against that deficit were impudent and groundless fictions, and that the assembly (or their lords of articles[5] at the Jacobins) were therefore justified in laying the whole burden of that deficit on the clergy. Yet even granting all this, a need of £2,200,000 sterling will not justify a confiscation amounting to five million. A levy of
2,200,000 on the clergy, as partial, would have been oppressive and unjust, but it would not have been altogether ruinous to those on whom it was imposed; and therefore it would not have answered the real purpose of the managers. [44]	£2,200,000 on the clergy, being partial, would have been oppressive and unjust, but it would not have been altogether ruinous to those it fell on; and therefore it would not have served the real purpose of the managers.
p. 178 Perhaps persons, unacquainted with the state of France, on hearing the clergy and the noblesse	People unacquainted with the state of France may hear that the clergy and the nobility were priv-

42 Burke quotes in French from Necker's report of May 5, 1789, p. 39.
43 The "instructions" are the *cahiers*, the mandates each order drew up for its deputies in 1789.

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were privileged in point of taxation, may be led to imagine, that previous to the revolution these bodies had contributed nothing to the state. This is a great mistake. They certainly did not contribute equally with each other, nor either of them equally with the commons. They both however contributed largely. Neither nobility nor clergy enjoyed any exemption from the excise on consumable commodities, from duties of custom, or from any of the other numerous *indirect* impositions, which in France as well as here, make so very large a proportion of all payments to the public. The noblesse paid the capitation.

They paid also a land-tax, called the twentieth penny, to the height sometimes of three, sometimes of four shillings in the pound; both of them *direct* impositions of no light nature, and no trivial produce. The clergy of the provinces annexed by conquest to France (which in extent make about an eighth part of the whole but in wealth a much larger proportion) paid likewise to the capitation and the twentieth penny, at the rate paid by the nobility. The clergy in the old provinces did not pay the capitation; but they had redeemed themselves at the expence of about 24 millions, or a little more than a million sterling.

They were exempted from the twentieths; but then they made free gifts; they contracted debts for the state; and they were subject to some other charges, the whole computed at about a thirteenth part of [179] their clear income. They ought to have paid annually about forty thousand pounds more, to put them on a par with the contribution of the nobility.

p. 179 When the terrors of this tremendous proscription hung over the clergy, they made an offer of a contribution, through the archbishop of Aix, which, for its extravagance, ought not to have been accepted. But it was evidently and obviously more advantageous to the public creditor, than any thing which could rationally be promised by

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ileged in matters of taxation, and imagine that before the revolution these bodies contributed nothing to the state. This is a great mistake. They certainly did not contribute equally with each other, and neither of them contributed equally with the commons. Both, however, contributed largely. Neither nobility nor clergy enjoyed any exemption from the excise on consumable goods, from customs duties, or from any of the other numerous *indirect* taxes, which in France as well as here make up so very large a proportion of all payments to the public. The nobility paid the capitation.[45]

They also paid a land tax called the twentieth penny, at a rate sometimes of three and sometimes of four shillings in the pound. Both were *direct* taxes, no light burden and no trivial source of revenue. The clergy of the provinces annexed to France by conquest (which make up about an eighth of the whole in extent, but a much larger share in wealth) likewise paid the capitation and the twentieth penny, at the rate paid by the nobility. The clergy in the old provinces did not pay the capitation; but they had bought themselves off at a cost of about 24 million, or a little more than a million sterling.[46]

They were exempt from the twentieths; but then they made free gifts, they contracted debts on behalf of the state, and they were subject to some other charges, the whole computed at about a thirteenth part of [179] their net income. To be on a par with the contribution of the nobility, they would have had to pay about forty thousand pounds more each year.[47]

When the terrors of this tremendous proscription hung over the clergy, they offered a contribution, through the archbishop of Aix, which for its very extravagance ought not to have been accepted. But it was plainly and obviously more advantageous to the public creditor than anything the confiscation could rationally promise. Why was it not accep-

44

[5] In the constitution of Scotland during the Stuart reigns, a committee sat for preparing bills; and none could pass, but those previously approved by them. This committee was called lords of articles.

[5] Under the constitution of Scotland in the reigns of the Stuarts, a committee sat to prepare bills, and none could pass except those it had first approved. This committee was called the lords of articles.

45 The capitation was a graded poll tax first levied in 1695.

46 The twentieth penny: the *vingtième*, nominally a 5 percent tax on income, often levied doubled or tripled.

47 The "free gift" (*don gratuit*) was the lump sum the clergy voted to the crown in their periodic assemblies.

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the confiscation. Why was it not accepted? The reason is plain—There was no desire that the church should be brought to serve the state. The service of the state was made a pretext to destroy the church. One great end in the project would have been defeated, if the plan of extortion had been adopted in lieu of the scheme of confiscation.

The new landed interest connected with the new republic, and connected with it for its very being, could not have been created. This was the reason why that extravagant ransom was not accepted.

The madness of the project of confiscation, on the plan that was first pretended, soon became apparent. To bring this unwieldy mass of landed property, enlarged by the confiscation of all the vast landed domain of the crown, at once into market, was obviously to defeat the profits proposed by the confiscation, by depreciating the value of those lands, and indeed of all the landed estates throughout France. Such a sudden diversion of all its circulating money from trade to land, must be an additional mischief. What [180] step was taken? Did the assembly, on becoming sensible of the inevitable ill effects of their projected sale, revert to the offers of the clergy?

p. 180 No distress could oblige them to travel in a course which was disgraced by any appearance of justice. Giving over all hopes from a general immediate sale, another project seems to have succeeded. They proposed to take stock in exchange for the church lands. In that project great difficulties arose in equalizing the objects to be exchanged. Other obstacles also presented themselves, which threw them back again upon some project of sale. The municipalities had taken an alarm. They would not hear of transferring the whole plunder of the kingdom to the stockholders in Paris. Many of those municipalities had been (upon system) reduced to the most deplorable indigence. Money was no where to be seen.

They were therefore led to the point that was so ardently desired. They panted for a currency of any kind which might revive their perishing

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ted? The reason is plain. There was no desire that the church should be brought to serve the state. The service of the state was made a pretext to destroy the church. One great end of the project would have been defeated if the plan of extortion had been adopted in place of the scheme of confiscation.[48]

The new landed interest connected with the new republic, and dependent on it for its very existence, could not have been created. This was the reason why that extravagant ransom was not accepted.

The madness of the project of confiscation, on the plan first professed, soon became apparent. This unwieldy mass of landed property had been enlarged by the confiscation of the whole vast landed domain of the crown, and to throw it onto the market all at once was obviously to defeat the profits proposed by the confiscation. It would depress the value of those lands, and indeed of all the landed estates throughout France. Such a sudden diversion of all the country's circulating money from trade to land must be a further mischief. What [180] step was taken? Once the assembly saw the inevitable ill effects of their projected sale, did they go back to the offers of the clergy?

No distress could compel them to take a course disgraced by any appearance of justice. Giving up all hope of a general immediate sale, they seem to have turned to another project. They proposed to take government stock in exchange for the church lands. In that project great difficulties arose in matching the value of the things to be exchanged. Other obstacles also appeared, which threw them back again on some project of sale. The municipalities had taken alarm. They would not hear of transferring the whole plunder of the kingdom to the stockholders in Paris. Many of those municipalities had been (systematically) reduced to the most deplorable poverty. Money was nowhere to be seen.

They were therefore brought to the point so ardently desired. They longed for a currency of any kind that might revive their dying industry. The

48 Jean de Dieu-Raymond de Boisgelin, archbishop of Aix, offered on the clergy's behalf a loan of 400 million livres secured on church property (April 1790).

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industry. The municipalities were then to be admitted to a share in the spoil, which evidently rendered the first scheme (if ever it had been seriously entertained) altogether impracticable. Public exigencies pressed upon all sides. The minister of finance reiterated his call for supply with a most urgent,

anxious, and boding voice. Thus pressed on all sides, instead of the first plan of converting their bankers into bishops and abbots, instead of paying the old debt, they contracted a new debt, at 3 per cent. creating a new paper currency, founded on an eventual sale of the church lands.

They issued [181] this paper currency to satisfy in the first instance chiefly the demands made upon them by the *Bank of discount,* the great machine, or papermill, of their fictitious wealth.

p. 181 The spoil of the church was now become the only resource of all their operations in finance; the vital principle of all their politics; the sole security for the existence of their power. It was necessary by all, even the most violent means, to put every individual on the same bottom, and to bind the nation in one guilty interest to uphold this act, and the authority of those by whom it was done. In order to force the most reluctant into a participation of their pillage, they rendered their paper circulation compulsory in all payments.

Those who consider the general tendency of their schemes to this one object as a centre; and a centre from which afterwards all their measures radiate, will not think that I dwell too long upon this part of the proceedings of the national assembly.

To cut off all appearance of connexion between the crown and public justice, and to bring the whole under implicit obedience to the dictators in Paris, the old independent judicature of the parliaments, with all its merits, and all its faults, was wholly abolished. Whilst the parliaments existed, it was evident that the people might some time or other come to resort to them, and rally under the standard of their antient laws. It became however a matter of consideration that the magistrates and officers, in the courts now

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municipalities were then to be admitted to a share in the spoils, which plainly made the first scheme (if it had ever been seriously entertained) altogether impracticable. Public needs pressed on every side. The minister of finance repeated his call for supply in a most urgent,

anxious, and foreboding voice. Thus pressed on every side, they gave up the first plan of turning their bankers into bishops and abbots. Instead of paying the old debt, they contracted a new debt at 3 percent, creating a new paper currency founded on an eventual sale of the church lands.[49]

They issued [181] this paper currency chiefly to satisfy, in the first instance, the demands made on them by the *Bank of discount*, the great machine, or paper mill, of their fictitious wealth.[50]

The spoil of the church had now become the only resource of all their financial operations, the vital principle of all their politics, and the sole security for the existence of their power. It was necessary by every means, even the most violent, to put every individual on the same footing, and to bind the nation in one guilty interest to uphold this act and the authority of those who had done it. To force even the most reluctant into a share of their pillage, they made their paper currency compulsory in all payments.

Those who see that their schemes generally tend toward this one object as a center, and that all their later measures radiate from this center, will not think that I dwell too long on this part of the proceedings of the National Assembly.

To cut off every appearance of connection between the crown and public justice, and to bring the whole under implicit obedience to the dictators in Paris, the old independent judiciary of the parliaments, with all its merits and all its faults, was wholly abolished. While the parliaments existed, it was evident that the people might at some time or other turn to them, and rally under the standard of their ancient laws. It became, however, a matter for consideration that the magistrates and officers of the courts now ab-

49 These are the assignats, first issued in December 1789 and made legal tender bearing interest in April 1790.
50 The *Caisse d'escompte*, a Paris discount bank founded in 1776, which had made large advances to the treasury.

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abolished, *had purchased their places* at a very high rate, for which, as well as for the [182] duty they performed, they received but a very low return of interest.	olished *had bought their places* at a very high price, for which, as well as for the [182] duty they performed, they received only a very low return of interest.[51]
p. 182 Simple confiscation is a boon only for the clergy; —to the lawyers some appearances of equity are to be observed; and they are to receive compensation to an immense amount. Their compensation becomes part of the national debt, for the liquidation of which there is the one exhaustless fund. The lawyers are to obtain their compensation in the new church paper, which is to march with the new principles of judicature and legislature.	Simple confiscation is a boon reserved for the clergy only. Toward the lawyers some appearances of equity are to be observed, and they are to receive compensation to an immense amount. Their compensation becomes part of the national debt, and for paying off that debt there is the one inexhaustible fund. The lawyers are to receive their compensation in the new church paper, which is to march with the new principles of judicature and legislature.
The dismissed magistrates are to take their share of martyrdom with the ecclesiastics, or to receive their own property from such a fund and in such a manner, as all those, who have been seasoned with the antient principles of jurisprudence, and had been the sworn guardians of property,	The dismissed magistrates are to take their share of martyrdom with the clergy, or else to receive their own property from such a fund and in such a manner as all those who have been formed by the ancient principles of jurisprudence, and who had been the sworn guardians of property,
must look upon with horror. Even the clergy are to receive their miserable allowance out of the depreciated paper which is stamped with the indelible character of sacrilege, and with the symbols of their own ruin, or they must starve. So violent an outrage upon credit, property, and liberty, as this compulsory paper currency, has seldom been exhibited by the alliance of bankruptcy and tyranny, at any time, or in any nation.	must look upon with horror. Even the clergy are to receive their miserable allowance out of the depreciated paper, which is stamped with the indelible character of sacrilege and with the symbols of their own ruin. Either they take it, or they starve. The alliance of bankruptcy and tyranny, at any time or in any nation, has seldom exhibited so violent an outrage on credit, property, and liberty as this compulsory paper currency.
In the course of all these operations, at length comes out the grand *arcanum*;—that in reality, and in a fair sense, the lands of the church (so far as any thing certain can be gathered from their proceedings) are not to be sold at all. By the late resolutions of the national assembly, they are indeed to be delivered to the highest bidder. But it is to be observed, that *a certain portion only of the purchase money* [183] *is to be laid down.* A period of twelve years is to be given for the payment of the rest. The philosophic purchasers are therefore, on payment of a sort of fine, to be put instantly into possession of the estate.	In the course of all these operations, the grand *arcanum* at last comes out. In reality, and in a fair sense, the lands of the church (so far as anything certain can be gathered from their proceedings) are not to be sold at all. By the recent resolutions of the National Assembly they are indeed to be delivered to the highest bidder. But it should be observed that *only a certain portion of the purchase money* [183] *is to be paid down.* A period of twelve years is to be allowed for paying the rest. The philosophic purchasers are therefore to be put at once into possession of the estate on payment of a sort of fine.[52]
p. 183 It becomes in some respects a sort of gift to them; to be held on the feudal tenure of zeal to the new	It becomes in some respects a sort of gift to them, to be held on the feudal tenure of zeal for the new establishment. This project is plainly meant to let

51 The *parlements* were the sovereign law courts of the old regime (Paris and the provinces), suspended in 1789 and abolished in 1790. Their offices were purchased and heritable.

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establishment. This project is evidently to let in a body of purchasers without money. The consequence will be, that these purchasers, or rather grantees, will pay, not only from the rents as they accrue, which might as well be received by the state, but from the spoil of the materials of buildings, from waste in woods, and from whatever money, by hands habituated to the gripings of usury, they can wring from the miserable peasant.

He is to be delivered over to the mercenary and arbitrary discretion of men, who will be stimulated to every species of extortion by the growing demands on the growing profits of an estate held under the precarious settlement of a new political system.

When all the frauds, impostures, violences, rapines, burnings, murders, confiscations, compulsory paper currencies, and every description of tyranny and cruelty employed to bring about and to uphold this revolution, have their natural effect, that is, to shock the moral sentiments of all virtuous and sober minds, the abettors of this philosophic system immediately strain their throats in a declamation against the old monarchical government of France. When they have rendered that deposed power sufficiently black, [184] they then proceed in argument, as if all those who disapprove of their new abuses must of course be partizans of the old; that those who reprobate their crude and violent schemes of liberty ought to be treated as advocates for servitude.

p. 184 I admit that their necessities do compel them to this base and contemptible fraud. Nothing can reconcile men to their proceedings and projects but the supposition that there is no third option between them, and some tyranny as odious as can be furnished by the records of history, or by the invention of poets. This prattling of theirs hardly deserves the name of sophistry. It is nothing but plain impudence. Have these gentlemen never heard, in the whole circle of the worlds of theory and practice, of any thing between the despotism of the monarch and the despotism of the multitude?

Have they never heard of a monarchy directed by laws, controlled and balanced by the great

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in a body of purchasers without money. The consequence will be that these purchasers, or rather grantees, will pay not only from the rents as they come in, which might as well be received by the state, but from stripping the materials of buildings, from waste in the woods, and from whatever money they can wring from the miserable peasant, with hands practiced in the grasping ways of usury.

He is to be handed over to the mercenary and arbitrary discretion of men who will be spurred to every kind of extortion by the growing demands on the growing profits of an estate held under the precarious settlement of a new political system.

All the frauds, impostures, violences, robberies, burnings, murders, confiscations, compulsory paper currencies, and every kind of tyranny and cruelty employed to bring about and uphold this revolution have their natural effect: they shock the moral sentiments of all virtuous and sober minds. When they do, the abettors of this philosophic system at once strain their throats in declaiming against the old monarchical government of France. When they have painted that deposed power black enough, [184] they then argue as if all who disapprove of their new abuses must of course be partisans of the old, and as if those who condemn their crude and violent schemes of liberty ought to be treated as advocates of servitude.

I admit that their necessities do compel them to this base and contemptible fraud. Nothing can reconcile men to their proceedings and projects except the supposition that there is no third option between them and some tyranny as odious as any the records of history, or the invention of poets, can supply. This prattle of theirs hardly deserves the name of sophistry. It is nothing but plain impudence. Have these gentlemen never heard, in the whole circle of the worlds of theory and practice, of anything between the despotism of the monarch and the despotism of the multitude?

Have they never heard of a monarchy directed by laws, controlled and balanced by the great hered-

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hereditary wealth and hereditary dignity of a nation; and both again controlled by a judicious check from the reason and feeling of the people at large acting by a suitable and permanent organ?	itary wealth and hereditary dignity of a nation? And of both of these controlled in turn by a judicious check from the reason and feeling of the people at large, acting through a suitable and permanent organ?
Is it then impossible that a man may be found who, without criminal ill intention, or pitiable absurdity, shall prefer such a mixed and tempered government to either of the extremes; and who may repute that nation to be destitute of all wisdom and of all virtue, which, having in its choice to obtain such a government with case, *or rather to confirm it when actually possessed,* thought proper to commit a thousand crimes, and [185] to subject their country to a thousand evils, in order to avoid it?	Is it then impossible that a man may be found who, without criminal ill intent or pitiable absurdity, prefers such a mixed and tempered government to either of the extremes? Or that he may judge a nation destitute of all wisdom and all virtue when, having it in its power to obtain such a government with ease, *or rather to confirm it when it was actually possessed,* it thought fit to commit a thousand crimes, and [185] to subject its country to a thousand evils, in order to avoid it?
p. 185 Is it then a truth so universally acknowledged, that a pure democracy is the only tolerable form into which human society can be thrown, that a man is not permitted to hesitate about its merits, without the suspicion of being a friend to tyranny, that is, of being a foe to mankind?	Is it then a truth so universally acknowledged that a pure democracy is the only tolerable form into which human society can be thrown, that a man may not hesitate about its merits without being suspected of being a friend to tyranny, that is, a foe to mankind?

52 *Arcanum*: Latin, a secret (the alchemists' word for a hidden remedy). A "fine" here is the lump sum a tenant paid on entering a holding.

Was the Old Order Past Reform?

Burke defends the old monarchy, nobility and clergy as faulty but reformable, and asks what reform without destruction would have looked like.

A DEMOCRACY TENDING TO TYRANNY

Pure democracy can oppress minorities as cruelly as tyranny; was the French monarchy really beyond reform?

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I do not know under what description to class the present ruling authority in France. It affects to be a pure democracy, though I think it in a direct train of becoming shortly a mischievous and ignoble oligarchy. But for the present I admit it to be a contrivance of the nature and effect of what it pretends to. I reprobate no form of government merely upon abstract principles. There may be situations in which the purely democratic form will become necessary. There may be some (very few,

and very particularly circumstanced) where it would be clearly desireable. This I do not take to be the case of France, or of any other great country. Until now, we have seen no examples of considerable democracies.

The antients were better acquainted with them. Not being wholly unread in the authors, who had seen the most of those constitutions, and who best understood them, I cannot help concurring with their opinion, that an absolute democracy, no more than absolute monarchy, is to be reckoned among the legitimate forms of government. They think it rather the corruption and degeneracy, than the sound constitution of a republic. If I recollect rightly, Aristotle observes, [186] that a democracy has many striking points of resemblance with a tyranny[1].

p. 186 Of this I am certain, that in a democracy, the majority of the citizens is capable of exercising the most cruel oppressions upon the minority, whenever strong divisions prevail in that kind of polity, as they often must; and that oppression of the minority will extend to far greater numbers, and will be carried on with much greater fury, than can almost ever be apprehended from the dominion of a single sceptre. In such a popular

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I do not know under what description to class the present ruling authority in France. It pretends to be a pure democracy, though I think it is on a direct course to becoming, before long, a mischievous and ignoble oligarchy. But for the present I grant that it is a contrivance of the nature and effect it claims. I condemn no form of government merely on abstract principles. There may be situations in which the purely democratic form will become necessary. There may be some (very few,

and very particularly circumstanced) where it would be clearly desirable. I do not take this to be the case of France, or of any other great country. Until now, we have seen no examples of considerable democracies.

The ancients knew them better. Since I am not wholly unread in the authors who had seen the most of those constitutions and understood them best, I cannot help agreeing with their opinion that an absolute democracy, no more than an absolute monarchy, is to be counted among the legitimate forms of government. They think it the corruption and degeneracy of a republic rather than its sound constitution. If I remember rightly, Aristotle observes [186] that a democracy has many striking points of resemblance with a tyranny[1].

Of this I am certain: that in a democracy the majority of the citizens is capable of exercising the most cruel oppressions on the minority whenever strong divisions prevail in that kind of polity, as they often must; and that this oppression of the minority will extend to far greater numbers, and will be carried on with far greater fury, than can almost ever be feared from the rule of a single scepter. In such a popular persecution, individual

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persecution, individual sufferers are in a much more deplorable condition than in any other.

Under a cruel prince they have the balmy compassion of mankind to assuage the smart of their wounds; they have the plaudits of the people to animate their generous constancy under their sufferings: but those who are subjected to wrong under multitudes, are deprived of all external consolation. [187] They seem deserted by mankind; overpowered by a conspiracy of their whole species.

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p. 187 But admitting democracy not to have that inevitable tendency to party tyranny, which I suppose it to have, and admitting it to possess as much good in it when unmixed, as I am sure it possesses when compounded with other forms; does monarchy, on its part, contain nothing at all

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sufferers are in a much more deplorable condition than in any other.

Under a cruel prince they have the balm of mankind's compassion to soothe the smart of their wounds; they have the applause of the people to animate their generous constancy under their sufferings. But those who are wronged by multitudes are deprived of all outward consolation. [187] They seem deserted by mankind, overpowered by a conspiracy of their whole species.

But granting that democracy does not have that inevitable tendency to party tyranny which I suppose it to have, and granting that it has as much good in it when unmixed as I am sure it has when compounded with other forms—does monarchy, for its part, contain nothing at all to recommend

1

[1] When I wrote this I quoted from memory, after many years had elapsed from my reading the passage. A learned friend has found it, and it is as follows:

[1] When I wrote this I quoted from memory, many years after I had read the passage. A learned friend has found it, and it is as follows:

3

τὸ ἦθος τὸ αὐτό, καὶ ἄμφω δεσποτικὰ τῶν βελτιόνων, καὶ τὰ ψηφίσματα ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ τὰ ἐπιτάγματα, καὶ ὁ δημαγωγὸς καὶ ὁ κόλαξ οἱ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀνάλογον· καὶ μάλιστα δ' ἑκάτεροι παρ' ἑκατέροις ἰσχύουσιν, οἱ μὲν κόλακες παρὰ τοῖς τυράννοις, οἱ δὲ δημαγωγοὶ παρὰ τοῖς δήμοις τοῖς τοιούτοις.—

"The character is the same, and both rule despotically over the better citizens; and the decrees are like the edicts there; and the demagogue and the flatterer are the same, or analogous; and each has the most power with its own—the flatterers with tyrants, the demagogues with democracies of this kind."—[2]

2 Aristotle, Politics IV.4 (1292a), in Greek; Burke supplies his own freer English version in the next paragraph.

5

"The ethical character is the same; both exercise despotism over the better class of citizens; and decrees are in the one, what ordinances and arrêts are in the other: the demagogue too, and the court favourite, are not unfrequently the same identical men, and always bear a close analogy; and these have the principal power, each in their respective forms of government, favourites with the absolute monarch, and demagogues with a people such as I have described." Arist. Politic. lib. iv. cap. 4.

"The ethical character is the same; both exercise despotism over the better class of citizens; and decrees are in the one what ordinances and *arrêts* are in the other. The demagogue, too, and the court favorite are not infrequently the very same men, and always bear a close analogy; and these hold the principal power, each in their respective form of government—favorites with the absolute monarch, and demagogues with a people such as I have described." Aristotle, *Politics*, book IV, chapter 4.[4]

4 Arrêts: decrees issued by the French royal council and the parlements.

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to recommend it? I do not often quote Bolingbroke, nor have his works, in general, left any permanent impression on my mind. He is a presumptuous and a superficial writer. But he has one observation, which, in my opinion, is not without depth and solidity.

He says, that he prefers a monarchy to other governments; because you can better ingraft any description of republic on a monarchy, than any thing of monarchy upon the republican forms. I think him perfectly in the right. The fact is so historically; and it agrees well with the speculation.

I know how easy a topic it is to dwell on the faults of departed greatness. By a revolution in the state, the fawning sycophant of yesterday, is converted into the austere critic of the present hour. But steady independent minds, when they have an object of so serious a concern to mankind as government, under their contemplation, will disdain to assume the part of satirists and declaimers. They will judge of human institutions as they do of human characters. They will sort out the good from the evil, which is mixed in mortal institutions as it is in mortal men.

Your government in France, though usually, and I think justly, reputed the best of the unqualified [188] or ill-qualified monarchies, was still full of abuses. These abuses accumulated in a length of time, as they must accumulate in every monarchy not under the constant inspection of a popular representative. I am no stranger to the faults and defects of the subverted government of France; and I think I am not inclined by nature or policy to make a panegyric upon any thing which is a just and natural object of censure. But the question is not now of the vices of that monarchy, but of its existence.

p. 188 Is it then true, that the French government was such as to be incapable or undeserving of reform; so that it was of absolute necessity the whole fabric should be at once pulled down, and the area cleared for the erection of a theoretic experimental edifice in its place? All France was of a different opinion in the beginning of the year 1789. The instructions to the representatives to the states-general,

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He says that he prefers a monarchy to other governments, because you can better graft any kind of republic onto a monarchy than anything of monarchy onto the republican forms. I think him perfectly right. It is so as a matter of history, and it agrees well with theory.

I know how easy a topic it is to dwell on the faults of fallen greatness. By a revolution in the state, the fawning sycophant of yesterday is turned into the stern critic of the present hour. But steady, independent minds, when they have before them an object of such serious concern to mankind as government, will disdain to play the part of satirists and declaimers. They will judge human institutions as they judge human characters. They will sort out the good from the evil, which is mixed in mortal institutions as it is in mortal men.

Your government in France, though usually—and I think justly—reputed the best of the unqualified [188] or ill-qualified monarchies, was still full of abuses. These abuses had piled up over a length of time, as they must pile up in every monarchy not under the constant inspection of a popular representative. I am no stranger to the faults and defects of the overthrown government of France, and I think I am not inclined by nature or by policy to make a panegyric on anything that is a just and natural object of censure. But the question now is not about the vices of that monarchy, but about its existence.

Is it true, then, that the French government was such as to be incapable or undeserving of reform, so that it was absolutely necessary to pull down the whole fabric at once and clear the ground for the erection of a theoretical, experimental edifice in its place? All France was of a different opinion at the beginning of the year 1789. The instructions to the representatives to the states general,

6 Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), Tory statesman and political writer.

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from every district in that kingdom, were filled with projects for the reformation of that government, without the remotest suggestion of a design to destroy it. Had such a design been then even insinuated, I believe there would have been but one voice, and that voice for rejecting it with scorn and horror.

Men have been sometimes led by degrees, sometimes hurried into things, the whole of which, if they could have seen together, they never would have permitted the most remote approach. When those instructions were given, there was no question but that abuses existed, and that they demanded a reform; nor is there now. In the interval between the instructions and the revolution, things changed their shape; and in consequence of that change, the true question at present is, [189] Whether those who would have reformed, or those who have destroyed, are in the right?

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from every district in that kingdom, were filled with projects for reforming that government, without the remotest suggestion of a design to destroy it. Had such a design even been hinted at then, I believe there would have been but one voice, and that voice for rejecting it with scorn and horror.

Men have sometimes been led by degrees, sometimes hurried, into things which, if they could have seen the whole of them together, they would never have allowed even the most remote approach to. When those instructions were given, there was no question that abuses existed and that they demanded reform; nor is there now. In the interval between the instructions and the revolution, things changed their shape; and in consequence of that change, the true question at present is, [189] who are in the right: those who would have reformed, or those who have destroyed?

THE OLD MONARCHY: POPULATION AND WEALTH

France's growing population and great wealth show that the old monarchy was not a ruinous despotism.

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p. 189 To hear some men speak of the late monarchy of France, you would imagine that they were talking of Persia bleeding under the ferocious sword of Taehmas Kouli Khân; or at least describing the barbarous anarchic despotism of Turkey, where the finest countries in the most genial climates in the world are wasted by peace more than any countries have been worried by war; where arts are unknown, where manufactures languish, where science is extinguished, where agriculture decays, where the human race itself melts away and perishes under the eye of the observer. Was this the case of France? I have no way of determining the question but by a reference to facts. Facts do not support this resemblance.

Along with much evil, there is some good in monarchy itself; and some corrective to its evil, from religion, from laws, from manners, from opinions, the French monarchy must have received; which rendered it (though by no means a free, and therefore by no means a good

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To hear some men speak of the late monarchy of France, you would imagine they were talking of Persia bleeding under the ferocious sword of Tahmas Kouli Khan; or at least describing the barbarous, anarchic despotism of Turkey, where the finest countries in the most genial climates in the world are wasted more by peace than any countries have been ravaged by war; where arts are unknown, where manufactures languish, where science is extinguished, where agriculture decays, where the human race itself melts away and perishes before the observer's eyes. Was this the case of France? I have no way of deciding the question but by reference to facts. The facts do not support this resemblance.[7]

Along with much evil, there is some good in monarchy itself; and the French monarchy must have received some corrective to its evil from religion, from laws, from manners, from opinions—which made it (though by no means a free, and therefore

7 Tahmasp Quli Khan, better known as Nadir Shah (1688–1747), the ruler of Persia notorious for his conquests and cruelty.

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constitution) a despotism rather in appearance than in reality.

Among the standards upon which the effects of government on any country are to be estimated, I must consider the state of its population as not the least certain. No country in which population flourishes, and is in progressive improvement, can be under a *very* mischievous government. About sixty years ago, the Intendants of the generalities of France made,

with other matters, a report of the population of their several districts. I have [190] not the books, which are very voluminous, by me, nor do I know where to procure them (I am obliged to speak by memory, and therefore the less positively) but I think the population of France was by them, even at that period, estimated at twenty-two millions of souls.

p. 190 At the end of the last century it had been generally calculated at eighteen. On either of these estimations France was not ill-peopled. Mr. Necker, who is an authority for his own time at least equal to the Intendants for theirs, reckons, and upon apparently sure principles, the people of France, in the year 1780,

at twenty-four millions six hundred and seventy thousand. But was this the probable ultimate term under the old establishment? Dr. Price is of opinion, that the growth of population in France was by no means at its *acmé* in that year. I certainly defer to Dr. Price's authority a good deal more in these speculations, than I do in his general politics. This gentleman, taking ground on Mr.

Necker's data, is very confident, that since the period of that minister's calculation, the French population has encreased rapidly; so rapidly that in the year 1789 he will not consent to rate the people of that kingdom at a lower number than thirty millions. After abating much (and much I think ought to be abated) from the sanguine calculation of Dr. Price, I have no doubt that the population of France did encrease considerably during this later period:

but supposing that it encreased to nothing more than will be sufficient to compleat the 24,670,000

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by no means a good, constitution) a despotism in appearance rather than in reality.

Among the standards by which the effects of a government on any country are to be judged, I must consider the state of its population not the least certain. No country in which population flourishes and is steadily improving can be under a *very* mischievous government. About sixty years ago, the Intendants of the generalities of France made,[8]

among other matters, a report on the population of their several districts. I do [190] not have the books, which are very voluminous, at hand, nor do I know where to get them (I am obliged to speak from memory, and therefore the less positively); but I think they estimated the population of France, even at that period, at twenty-two million souls.

At the end of the last century it had generally been calculated at eighteen. On either of these estimates France was not thinly peopled. Mr. Necker, who for his own time is an authority at least equal to the Intendants for theirs, reckons, on apparently sure principles, the people of France in the year 1780

at twenty-four million six hundred and seventy thousand. But was this likely to be the final limit under the old establishment? Dr. Price is of the opinion that the growth of population in France was by no means at its *acme* in that year. I certainly defer to Dr. Price's authority a good deal more in these speculations than I do in his politics generally. This gentleman, taking his ground on Mr.

Necker's data, is very confident that since the time of that minister's calculation the French population has increased rapidly—so rapidly that for the year 1789 he will not consent to put the people of that kingdom at a lower number than thirty million. After deducting much (and much, I think, ought to be deducted) from Dr. Price's sanguine calculation, I have no doubt that the population of France did increase considerably during this later period;

but supposing it increased by no more than enough to bring the 24,670,000 up to 25 million, still a population of 25 million, and that [191] still in-

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to 25 millions, still a population of 25 millions, and that [191] in an increasing progress, on a space of about twenty-seven thousand square leagues, is immense.	creasing, on an area of about twenty-seven thousand square leagues, is immense.
p. 191 It is, for instance, a good deal more than the proportionable population of this island, or even than that of England, the best-peopled part of the united kingdom.	It is, for instance, a good deal more than the proportional population of this island, or even than that of England, the best-peopled part of the United Kingdom.
It is not universally true, that France is a fertile country. Considerable tracts of it are barren, and labour under other natural disadvantages. In the portions of that territory, where things are more favourable, as far as I am able to discover, the numbers of the people correspond to the indulgence of nature[2]. The Generality of Lisle (this I admit is the strongest example) upon an extent of 404 ½ leagues, about ten years ago, contained 734,600 souls, which is 1772 inhabitants to each square league. The middle term for the rest of France is about 900 inhabitants to the same admeasurement.	It is not universally true that France is a fertile country. Considerable tracts of it are barren, and labor under other natural disadvantages. In those parts of the territory where things are more favorable, as far as I can discover, the numbers of the people correspond to the generosity of nature[2]. The Generality of Lille (this, I admit, is the strongest example), on an extent of 404 ½ leagues, contained about ten years ago 734,600 souls, which is 1,772 inhabitants to each square league. The average for the rest of France is about 900 inhabitants to the same measure.
10	
I do not attribute this population to the deposed government; because I do not like to compliment the contrivances of men, with what is due in a great degree to the bounty of Providence. But that decried government could not have obstructed, most probably it favoured, the operation of those causes (whatever they were) whether of nature in the soil, or in habits of industry among the people, which has produced so large a number of the species throughout that whole kingdom, and exhibited in some particular places such [192] prodigies of population.	I do not credit this population to the deposed government, because I do not like to compliment the contrivances of men with what is due in great measure to the bounty of Providence. But that much-decried government could not have obstructed, and most probably favored, the operation of those causes (whatever they were)—whether of nature in the soil, or of habits of industry among the people—which have produced so large a number of the species throughout that whole kingdom, and displayed in some particular places such [192] prodigies of population.
p. 192 I never will suppose that fabrick of a state to be the worst of all political institutions, which, by experience, is found to contain a principle favourable (however latent it may be) to the encrease of mankind.	I will never suppose that fabric of a state to be the worst of all political institutions which experience shows to contain a principle favorable (however latent it may be) to the increase of mankind.

8 The Intendants were the crown's chief administrators in the generalities, the fiscal and administrative districts of old-regime France.

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[2] De l'Administration des Finances de la France, par Mons. Necker, vol. i. p. 288.	[2] *De l'Administration des Finances de la France*, by M. Necker, vol. i, p. 288.[9]

9 Necker's "On the Administration of the Finances of France," a three-volume survey of French public finance.

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The wealth of a country is another, and no contemptible standard, by which we may judge whether, on the whole, a government be protecting or destructive. France far exceeds England in the multitude of her people; but I apprehend that her comparative wealth is much inferior to ours; that it is not so equal in the distribution, nor so ready in the circulation. I believe the difference in the form of the two governments to be amongst the causes of this advantage on the side of England. I speak of England, not of the whole British dominions; which, if compared with those of France, will, in some degree, weaken the comparative rate of wealth upon our side.

But that wealth, which will not endure a comparison with the riches of England, may constitute a very respectable degree of opulence. Mr. Necker's book published in 1785[3], contains an accurate and interesting collection of facts relative to public oeconomy and to political arithmetic; and his speculations on the subject are generally wise and liberal. In that work he gives an idea of the state of France, very remote from the portrait of a country whose government was a perfect grievance, an absolute evil, admitting no cure but through the violent and uncertain remedy of a total revolution.

p. 193 He affirms, that from the year 1726 to the year 1784, there was coined at the mint of France, in the species of gold and silver, to the amount of about one hundred millions of pounds sterling[4].

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It is impossible that Mr. Necker should be mistaken in the amount of the bullion which has been coined in the mint. It is a matter of official record. The reasonings of this able financier, concerning the quantity of gold and silver which remained for circulation, when he wrote in 1785, that is about four years before the deposition and imprisonment of the French King, are not of equal certainty; but they are laid on grounds so apparently solid, that it is not easy to refuse a

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The wealth of a country is another standard, and no contemptible one, by which we may judge whether, on the whole, a government is protective or destructive. France far exceeds England in the multitude of her people; but I take it that her comparative wealth is much inferior to ours—that it is not so equal in its distribution, nor so ready in its circulation. I believe the difference in the form of the two governments to be among the causes of this advantage on England's side. I speak of England, not of the whole British dominions, which, if compared with those of France, will somewhat weaken the comparative rate of wealth on our side.

But wealth that will not bear comparison with the riches of England may still amount to a very respectable degree of opulence. Mr. Necker's book, published in 1785[3], contains an accurate and interesting collection of facts on public economy and political arithmetic, and his reflections on the subject are generally wise and liberal. In that work he gives an idea of the state of France very far from the portrait of a country whose government was a perfect grievance, an absolute evil, admitting no cure but the violent and uncertain remedy of a total revolution.[11]

He states that from the year 1726 to the year 1784 there was coined at the French mint, in gold and silver coin, to the amount of about one hundred million pounds sterling[4].

It is impossible that Mr. Necker should be mistaken in the amount of bullion coined at the mint. It is a matter of official record. The reasonings of this able financier about the quantity of gold and silver that remained in circulation when he wrote in 1785—that is, about four years before the deposition and imprisonment of the French king—are not equally certain; but they rest on grounds so apparently solid that it is not easy to withhold a

11 Political arithmetic: the period's term for economic and demographic statistics.

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[3] De l'Administration des Finances de la France, par M. Necker.

[3] *De l'Administration des Finances de la France,* by M. Necker.

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[4] Vol. iii. chap. 8. and chap. 9.

[4] Vol. iii, chap. 8 and chap. 9.

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considerable degree of assent to his calculation. He calculates the *numeraire,* or what we call *specie,* then actually existing in France, at about eighty-eight millions of the same English money.

A great accumulation of wealth for one country, large as that country is! Mr. Necker was so far from considering this influx of wealth as likely to cease, when he wrote in 1785, that he presumes upon a future annual increase of two per cent. upon the money brought into France during the periods from which he computed.

Some adequate cause must have originally introduced all the money coined at its mint into that kingdom; and some cause as operative must have kept at home, or returned into its bosom, such a vast flood of treasure as Mr. Necker calculates to remain for domestic circulation. Suppose any reasonable deductions from M. Necker's computation; [194] the remainder must still amount to an immense sum. Causes thus powerful to acquire and to retain, cannot be found in discouraged industry, insecure property, and a positively destructive government.

p. 194 Indeed, when I consider the face of the kingdom of France; the multitude and opulence of her cities; the useful magnificence of her spacious high roads and bridges; the opportunity of her artificial canals and navigations opening the conveniences of maritime communication through a solid continent of so immense an extent; when I turn my eyes to the stupendous works of her ports and harbours, and to her whole naval apparatus, whether for war or trade;

when I bring before my view the number of her fortifications, constructed with so bold and masterly a skill, and made and maintained at so prodigious a charge, presenting an armed front and impenetrable barrier to her enemies upon every side; when I recollect how very small a part of that extensive region is without cultivation, and to what complete perfection the culture of many of the best productions of the earth have been brought in France;

when I reflect on the excellence of her manufactures and fabrics, second to none but ours, and in some particulars not second; when I contemplate the grand foundations of charity,

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considerable degree of assent from his calculation. He calculates the *numéraire*, or what we call *specie*, then actually existing in France at about eighty-eight million in the same English money.

A great accumulation of wealth for one country, large as that country is! Mr. Necker, writing in 1785, was so far from thinking this influx of wealth likely to cease that he assumes a future annual increase of two percent on the money brought into France during the periods from which he made his computation.

Some adequate cause must originally have brought into that kingdom all the money coined at its mint; and some cause just as effective must have kept at home, or drawn back into its bosom, the vast flood of treasure that Mr. Necker calculates to remain for domestic circulation. Make any reasonable deductions from M. Necker's computation; [194] the remainder must still amount to an immense sum. Causes so powerful to acquire and to retain cannot be found in discouraged industry, insecure property, and a positively destructive government.

Indeed, when I consider the face of the kingdom of France; the multitude and opulence of her cities; the useful magnificence of her spacious highways and bridges; the advantage of her artificial canals and waterways, opening the conveniences of maritime communication through a solid continent of such immense extent; when I turn my eyes to the stupendous works of her ports and harbors, and to her whole naval apparatus, whether for war or for trade;

when I bring before my view the number of her fortifications, built with such bold and masterly skill, and made and maintained at such prodigious cost, presenting an armed front and an impenetrable barrier to her enemies on every side; when I recall how very small a part of that extensive region is uncultivated, and to what complete perfection the culture of many of the best products of the earth has been brought in France;

when I reflect on the excellence of her manufactures and fabrics, second to none but ours, and in some particulars not second; when I contemplate her grand foundations of charity, public and

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public and private; when I survey the state of all the arts that beautify and polish life;

when I reckon the men she has bred for extending her fame in war, her able statesmen, the multitude of her profound lawyers and theologians, her philosophers, her critics, her historians and antiquaries, her poets, and her orators [195] sacred and profane, I behold in all this something which awes and commands the imagination, which checks the mind on the brink of precipitate and indiscriminate censure, and which demands, that we should very seriously examine, what and how great are the latent vices that could authorise us at once to level so specious a fabric with the ground.

p. 195 I do not recognize, in this view of things, the despotism of Turkey. Nor do I discern the character of a government that has been, on the whole, so oppressive, or so corrupt, or so negligent, as to be utterly unfit *for all reformation.* I must think such a government well deserved to have its excellencies heightened; its faults corrected; and its capacities improved into a British constitution.

Whoever has examined into the proceedings of that deposed government for several years back, cannot fail to have observed, amidst the inconstancy and fluctuation natural to courts, an earnest endeavour towards the prosperity and improvement of the country; he must admit, that it had long been employed, in some instances, wholly to remove, in many considerably to correct, the abusive practices and usages that had prevailed in the state; and that even the unlimited power of the sovereign over the persons of his subjects, inconsistent, as undoubtedly it was, with law and liberty, had yet been every day growing more mitigated in the exercise.

So far from refusing itself to reformation, that government was open, with a censurable degree of facility, to all sorts of projects and projectors on the subject. Rather too much countenance was given to the spirit of innovation, [196] which soon was turned against those who fostered it, and ended in their ruin. It is but cold, and no very flattering justice to that fallen monarchy, to say, that, for many years, it trespassed more by levity and want of judgment in several of its schemes,

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private; when I survey the state of all the arts that beautify and polish life;

when I count the men she has bred to extend her fame in war, her able statesmen, the multitude of her profound lawyers and theologians, her philosophers, her critics, her historians and antiquaries, her poets, and her orators [195] sacred and profane—I see in all this something that awes and commands the imagination, that checks the mind on the brink of hasty and indiscriminate censure, and that demands that we examine very seriously what the hidden vices are, and how great, that could authorize us to level so splendid a fabric with the ground at a stroke.

I do not recognize, in this view of things, the despotism of Turkey. Nor do I discern the character of a government that has been, on the whole, so oppressive, or so corrupt, or so negligent, as to be utterly unfit *for all reformation.* I must think that such a government well deserved to have its excellences heightened, its faults corrected, and its capacities improved into a British constitution.

Whoever has looked into the proceedings of that deposed government over the past several years cannot fail to have noticed, amid the inconstancy and fluctuation natural to courts, an earnest effort toward the prosperity and improvement of the country. He must admit that it had long been at work, in some instances wholly removing and in many considerably correcting the abusive practices and usages that had prevailed in the state. He must also admit that even the unlimited power of the sovereign over the persons of his subjects, inconsistent as it undoubtedly was with law and liberty, had been growing milder in its exercise every day.

So far from refusing reform, that government was open, with a blameworthy degree of readiness, to every sort of project and projector on the subject. Rather too much encouragement was given to the spirit of innovation, [196] which was soon turned against those who had fostered it, and ended in their ruin. It is only cold, and not very flattering, justice to that fallen monarchy to say that for many years it went wrong more through frivolity and want of judgment in several of its schemes than from any lack of diligence or of public spirit.

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than from any defect in diligence or in public spirit.

p. 196 To compare the government of France for the last fifteen or sixteen years with wise and well-constituted establishments, during that, or during any period, is not to act with fairness. But if in point of prodigality in the expenditure of money, or in point of rigour in the exercise of power, it be compared with any of the former reigns, I believe candid judges will give little credit to the good intentions of those who dwell perpetually on the donations to favourites, or on the expences of the court, or on the horrors of the Bastile in the reign of Louis the XVIth.

To compare the government of France over the last fifteen or sixteen years with wise and well-constituted establishments, during that or any other period, is not to act fairly. But if it is compared with any of the earlier reigns in its extravagance in spending money, or in its severity in exercising power, I believe candid judges will give little credit to the good intentions of those who dwell endlessly on the gifts to favorites, or on the expenses of the court, or on the horrors of the Bastille in the reign of Louis XVI.

Whether the system, if it deserves such a name, now built on the ruins of that antient monarchy, will be able to give a better account of the population and wealth of the country, which it has taken under its care, is a matter very doubtful. Instead of improving by the change, I apprehend that a long series of years must be told before it can recover in any degree the effects of this philosophic revolution, and before the nation can be replaced on its former footing. If Dr.

Price should think fit, a few years hence, to favour us with an estimate of the population of France, he will hardly be able to make up his tale of thirty millions of souls, as computed in 1789, or the assembly's computation of twenty-six millions in that year; or even [197] Mr. Necker's twenty-five millions in 1780. I hear that there are considerable emigrations from France; and that many quitting that voluptuous climate, and that seductive *Circean* liberty, have taken refuge in the frozen regions, and under the British despotism, of Canada.

Whether the system now built on the ruins of that ancient monarchy, if it deserves the name, will be able to give a better account of the population and wealth of the country it has taken under its care is very doubtful. Far from gaining by the change, I fear that a long run of years must pass before the country can recover in any degree from the effects of this philosophic revolution, and before the nation can be restored to its former footing. If Dr.

Price should see fit, a few years from now, to favor us with an estimate of the population of France, he will hardly be able to make up his count of thirty million souls, as computed in 1789, or the Assembly's figure of twenty-six million for that year, or even [197] Mr. Necker's twenty-five million in 1780. I hear that there are considerable emigrations from France, and that many people, leaving that voluptuous climate and that seductive *Circean* liberty, have taken refuge in the frozen regions of Canada, under British despotism.[14]

p. 197 In the present disappearance of coin, no person could think it the same country, in which the present minister of the finances has been able to discover fourscore millions sterling in specie. From its general aspect one would conclude that it had been for some time past under the special direction of the learned academicians of Laputa and Balnibarbi[5]. Already the population of Paris has so declined, that Mr. Necker stated to the national assembly the provision to be made for its

With coin vanishing as it now is, no one could believe this the same country in which the present minister of finance was able to find eighty million pounds sterling in specie. From its general appearance one would conclude that it had been for some time under the special direction of the learned academicians of Laputa and Balnibarbi[5]. Already the population of Paris has fallen so far that Mr. Necker told the National Assembly that the provision for feeding the city could be set a

14 Canada had been governed without an elected assembly under the Quebec Act of 1774, hence Burke's ironic "British despotism." Circe was the enchantress in Homer's *Odyssey* who turned men into swine.

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subsistence at a fifth less than what had formerly been found requisite.	fifth lower than what had formerly been found necessary.
It is said (and I have never heard it contradicted) that an hundred thousand people are out of employment in that city, though it is become the seat of the imprisoned court and national assembly. Nothing, I am credibly informed, can exceed the shocking and disgusting spectacle of mendicancy displayed in that capital. Indeed, the votes of the national assembly leave no doubt of the fact. They have lately appointed a standing committee of mendicancy. They are contriving at once a vigorous police on this subject, and, for the first time, the imposition of a tax to maintain the poor, for whose present relief great sums appear on the face of the public accounts of the [198] year[6].	It is said, and I have never heard it contradicted, that a hundred thousand people are out of work in that city, though it has become the seat of the imprisoned court and of the National Assembly. Nothing, I am reliably told, can exceed the shocking and disgusting spectacle of begging on display in that capital. Indeed, the votes of the National Assembly leave no doubt of the fact. They have lately appointed a standing committee on begging. They are devising both a vigorous police on this subject and, for the first time, a tax to maintain the poor, for whose present relief great sums appear on the face of the public accounts for the [198] year[6].[15]
p. 198 In the mean time, the leaders of the legislative clubs and coffee-houses are intoxicated with admiration at their own wisdom and ability. They speak with the most sovereign contempt of the rest of the world. They tell the people, to comfort them in the rags with which they have cloathed them, that they are a nation of philosophers;	Meanwhile the leaders of the legislative clubs and coffee-houses are intoxicated with admiration of their own wisdom and ability. They speak with the most sovereign contempt of the rest of the world. To comfort the people in the rags they have clothed them in, they tell them that they are a nation of philosophers;
and, sometimes, by all the arts of quackish parade, by shew, tumult, and bustle, sometimes by the alarms of plots and invasions, they attempt to drown the cries of indigence, and to divert the eyes of the observer from the ruin and wretchedness of the state. A brave people will certainly prefer liberty, accompanied with a virtuous poverty, to a depraved and wealthy servitude.	and sometimes by every art of quack parade, by show, tumult, and bustle, sometimes by alarms of plots and invasions, they try to drown the cries of the destitute and to divert the observer's eyes from the ruin and wretchedness of the state. A brave people will certainly prefer liberty accompanied by a virtuous poverty to a depraved and wealthy servitude.
But before the price of comfort and opulence is paid, one ought to be pretty sure, it is real liberty which is purchased, and that she is to be purchased at no other price. I shall always, however, consider that liberty as very equivocal in her appearance, which has not wisdom and justice for her companions; and does not lead prosperity and plenty in her train.	But before the price of comfort and wealth is paid, one ought to be quite sure that it is real liberty being bought, and that she can be bought at no other price. I shall always, however, regard as very doubtful in her appearance any liberty that does not have wisdom and justice for her companions, and does not lead prosperity and plenty in her train.

15 "Police" here means civil administration and regulation, not a police force.
17 The entries are from the French public accounts of 1790; "Liv." is livres, converted by Burke into pounds, shillings, and pence sterling.

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Burke defends the French nobility as honorable and humane, with faults that reform could have corrected.

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p. 199 The advocates for this revolution, not satisfied with exaggerating the vices of their antient government, strike at the fame of their country itself, by painting almost all that could have attracted the attention of strangers, I mean their nobility and their clergy, as objects of horror. If this were only a libel, there had not been much in it. But it has practical consequences.

Had your nobility and gentry, who formed the great body of your landed men, and the whole of your military officers, resembled those of Germany, at the period when the Hanse-towns were necessitated to confederate against the nobles in defence of their property—had they been like the *Orsini* and *Vitelli* in Italy, who used to sally from their fortified dens to rob the trader and traveller—had they been such as the *Mamalukes* in Egypt, or the *Nayres* on the coast of Malabar, I do admit, that too critical an enquiry might not be adviseable into the means of freeing the world from such a nuisance. The statues of Equity and Mercy might be veiled for a moment.

The tenderest minds, confounded with the dreadful exigence in which morality submits to the suspension of its own rules in favour of its

The advocates of this revolution, not content with exaggerating the vices of their old government, strike at the reputation of their country itself, painting almost everything that could have drawn the attention of foreigners, I mean their nobility and their clergy, as objects of horror. If this were only a libel, there would not be much in it. But it has practical consequences.

Suppose your nobility and gentry, who made up the great body of your landowners and the whole of your military officers, had resembled those of Germany at the time when the Hanseatic towns were forced to confederate against the nobles in defense of their property. Suppose they had been like the *Orsini* and *Vitelli* in Italy, who used to sally out of their fortified dens to rob the merchant and the traveler, or like the *Mamelukes* in Egypt or the *Nayars* on the coast of Malabar. In that case I admit that too exacting an inquiry into the means of freeing the world from such a nuisance might not be advisable. The statues of Equity and Mercy might be veiled for a moment.[20]

The tenderest minds, bewildered by that dreadful emergency in which morality submits to the suspension of its own rules for the sake of its own

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[5] See Gulliver's Travels for the idea of countries governed by philosophers.

[5] See *Gulliver's Travels* for the idea of countries governed by philosophers.

18

[6] Travaux de charité pour subvenir au manque de travail à Paris et dans les province Liv. 3,866,920 Stg £. 161,121 *s.* 13 *d.* 4
Destruction de vagabondage et de la mendicité 1,671,417 69,642 7 6
Primes pour l'importation de grains 5,671,907 236,329 9 2
Liv. 11,210,244 Stg 467,093 10 0
As I am not quite satisfied with the nature and extent of the annexed article in the public accounts, I do not insert it in the above reference; but if it be understood of the purchase of provision for the poor, it is Immense indeed, and swells the total to a formidable bulk.

[6] Charitable works to relieve the lack of employment in Paris and in the provinces Liv. 3,866,920 Stg £. 161,121 *s.* 13 *d.* 4
Suppression of vagrancy and begging 1,671,417 69,642 7 6
Bounties for the importation of grain 5,671,907 236,329 9 2
Liv. 11,210,244 Stg 467,093 10 0
As I am not entirely satisfied about the nature and extent of the item appended below in the public accounts, I do not include it in the reference above; but if it is to be understood as the purchase of provisions for the poor, it is immense indeed, and swells the total to a formidable size.[17]

19

/ Dépenses relatives aux subsistances, deduction fait des rĕcouvremens qui ont eu lieu 39,871,790 1,661,324 11 8 / Total — Liv. 51,082,034 Stg 2,128,418 1 8

/ Expenses relating to provisions, after deducting the sums recovered 39,871,790 1,661,324 11 8 / Total — Liv. 51,082,034 Stg 2,128,418 1 8

20 The Orsini and Vitelli were feuding noble houses of Renaissance Italy; the Mamelukes were the military caste that dominated Egypt; the Nayars were a warrior caste of Malabar in southwestern India.

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own principles, might turn aside whilst fraud and violence were accomplishing the destruction of a pretended nobility which disgraced whilst it persecuted human nature. The persons most abhorrent from blood, and treason, and arbitrary confiscation, might remain silent spectators of this civil war between the vices.

But did the privileged nobility who met under the king's precept at Versailles, in 1789, or their [200] constituents, deserve to be looked on as the *Nayres* or *Mamalukes* of this age, or as the *Orsini* and *Vitelli* of ancient times? If I had then asked the question, I should have passed for a madman. What have they since done that they were to be driven into exile, that their persons should be hunted about, mangled, and tortured, their families dispersed, their houses laid in ashes, that their order should be abolished, and the memory of it, if possible, extinguished, by ordaining them to change the very names by which they were usually known? Read their instructions to their representatives.

p. 200 They breathe the spirit of liberty as warmly, and they recommend reformation as strongly, as any other order. Their privileges relative to contribution were voluntarily surrendered; as the king, from the beginning, surrendered all pretence to a right of taxation. Upon a free constitution there was but one opinion in France. The absolute monarchy was at an end. It breathed its last, without a groan, without struggle, without convulsion. All the struggle, all the dissension arose afterwards upon the preference of a despotic democracy to a government of reciprocal controul. The triumph of the victorious party was over the principles of a British constitution.

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principles, might look away while fraud and violence accomplished the destruction of a pretended nobility that disgraced human nature even as it persecuted it. Those who most abhor blood, and treason, and arbitrary confiscation might remain silent spectators of this civil war between the vices.

But did the privileged nobility who met at Versailles in 1789 under the king's summons, or their [200] constituents, deserve to be regarded as the *Nayars* or *Mamelukes* of this age, or as the *Orsini* and *Vitelli* of former times? Had I asked the question then, I would have been taken for a madman. What have they done since, that they should be driven into exile, their persons hunted down, mangled, and tortured, their families scattered, their houses burned to ashes? What have they done, that their order should be abolished, and its very memory extinguished if possible, by a decree obliging them to change the very names by which they were commonly known? Read their instructions to their representatives.[21]

They breathe the spirit of liberty as warmly, and urge reform as strongly, as those of any other order. Their privileges with respect to taxation were voluntarily surrendered, just as the king had from the beginning surrendered every claim to a right of taxation. On a free constitution there was only one opinion in France. The absolute monarchy was at an end. It breathed its last without a groan, without a struggle, without convulsion. All the struggle, all the dissension came afterward, over the preference of a despotic democracy to a government of reciprocal control. The triumph of the victorious party was over the principles of a British constitution.

21 In June 1790 the Assembly abolished hereditary nobility and noble titles.

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I have observed the affectation, which, for many years past, has prevailed in Paris even to a degree perfectly childish, of idolizing the memory of your Henry the Fourth. If any thing could put one out of humour with that ornament to the kingly character, it would be this overdone style of insidious panegyric. The persons who have worked this engine the most busily, are those who have [201] ended their panegyrics in dethroning his successor and descendant;

a man, as good-natured at the least, as Henry the Fourth; altogether as fond of his people; and who has done infinitely more to correct the antient vices of the state than that great monarch did, or we are sure he ever meant to do.

p. 201 Well it is for his panegyrists that they have not him to deal with. For Henry of Navarre was a resolute, active, and politic prince. He possessed indeed great humanity and mildness; but an humanity and mildness that never stood in the way of his interests. He never sought to be loved without putting himself first in a condition to be feared. He used soft language with determined conduct. He asserted and maintained his authority in the gross, and distributed his acts of concession only in the detail.

He spent the income of his prerogatives nobly; but he took care not to break in upon the capital; never abandoning for a moment any of the claims, which he made under the fundamental laws, nor sparing to shed the blood of those who opposed him, often in the field, sometimes upon the scaffold. Because he knew how to make his virtues respected by the ungrateful, he has merited the praises of those whom, if they had lived in his time, he would have shut up in the Bastile, and brought to punishment along with the regicides whom he hanged after he had famished Paris into a surrender.

If these panegyrists are in earnest in their admiration of Henry the Fourth, they must remember, that they cannot think more highly of him, than he did of the noblesse of France; whose virtue, honour, courage, patriotism, and loyalty were his constant theme.

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I have noticed the affectation, prevalent in Paris for many years now and carried to a perfectly childish degree, of idolizing the memory of your Henry IV. If anything could put one out of humor with that ornament of the kingly character, it would be this overdone style of insidious praise. The people who have worked this engine most busily are those who have [201] ended their eulogies by dethroning his successor and descendant;[22]

a man at least as good-natured as Henry IV, every bit as fond of his people, and one who has done infinitely more to correct the ancient vices of the state than that great monarch did, or than we can be sure he ever meant to do.

It is lucky for his admirers that they do not have him to deal with. For Henry of Navarre was a resolute, active, and shrewd prince. He did indeed possess great humanity and mildness, but a humanity and mildness that never stood in the way of his interests. He never sought to be loved without first putting himself in a position to be feared. He used soft language with determined conduct. He asserted and maintained his authority in the gross, and handed out his concessions only in the detail.

He spent the income of his prerogatives nobly, but he took care not to break into the capital. He never abandoned for a moment any of the claims he made under the fundamental laws, nor did he spare the blood of those who opposed him, often in the field, sometimes on the scaffold. Because he knew how to make his virtues respected by the ungrateful, he has earned the praise of people whom, had they lived in his time, he would have shut up in the Bastille and brought to punishment along with the regicides he hanged after he had starved Paris into surrender.[23]

If these admirers are sincere in their admiration of Henry IV, they must remember that they cannot think more highly of him than he did of the noblesse of France, whose virtue, honor, courage, patriotism, and loyalty were his constant theme.

22 Henry IV (reigned 1589–1610), the first Bourbon king of France, Louis XVI's ancestor.
23 Henry besieged and starved Paris in 1590 during the Wars of Religion; the city finally opened its gates to him in 1594.

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But the nobility of France are degenerated since the days of Henry the Fourth.—This is possible. But it is more than I can believe to be true in any great degree. I do not pretend to know France as correctly as some others; but I have endeavoured through my whole life to make myself acquainted with human nature; otherwise I should be unfit to take even my humble part in the service of mankind. In that study I could not pass by a vast portion of our nature, as it appeared modified in a country but twenty-four miles from the shore of this island.

On my best observation, compared with my best enquiries, I found your nobility for the greater part composed of men of an high spirit, and of a delicate sense of honour, both with regard to themselves individually and with regard to their whole corps, over whom they kept, beyond what is common in other countries, a censorial eye. They were tolerably well-bred; very officious, humane, and hospitable; in their conversation frank and open; with a good military tone; and reasonably tinctured with literature, particularly of the authors in their own language. Many had pretensions far above this description. I speak of those who were generally met with.

As to their behaviour to the inferior classes, they appeared to me to comport themselves towards them with good-nature, and with something more nearly approaching to familiarity, than is generally practised with us in the intercourse between the higher and lower ranks of life. To strike any person, even in the most abject condition, was a thing in a manner unknown, and would be highly disgraceful. Instances of other ill-treatment of [203] the humble part of the community were rare;

and as to attacks made upon the property or the personal liberty of the commons, I never heard of any whatsoever from *them*; nor, whilst the laws were in vigour under the antient government, would such tyranny in subjects have been permitted.

As men of landed estates, I had no fault to find with their conduct, though much to reprehend, and much to wish changed, in many of the old tenures. Where the letting of their land was by rent, I could not discover that their agreements with their farmers were oppressive; nor when

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But the nobility of France have degenerated since the days of Henry IV.—That is possible. But it is more than I can believe to be true to any great degree. I do not claim to know France as precisely as some others do; but I have tried throughout my life to acquaint myself with human nature, or I would be unfit to take even my humble part in the service of mankind. In that study I could not pass over a vast portion of our nature as it appeared, modified, in a country only twenty-four miles from the shore of this island.

From my best observation, compared with my best inquiries, I found your nobility for the most part composed of men of high spirit and a delicate sense of honor, both with regard to themselves individually and with regard to their whole body, over which they kept, more than is common in other countries, a censor's eye. They were tolerably well-bred; very obliging, humane, and hospitable; frank and open in their conversation; with a good military tone; and reasonably tinctured with literature, particularly with the authors of their own language. Many had claims well beyond this description. I speak of those one generally met.

As for their behavior toward the lower classes, they seemed to me to conduct themselves toward them with good nature, and with something closer to familiarity than is usual with us in the dealings between the higher and lower ranks of life. To strike anyone, even in the most abject condition, was almost unknown, and would have been highly disgraceful. Instances of other ill-treatment of [203] the humble part of the community were rare;

and as for attacks on the property or personal liberty of the commons, I never heard of any whatever from *them*; nor, while the laws were in force under the old government, would such tyranny by subjects have been permitted.

As landowners, I found no fault with their conduct, though I found much to criticize, and much I wished changed, in many of the old tenures. Where they let their land for rent, I could not discover that their agreements with their farmers were oppressive; nor, when they were in partner-

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they were in partnership with the farmer, as often was the case, have I heard that they had taken the lion's share. The proportions seemed not inequitable. There might be exceptions; but certainly they were exceptions only.

I have no reason to believe that in these respects the landed noblesse of France were worse than the landed gentry of this country; certainly in no respect more vexatious than the landholders, not noble, of their own nation. In cities the nobility had no manner of power; in the country very little. You know, Sir, that much of the civil government, and the police in the most essential parts, was not in the hands of that nobility which presents itself first to our consideration.

The revenue, the system and collection of which were the most grievous parts of the French government, was not administered by the men of the sword; nor were they answerable for the vices of its principle, or the vexations, where any such existed, in its management.

Denying, as I am well warranted to do, that the nobility had any considerable share in the oppression [204] of the people, in cases in which real oppression existed, I am ready to admit that they were not without considerable faults and errors. A foolish imitation of the worst part of the manners of England, which impaired their natural character without substituting in its place what perhaps they meant,

has certainly rendered them worse than formerly they were. Habitual dissoluteness of manners continued beyond the pardonable period of life, was more common amongst them than it is with us; and it reigned with the less hope of remedy, though possibly with something of less mischief, by being covered with more exterior decorum.

p. 204 They countenanced too much that licentious philosophy which has helped to bring on their ruin. There was another error amongst them more fatal. Those of the commons, who approached to or exceeded many of the nobility in point of wealth, were not fully admitted to the rank and estimation which wealth, in reason and

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ship with the farmer, as was often the case, have I heard that they took the lion's share. The proportions did not seem unfair. There may have been exceptions, but they were certainly only exceptions.[24]

I have no reason to believe that in these respects the landed noblesse of France were worse than the landed gentry of this country; and they were certainly in no respect more vexatious than the landowners of their own nation who were not noble. In the cities the nobility had no power at all; in the country very little. You know, Sir, that much of the civil government, and the most essential parts of the police, were not in the hands of the nobility who first come to mind.[25]

The revenue, whose system and collection were the most oppressive parts of the French government, was not administered by the men of the sword; nor were they answerable for the vices of its principle, or for the vexations in its management, where any such existed.[26]

Denying, as I am fully entitled to do, that the nobility had any considerable share in the oppression [204] of the people, in cases where real oppression existed, I am ready to admit that they were not without considerable faults and errors. A foolish imitation of the worst part of English manners, which impaired their natural character without putting in its place what they perhaps intended,

has certainly made them worse than they used to be. Habitual dissoluteness of manners, continued beyond the pardonable age of life, was more common among them than it is with us; and it reigned with less hope of remedy, though possibly with somewhat less harm, because it was covered with more outward decorum.

They gave too much countenance to that licentious philosophy which has helped to bring on their ruin. There was another error among them, a more fatal one. Those of the commons who approached or exceeded many of the nobility in wealth were not fully admitted to the rank and esteem which wealth, in reason and good policy,

24 In the partnership arrangement (*métayage*), landlord and tenant divided the produce between them.
25 Burke means the old military nobility; much of the civil administration lay with the judicial nobility and royal officials.
26 "Men of the sword" translates *noblesse d'épée*, the old military nobility, as distinct from the *noblesse de robe* of the law courts and offices.

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good policy, ought to bestow in every country; though I think not equally with that of other nobility. The two kinds of aristocracy were too punctiliously kept asunder; less so, however, than in Germany and some other nations. This separation, as I have already taken the liberty of suggesting to you, I conceive to be one principal cause of the destruction of the old nobility.

The military, particularly, was too exclusively reserved for men of family. But after all, this was an error of opinion, which a conflicting opinion would have rectified. A permanent assembly, in which the commons had their share of power, would soon abolish whatever was too invidious and insulting in these distinctions; and even the faults in the morals of the nobility [205] would have been probably corrected by the greater varieties of occupation and pursuit to which a constitution by orders would have given rise.

p. 205 All this violent cry against the nobility I take to be a mere work of art. To be honoured and even privileged by the laws, opinions, and inveterate usages of our country, growing out of the prejudice of ages, has nothing to provoke horror and indignation in any man. Even to be too tenacious of those privileges, is not absolutely a crime. The strong struggle in every individual to preserve possession of what he has found to belong to him and to distinguish him, is one of the securities against injustice and despotism implanted in our nature. It operates as an instinct to secure property, and to preserve communities in a settled state. What is there to shock in this?

Nobility is a graceful ornament to the civil order. It is the Corinthian capital of polished society. *Omnes boni nobilitati semper favemus,* was the saying of a wise and good man. It is indeed one sign of a liberal and benevolent mind to incline to it with some sort of partial propensity. He feels no ennobling principle in his own heart who wishes to level all the artificial institutions which have been adopted for giving a body to opinion,

and permanence to fugitive esteem. It is a sour, malignant, envious disposition, without taste for the reality or for any image or representation of virtue, that sees with joy the unmerited fall of

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ought to confer in every country—though not, I think, equally with the rank of the other nobility. The two kinds of aristocracy were kept too punctiliously apart; less so, however, than in Germany and some other nations. This separation, as I have already taken the liberty of suggesting to you, I take to be one principal cause of the destruction of the old nobility.

The military, in particular, was too exclusively reserved for men of family. But after all, this was an error of opinion, which a contrary opinion would have corrected. A permanent assembly, in which the commons had their share of power, would soon have abolished whatever was too invidious and insulting in these distinctions; and even the faults in the morals of the nobility [205] would probably have been corrected by the greater variety of occupations and pursuits to which a constitution by orders would have given rise.

All this violent outcry against the nobility I take to be a mere work of art. To be honored, and even privileged, by the laws, opinions, and inveterate customs of our country, growing out of the prejudice of ages, has nothing in it to provoke horror and indignation in anyone. Even to cling too tenaciously to those privileges is not absolutely a crime. The strong struggle in every individual to keep possession of what he has found to belong to him and to distinguish him is one of the securities against injustice and despotism implanted in our nature. It operates as an instinct to secure property and to keep communities in a settled state. What is there in this to shock anyone?

Nobility is a graceful ornament to the civil order. It is the Corinthian capital of polished society. *All of us good men always favor the nobility,* was the saying of a wise and good man. It is indeed one sign of a liberal and benevolent mind to lean toward it with a certain partial inclination. He feels no ennobling principle in his own heart who wishes to level all the artificial institutions that have been adopted to give a body to opinion,[27]

and permanence to fleeting esteem. It is a sour, malignant, envious disposition, with no taste for the reality of virtue or for any image or representation of it, that sees with joy the unmerited fall of

27 The Latin is Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 9.21: "Omnes boni nobilitati semper favemus."

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what had long flourished in splendour and in honour.

I do not like to see any thing destroyed; any void produced in society; any ruin on the face of the land. It was therefore with no disappointment or dissatisfaction, that my [206] enquiries and observation did not present to me any incorrigible vices in the noblesse of France, or any abuse which could not be removed by a reform very short of abolition. Your noblesse did not deserve punishment; but to degrade is to punish.

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what had long flourished in splendor and in honor.

I do not like to see anything destroyed; any void produced in society; any ruin on the face of the land. It was therefore with no disappointment or dissatisfaction that my [206] inquiries and observation showed me no incorrigible vices in the noblesse of France, nor any abuse that could not be removed by a reform falling far short of abolition. Your noblesse did not deserve punishment; but to degrade is to punish.

THE CLERGY

The French clergy, whom Burke met, were learned and decent; present persecution punishes them for past churchmen's crimes.

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p. 206 It was with the same satisfaction I found that the result of my enquiry concerning your clergy was not dissimilar. It is no soothing news to my ears, that great bodies of men are incurably corrupt. It is not with much credulity I listen to any, when they speak evil of those whom they are going to plunder. I rather suspect that vices are feigned or exaggerated, when profit is looked for in their punishment. An enemy is a bad witness: a robber is a worse. Vices and abuses there were undoubtedly in that order, and must be. It was an old establishment, and not frequently revised.

But I saw no crimes in the individuals that merited confiscation of their substance, nor those cruel insults and degradations, and that unnatural persecution which have been substituted in the place of meliorating regulation.

If there had been any just cause for this new religious persecution, the atheistic libellers, who act as trumpeters to animate the populace to plunder, do not love any body so much as not to dwell with complacence on the vices of the existing clergy. This they have not done. They find themselves obliged to rake into the histories of former ages (which they have ransacked with a malignant and profligate industry) for every instance of oppression and persecution which has been made by that body or in its favour, in order to justify, upon very iniquitous, because very illogical principles of retaliation, [207] their own persecutions, and their own cruelties.

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It was with the same satisfaction that I found the result of my inquiry concerning your clergy to be much the same. It is no soothing news to my ears that great bodies of men are incurably corrupt. I listen with little credulity to anyone who speaks evil of those he is about to plunder. I rather suspect that vices are invented or exaggerated when profit is expected from their punishment. An enemy is a bad witness; a robber is a worse. Vices and abuses there undoubtedly were in that order, and must be. It was an old establishment, and not often revised.

But I saw no crimes in the individuals that deserved the confiscation of their property, nor those cruel insults and degradations, and that unnatural persecution, which have been put in the place of reforming regulation.

If there had been any just cause for this new religious persecution, the atheistic libelers who act as trumpeters to rouse the populace to plunder love nobody so well that they would refrain from dwelling with relish on the vices of the existing clergy. This they have not done. They find themselves obliged to rake through the histories of former ages (which they have ransacked with a malignant and shameless industry) for every instance of oppression and persecution committed by that body or on its behalf, in order to justify, on very iniquitous—because very illogical—principles of retaliation, [207] their own persecutions and their own cruelties.

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p. 207 After destroying all other genealogies and family distinctions, they invent a sort of pedigree of crimes. It is not very just to chastise men for the offences of their natural ancestors; but to take the fiction of ancestry in a corporate succession, as a ground for punishing men who have no relation to guilty acts, except in names and general descriptions, is a sort of refinement in injustice belonging to the philosophy of this enlightened age.	After destroying all other genealogies and family distinctions, they invent a sort of pedigree of crimes. It is not very just to chastise men for the offenses of their natural ancestors; but to take the fiction of ancestry in a corporate succession as grounds for punishing men who have no connection with guilty acts except in names and general descriptions is a sort of refinement in injustice belonging to the philosophy of this enlightened age.
The assembly punishes men, many, if not most, of whom abhor the violent conduct of ecclesiastics in former times as much as their present persecutors can do, and who would be as loud and as strong in the expression of that sense, if they were not well aware of the purposes for which all this declamation is employed.	The Assembly punishes men many—if not most—of whom abhor the violent conduct of churchmen in former times as much as their present persecutors can, and who would be as loud and as strong in expressing that feeling if they were not well aware of the purposes for which all this declamation is employed.
Corporate bodies are immortal for the good of the members, but not for their punishment. Nations themselves are such corporations. As well might we in England think of waging inexpiable war upon all Frenchmen for the evils which they have brought upon us in the several periods of our mutual hostilities. You might, on your part, think yourselves justified in falling upon all Englishmen on account of the unparalleled calamities brought upon the people of France by the unjust invasions of our Henries and our Edwards.	Corporate bodies are immortal for the good of their members, but not for their punishment. Nations themselves are such corporations. We in England might as well think of waging inexpiable war on all Frenchmen for the evils they have brought on us in the various periods of our mutual hostilities. You, for your part, might think yourselves justified in falling on all Englishmen on account of the unparalleled calamities brought on the people of France by the unjust invasions of our Henrys and our Edwards.[28]
Indeed we should be mutually justified in this exterminatory war upon each other, full as much as you are in the unprovoked persecution of your present countrymen, on account of the conduct of men of the same name in other times.	Indeed we should be mutually justified in this war of extermination on each other, every bit as much as you are in the unprovoked persecution of your present countrymen on account of the conduct of men of the same name in other times.

THE MISUSE OF HISTORY

Using history to revive old hatreds; the Paris stage's Saint Bartholomew massacre turned against today's clergy.

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We do not draw the moral lessons we might from history. On the contrary, without care it [208] may be used to vitiate our minds and to destroy our happiness. In history a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind. It may, in the perversion, serve for a magazine, furnishing offensive and	We do not draw the moral lessons from history that we might. On the contrary, without care it [208] may be used to corrupt our minds and to destroy our happiness. In history a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind. Perverted, it may serve as an arsenal, furnishing offensive and defensive weapons

28 English kings who invaded France during the Hundred Years' War, such as Edward III and Henry V.

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defensive weapons for parties in church and state, and supplying the means of keeping alive, or reviving dissensions and animosities, and adding fuel to civil fury.	for parties in church and state, supplying the means of keeping alive or reviving dissensions and animosities, and adding fuel to civil fury.
p. 208 History consists, for the greater part, of the miseries brought upon the world by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy, ungoverned zeal, and all the train of disorderly appetities, which shake the public with the same	History consists, for the most part, of the miseries brought upon the world by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy, ungoverned zeal, and the whole train of disorderly appetites, which shake the public with the same
—"troublous storms that toss / The private state, and render life unsweet."	—"troublous storms that toss / The private state, and render life unsweet."[29]
These vices are the *causes* of those storms. Religion, morals, laws, prerogatives, privileges, liberties, rights of men, are the *pretexts.* The pretexts are always found in some specious appearance of a real good. You would not secure men from tyranny and sedition, by rooting out of the mind the principles to which these fraudulent pretexts apply? If you did, you would root out every thing that is valuable in the human breast. As these are the pretexts, so the ordinary actors and instruments in great public evils are kings, priests, magistrates, senates, parliaments, national assemblies, judges, and captains.	These vices are the *causes* of those storms. Religion, morals, laws, prerogatives, privileges, liberties, rights of men are the *pretexts.* The pretexts are always found in some plausible appearance of a real good. You would not secure men from tyranny and sedition by rooting out of the mind the principles to which these fraudulent pretexts apply? If you did, you would root out everything that is valuable in the human breast. As these are the pretexts, so the ordinary actors and instruments in great public evils are kings, priests, magistrates, senates, parliaments, national assemblies, judges, and captains.
You would not cure the evil by resolving, that there should be no more monarchs, nor ministers of state, nor of the gospel; no interpreters of law; no general officers; no public councils. You might change [209] the names. The things in some shape must remain. A certain *quantum* of power must always exist in the community, in some hands, and under some appellation. Wise men will apply their remedies to vices, not to names; to the causes of evil which are permanent, not to the occasional organs by which they act, and the transitory modes in which they appear. Otherwise you will be wise historically, a fool in practice.	You would not cure the evil by resolving that there should be no more monarchs, nor ministers of state or of the gospel; no interpreters of law; no general officers; no public councils. You might change [209] the names. The things themselves must remain in some shape. A certain *quantum* of power must always exist in the community, in some hands, and under some name. Wise men will apply their remedies to vices, not to names; to the causes of evil, which are permanent, not to the occasional organs through which they act and the transitory forms in which they appear. Otherwise you will be wise historically, a fool in practice.
p. 209 Seldom have two ages the same fashion in their pretexts and the same modes of mischief. Wickedness is a little more inventive. Whilst you are discussing fashion, the fashion is gone by. The very same vice assumes a new body. The spirit transmigrates; and, far from losing its principle of life by the change of its appearance, it is renovated in its new organs with the fresh vigour	Seldom do two ages have the same fashion in their pretexts and the same modes of mischief. Wickedness is a little more inventive. While you are discussing the fashion, the fashion has gone by. The very same vice takes on a new body. The spirit transmigrates; and, far from losing its principle of life by the change in its appearance, it is renewed

29 Burke is quoting Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book II.

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of a juvenile activity. It walks abroad; it continues its ravages; whilst you are gibbeting the carcass, or demolishing the tomb. You are terrifying yourself with ghosts and apparitions, whilst your house is the haunt of robbers.

It is thus with all those, who, attending only to the shell and husk of history, think they are waging war with intolerance, pride, and cruelty, whilst, under colour of abhorring the ill principles of antiquated parties, they are authorizing and feeding the same odious vices in different factions, and perhaps in worse.

Your citizens of Paris formerly had lent themselves as the ready instruments to slaughter the followers of Calvin, at the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew. What should we say to those who could think of retaliating on the Parisians of this day the abominations and horrors of that time? They are [210] indeed brought to abhor *that* massacre. Ferocious as they are, it is not difficult to make them dislike it; because the politicians and fashionable teachers have no interest in giving their passions exactly the same direction. Still however they find it their interest to keep the same savage dispositions alive.

p. 210 It was but the other day that they caused this very massacre to be acted on the stage for the diversion of the descendants of those who committed it. In this tragic farce they produced the cardinal of Lorraine in his robes of function, ordering general slaughter. Was this spectacle intended to make the Parisians abhor persecution, and loath the effusion of blood?—No, it was to teach them to persecute their own pastors; it was to excite them, by raising a disgust and horror of their clergy, to an alacrity in hunting down to destruction an order, which, if it ought to exist at all, ought to exist not only in safety, but in reverence.

It was to stimulate their cannibal appetites (which one would think had been gorged sufficiently) by variety and seasoning; and to quicken them to an alertness in new murders and massacres, if it should suit the purpose of the Guises of the day.

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in its new organs with the fresh vigor of youthful activity. It walks abroad; it continues its ravages; while you are gibbeting the carcass or demolishing the tomb. You are terrifying yourself with ghosts and apparitions while your house is the haunt of robbers.

So it is with all those who, attending only to the shell and husk of history, think they are waging war on intolerance, pride, and cruelty, while, under color of abhorring the bad principles of antiquated parties, they are authorizing and feeding the same odious vices in different factions, and perhaps in worse ones.

Your citizens of Paris once lent themselves as ready instruments for slaughtering the followers of Calvin in the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew. What should we say to anyone who could think of retaliating on the Parisians of today for the abominations and horrors of that time? They are [210] indeed brought to abhor *that* massacre. Ferocious as they are, it is not hard to make them dislike it, because the politicians and fashionable teachers have no interest in giving their passions exactly the same direction. Still, they find it in their interest to keep the same savage dispositions alive.[30]

Only the other day they had this very massacre acted on the stage for the entertainment of the descendants of those who committed it. In this tragic farce they brought on the Cardinal of Lorraine in his official robes, ordering a general slaughter. Was this spectacle meant to make the Parisians abhor persecution and loathe the shedding of blood? —No, it was to teach them to persecute their own pastors; it was to excite them, by raising disgust and horror at their clergy, to an eagerness in hunting down to destruction an order which, if it ought to exist at all, ought to exist not only in safety but in reverence.[31]

It was to stimulate their cannibal appetites (which one would think had been gorged enough already) with variety and seasoning, and to quicken them to readiness for new murders and massacres, should it suit the purpose of the Guises of the day.

30 The massacre of Protestants (Huguenots) in Paris that began on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572.
31 Marie-Joseph Chénier's tragedy *Charles IX*, first performed in Paris in November 1789. The Cardinal of Lorraine was Charles de Guise (1524–1574), a leader of the Catholic party.

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An assembly, in which sat a multitude of priests and prelates, was obliged to suffer this indignity at its door. The author was not sent to the gallies, nor the players to the house of correction.

Not long after this exhibition, those players came forward to the assembly to claim the rites of that very religion which they had dared to expose, and to shew their prostituted faces in the senate, whilst the archbishop of Paris, whose function was known to his people only by [211] his prayers and benedictions, and his wealth only by his alms, is forced to abandon his house, and to fly from his flock (as from ravenous wolves) because, truly, in the sixteenth century, the Cardinal of Lorraine was a rebel and a murderer.

p. 211 Such is the effect of the perversion of history, by those, who, for the same nefarious purposes, have perverted every other part of learning. But those who will stand upon that elevation of reason, which places centuries under our eye, and brings things to the true point of comparison, which obscures little names, and effaces the colours of little parties, and to which nothing can ascend but the spirit and moral quality of human actions, will say to the teachers of the Palais Royal,—the Cardinal of Lorraine was the murderer of the sixteenth century, you have the glory of being the murderers in the eighteenth; and this is the only difference between you.

But history, in the nineteenth century, better understood, and better employed, will, I trust, teach a civilized posterity to abhor the misdeeds of both these barbarous ages. It will teach future priests and magistrates not to retaliate upon the speculative and inactive atheists of future times, the enormities committed by the present practical zealots and furious fanatics of that wretched error, which, in its quiescent state, is more than punished whenever it is embraced.

It will teach posterity not to make war upon either religion or philosophy, for the abuse which the hypocrites of both have made of the two most valuable blessings conferred upon us by the bounty of the universal Patron, [212] who in all

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An assembly in which sat a multitude of priests and prelates was obliged to suffer this indignity at its door. The author was not sent to the galleys, nor the players to the house of correction.[32]

Not long after this exhibition, those players came forward to the Assembly to claim the rites of the very religion they had dared to expose, and to show their prostituted faces in the senate, while the archbishop of Paris, whose office was known to his people only by [211] his prayers and blessings, and his wealth only by his alms, is forced to abandon his house and to flee from his flock (as from ravenous wolves) because—if you please—in the sixteenth century the Cardinal of Lorraine was a rebel and a murderer.[33]

Such is the effect of the perversion of history by those who, for the same wicked purposes, have perverted every other branch of learning. But those who will stand on that height of reason which places centuries under our eye and brings things to the true point of comparison, which obscures little names and effaces the colors of little parties, and to which nothing can ascend but the spirit and moral quality of human actions, will say to the teachers of the Palais Royal—the Cardinal of Lorraine was the murderer of the sixteenth century; you have the glory of being the murderers of the eighteenth; and this is the only difference between you.

But history in the nineteenth century, better understood and better employed, will, I trust, teach a civilized posterity to abhor the misdeeds of both these barbarous ages. It will teach future priests and magistrates not to retaliate on the speculative and inactive atheists of future times for the enormities committed by the present practical zealots and furious fanatics of that wretched error, which, even in its quiet state, is more than punished whenever it is embraced.

It will teach posterity not to make war on either religion or philosophy for the abuse that the hypocrites of both have made of the two most valuable blessings conferred on us by the bounty of the universal Patron, [212] who in all things eminently favors and protects the human race.

32 The Guise family led the militant Catholic faction in the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion.
33 Actors, then denied the sacraments by the church, petitioned the Assembly in December 1789. The archbishop, Antoine-Éléonore-Léon Le Clerc de Juigné, left Paris in October 1789.

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things eminently favours and protects the race of man.

p. 212 If your clergy, or any clergy, should shew themselves vicious beyond the fair bounds allowed to human infirmity, and to those professional faults which can hardly be separated from professional virtues, though their vices never can countenance the exercise of oppression, I do admit, that they would naturally have the effect of abating very much of our indignation against the tyrants who exceed measure and justice in their punishment.

I can allow in clergymen, through all their divisions, some tenaciousness of their own opinion; some overflowings of zeal for its propagation; some predilection to their own state and office; some attachment to the interest of their own corps; some preference to those who listen with docility to their doctrines, beyond those who scorn and deride them. I allow all this, because I am a man who have to deal with men, and who would not, through a violence of toleration, run into the greatest of all intolerance. I must bear with infirmities until they fester into crimes.

Undoubtedly, the natural progress of the passions, from frailty to vice, ought to be prevented by a watchful eye and a firm hand. But is it true that the body of your clergy had past those limits of a just allowance? From the general style of your late publications of all sorts, one would be led to believe that your clergy in France were a sort of monsters; an horrible composition of superstition, ignorance, sloth, fraud, avarice, and tyranny. But [213] is this true? Is it true, that the lapse of time, the cessation of conflicting interests, the woful experience of the evils resulting from party rage, has had no sort of influence gradually to meliorate their minds?

p. 213 Is it true, that they were daily renewing invasions on the civil power, troubling the domestic quiet of their country, and rendering the operations of its government feeble and precarious? Is it true, that the clergy of our times have pressed down the laity with an iron hand, and were, in all places, lighting up the fires of a savage persecution? Did they by every fraud endeavour to encrease their estates? Did they use to exceed the due demands on estates that were their own? Or, rigidly

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If your clergy, or any clergy, should show themselves vicious beyond the fair bounds allowed to human weakness, and to those professional faults that can hardly be separated from professional virtues, then—though their vices can never justify the exercise of oppression—I do admit that they would naturally have the effect of greatly abating our indignation against the tyrants who exceed measure and justice in punishing them.

I can allow in clergymen, through all their divisions, some tenacity in their own opinions; some overflowing of zeal for spreading them; some partiality for their own state and office; some attachment to the interest of their own body; some preference for those who listen with docility to their doctrines over those who scorn and deride them. I allow all this, because I am a man who has to deal with men, and who would not, through a violence of toleration, run into the greatest of all intolerance. I must bear with infirmities until they fester into crimes.

Undoubtedly, the natural progress of the passions from frailty to vice ought to be prevented by a watchful eye and a firm hand. But is it true that the body of your clergy had passed those limits of a just allowance? From the general tone of your recent publications of every kind, one would be led to believe that your clergy in France were a sort of monsters: a horrible compound of superstition, ignorance, sloth, fraud, avarice, and tyranny. But [213] is this true? Is it true that the passage of time, the ending of conflicting interests, and the woeful experience of the evils that flow from party rage have had no influence whatever in gradually improving their minds?

Is it true that they were daily renewing their encroachments on the civil power, disturbing the domestic peace of their country, and making the operations of its government feeble and precarious? Is it true that the clergy of our times have pressed down the laity with an iron hand, and were everywhere lighting the fires of a savage persecution? Did they try by every fraud to increase their estates? Were they in the habit of exceeding the due

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screwing up right into wrong, did they convert a legal claim into a vexatious extortion? When not possessed of power, were they filled with the vices of those who envy it?

Were they enflamed with a violent litigious spirit of controversy? Goaded on with the ambition of intellectual sovereignty, were they ready to fly in the face of all magistracy, to fire churches, to massacre the priests of other descriptions, to pull down altars, and to make their way over the ruins of subverted governments to an empire of doctrine, sometimes flattering, sometimes forcing the consciences of men from the jurisdiction of public institutions into a submission to their personal authority, beginning with a claim of liberty and ending with an abuse of power?

These, or some of these, were the vices objected, and not wholly without foundation, to several of the churchmen of former times, who belonged to
214 the two great parties which then divided and distracted Europe.

p. 214 If there was in France, as in other countries there visibly is, a great abatement, rather than any increase of these vices, instead of loading the present clergy with the crimes of other men, and the odious character of other times, in common equity they ought to be praised, encouraged, and supported, in their departure from a spirit which disgraced their predecessors, and for having assumed a temper of mind and manners more suitable to their sacred function.

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demands on estates that were their own? Or, rigidly screwing right up into wrong, did they turn a legal claim into a vexatious extortion? When they did not possess power, were they filled with the vices of those who envy it?

Were they inflamed with a violent, litigious spirit of controversy? Goaded on by the ambition of intellectual sovereignty, were they ready to fly in the face of all magistracy, to set fire to churches, to massacre the priests of other denominations, to pull down altars, and to make their way over the ruins of overthrown governments to an empire of doctrine—sometimes flattering, sometimes forcing men's consciences out of the jurisdiction of public institutions into submission to their personal authority, beginning with a claim of liberty and ending with an abuse of power?

These, or some of these, were the vices charged—and not wholly without foundation—against several of the churchmen of former times who belonged to
214 the two great parties that then divided and distracted Europe.[34]

If there was in France, as there visibly is in other countries, a great lessening of these vices rather than any increase, then instead of loading the present clergy with the crimes of other men and the odious character of other times, common fairness requires that they be praised, encouraged, and supported in their departure from a spirit that disgraced their predecessors, and for having taken on a temper of mind and manners better suited to their sacred function.

34 The Catholic and Protestant parties of the Reformation and the wars of religion.

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When my occasions took me into France, towards the close of the late reign, the clergy, under all their forms, engaged a considerable part of my curiosity. So far from finding (except from one set of men, not then very numerous though very active) the complaints and discontents against that body, which some publications had given me reason to expect, I perceived little or no public or private uneasiness on their account. On further examination, I found the clergy in general, persons of moderate minds and decorous manners; I include the seculars, and the regulars of both sexes.

I had not the good fortune to know a great many of the parochial clergy; but in general I received a perfectly good account of their morals, and of their attention to their duties. With some of the higher clergy I had a personal acquaintance; and of the rest in that class, very good means of information. They were, almost all of them, persons of noble birth. They resembled others of their own rank; and where there was [215] any difference, it was in their favour. They were more fully educated than the military noblesse; so as by no means to disgrace their profession by ignorance, or by want of fitness for the exercise of their authority.

p. 215 They seemed to me, beyond the clerical character, liberal and open; with the hearts of gentlemen, and men of honour; neither insolent nor servile in their manners and conduct. They seemed to me rather a superior class; a set of men, amongst whom you would not be surprised to find a *Fenelon.* I saw among the clergy in Paris (many of the description are not to be met with any where) men of great learning and candour; and I had reason to believe, that this description was not confined to Paris. What I found in other places, I know was accidental; and therefore to be presumed a fair sample.

I spent a few days in a provincial town, where, in the absence of the bishop, I passed my evenings with three clergymen, his vicars general, persons who would have done honour to any church. They were all well informed; two of them of deep, general, and extensive erudition, antient and

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When my affairs took me to France, toward the close of the late reign, the clergy in all their forms engaged a good part of my curiosity. So far from finding (except from one set of men, not then very numerous though very active) the complaints and discontents against that body which some publications had led me to expect, I perceived little or no public or private uneasiness on their account. On further examination, I found the clergy in general to be people of moderate minds and decorous manners; I include the secular clergy, and the regulars of both sexes.[35]

I did not have the good fortune to know a great many of the parish clergy, but in general I received a thoroughly good account of their morals and of their attention to their duties. With some of the higher clergy I had a personal acquaintance, and about the rest of that class I had very good means of information. They were almost all of noble birth. They resembled others of their own rank; and where there was [215] any difference, it was in their favor. They were more fully educated than the military nobility, so that they in no way disgraced their profession by ignorance or by unfitness for the exercise of their authority.

They seemed to me, beyond the clerical character, liberal and open, with the hearts of gentlemen and men of honor, neither insolent nor servile in their manners and conduct. They seemed to me rather a superior class: a set of men among whom you would not be surprised to find a *Fénelon.* I saw among the clergy in Paris (not many of that description are to be met with anywhere) men of great learning and candor; and I had reason to believe that this description was not confined to Paris. What I found in other places, I know, came by chance, and is therefore to be presumed a fair sample.[36]

I spent a few days in a provincial town where, in the bishop's absence, I passed my evenings with three clergymen, his vicars general, men who would have done honor to any church. They were all well informed; two of them were of deep, general, and extensive learning, ancient and modern,

35 "Secular" clergy served parishes and dioceses; "regulars" were monks, friars, and nuns living under a religious rule.
36 François Fénelon (1651–1715), archbishop of Cambrai and author of *Télémaque,* celebrated for his piety, gentleness, and learning.

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modern, oriental and western; particularly in their own profession. They had a more extensive knowledge of our English divines than I expected; and they entered into the genius of those writers with a critical accuracy.	Eastern and Western, particularly in their own profession. They had a wider knowledge of our English divines than I expected, and they entered into the genius of those writers with critical accuracy.[37]
One of these gentlemen is since dead, the Abbé *Morangis.* I pay this tribute, without reluctance, to the memory of that noble, reverend, learned, and excellent person; and I should do the same, with equal cheerfulness, to the merits of the others, who I believe are still living, [216] if I did not fear to hurt those whom I am unable to serve.	One of these gentlemen, the Abbé *Morangis,* has since died. I pay this tribute willingly to the memory of that noble, reverend, learned, and excellent man; and I would do the same, with equal cheerfulness, for the merits of the others, who I believe are still living, [216] if I did not fear harming those whom I am unable to serve.
p. 216 Some of these ecclesiastics of rank, are, by all titles, persons deserving of general respect. They are deserving of gratitude from me, and from many English. If this letter should ever come into their hands, I hope they will believe there are those of our nation who feel for their unmerited fall, and for the cruel confiscation of their fortunes, with no common sensibility. What I say of them is a testimony, as far as one feeble voice can go, which I owe to truth. Whenever the question of this unnatural persecution is concerned, I will pay it. No one shall prevent me from being just and grateful.	Some of these ecclesiastics of rank are, on every ground, people deserving of general respect. They deserve gratitude from me and from many English people. If this letter should ever reach them, I hope they will believe that there are those of our nation who feel for their undeserved fall, and for the cruel confiscation of their fortunes, with no common sensibility. What I say of them is a testimony, as far as one feeble voice can carry, which I owe to truth. Whenever the question of this unnatural persecution arises, I will pay it. No one shall prevent me from being just and grateful.
The time is fitted for the duty; and it is particularly becoming to shew our justice and gratitude, when those who have deserved well of us and of mankind are labouring under popular obloquy and the persecutions of oppressive power.	The time suits the duty; and it is especially fitting to show our justice and gratitude when those who have deserved well of us and of mankind are laboring under popular abuse and the persecutions of oppressive power.
You had before your revolution about an hundred and twenty bishops. A few of them were men of eminent sanctity, and charity without limit. When we talk of the heroic, of course we talk of rare, virtue. I believe the instances of eminent depravity maybe as rare amongst them as those of transcendent goodness. Examples of avarice and of licentiousness may be picked out, I do not question it, by those who delight in the investigation which leads to such discoveries.	Before your revolution you had about a hundred and twenty bishops. A few of them were men of eminent holiness and of charity without limit. When we talk of heroic virtue, we of course talk of rare virtue. I believe instances of eminent depravity may be as rare among them as those of transcendent goodness. Examples of avarice and of licentiousness may be picked out, I do not doubt it, by those who delight in the kind of investigation that leads to such discoveries.
A man, as old as I am, will not be astonished that several, in every description, do not lead that perfect life of self-denial, with regard to wealth or to pleasure, which is wished for by all, by some expected, but by none exacted with more rigour,	A man as old as I am will not be astonished that several, in every class of men, do not lead that perfect life of self-denial with regard to wealth or pleasure which is wished for by all, expected by

37 Vicars general were a bishop's deputies in governing his diocese. The town is generally identified as Auxerre, which Burke visited in 1773.

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than by [217] those who are the most attentive to their own interests, or the most indulgent to their own passions. When I was in France, I am certain that the number, of vicious prelates was not great.

p. 217 Certain individuals among them not distinguishable for the regularity of their lives, made some amends for their want of the severe virtues, in their possession of the liberal; and were endowed with qualities which made them useful in the church and state. I am told, that with few exceptions, Louis the Sixteenth had been more attentive to character, in his promotions to that rank, than his immediate predecessor; and I believe, (as some spirit of reform has prevailed through the whole reign) that it may be true. But the present ruling power has shewn a disposition only to plunder the church. It has punished *all* prelates; which is to favour the vicious, at least in point of reputation.

It has made a degrading pensionary establishment, to which no man of liberal ideas or liberal condition will destine his children. It must settle into the lowest classes of the people. As with you the inferior clergy are not numerous enough for their duties; as these duties are, beyond measure, minute and toilsome; as you have left no middle classes of clergy at their ease, in future nothing of science or erudition can exist in the Gallican church.

To complete the project, without the least attention to the rights of patrons, the assembly has provided in future an elective clergy; an arrangement which will drive out of the clerical profession all men of sobriety; all who can pretend to independence in their function or their conduct; and which will throw the whole direction of the public mind into the [218] hands of a set of licentious, bold, crafty, factious, flattering wretches, of such condition and such habits of life as will make their contemptible pensions (in comparison of which the stipend of an exciseman is lucrative and honourable) an object of low and illiberal intrigue.

p. 218 Those officers, whom they still call bishops, are to be elected to a provision comparatively mean, through the same arts, (that is, electioneering

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some, but demanded with more rigor by none than by [217] those who are most attentive to their own interests or most indulgent to their own passions. When I was in France, I am certain that the number of vicious prelates was not great.

Certain individuals among them, not distinguished for the regularity of their lives, made some amends for their lack of the severe virtues by their possession of the liberal ones, and were endowed with qualities that made them useful in church and state. I am told that, with few exceptions, Louis the Sixteenth had paid more attention to character in his promotions to that rank than his immediate predecessor; and I believe (as some spirit of reform has prevailed through the whole reign) that this may be true. But the present ruling power has shown a disposition only to plunder the church. It has punished *all* prelates—which is to favor the vicious, at least in point of reputation.

It has made a degrading establishment of pensioners, to which no man of liberal ideas or liberal station will destine his children. It must settle down into the lowest classes of the people. Since with you the lower clergy are not numerous enough for their duties; since those duties are beyond measure minute and toilsome; since you have left no middle classes of clergy in easy circumstances—in future nothing of knowledge or learning can exist in the Gallican church.

To complete the project, without the least regard for the rights of patrons, the Assembly has provided for an elected clergy in future—an arrangement that will drive out of the clerical profession all men of sobriety, all who can claim independence in their function or their conduct, and that will throw the whole direction of the public mind into the [218] hands of a set of licentious, bold, crafty, factious, flattering wretches, of such condition and such habits of life as will make their contemptible pensions (compared with which the salary of an excise officer is lucrative and honorable) an object of low and illiberal intrigue.[38]

Those officers whom they still call bishops are to be elected to a comparatively paltry provision, by the same arts (that is, electioneering arts), and by

38 The Civil Constitution of the Clergy (July 1790) made bishops and parish priests elected by the local electoral assemblies and paid by the state.

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arts) by men of all religious tenets that are known or can be invented. The new lawgivers have not ascertained any thing whatsoever concerning their qualifications, relative either to doctrine or to morals;

no more than they have done with regard to the subordinate clergy; nor does it appear but that both the higher and the lower may, at their discretion, practise or preach any mode of religion or irreligion that they please. I do not yet see what the jurisdiction of bishops over their subordinates is to be; or whether they are to have any jurisdiction at all.

In short, Sir, it seems to me, that this new ecclesiastical establishment is intended only to be temporary, and preparatory to the utter abolition, under any of its forms, of the Christian religion, whenever the minds of men are prepared for this last stroke against it, by the accomplishment of the plan for bringing its ministers into universal contempt. They who will not believe, that the philosophical fanatics who guide in these matters, have long entertained such a design, are utterly ignorant of their character and proceedings.

These enthusiasts do not scruple to avow their opinion, that a state can subsist without any religion better than with one; and that they are able to supply the place of any [219] good which may be in it, by a project of their own —namely, by a sort of education they have imagined, founded in a knowledge of the physical wants of men; progressively carried to an enlightened self-interest, which, when well understood, they tell us will identify with an interest more enlarged and public. The scheme of this education has been long known. Of late they distinguish it (as they have got an entire new nomenclature of technical terms) by the name of a *Civic Education.*

p. 219 I hope their partizans in England, (to whom I rather attribute very inconsiderate conduct than the ultimate object in this detestable design) will succeed neither in the pillage of the ecclesiastics, nor in the introduction of a principle of popular election to our bishoprics and parochial cures. This, in the present condition of the world, would be the last corruption of the church; the utter ruin of the clerical character; the most dangerous

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men of every religious belief that is known or can be invented. The new lawgivers have laid down nothing whatsoever about their qualifications, either in doctrine or in morals;

no more than they have for the subordinate clergy; nor does anything appear to prevent both the higher and the lower from practicing or preaching, at their discretion, any form of religion or irreligion they please. I do not yet see what the jurisdiction of bishops over their subordinates is to be, or whether they are to have any jurisdiction at all.

In short, Sir, it seems to me that this new ecclesiastical establishment is meant to be only temporary, and preparatory to the utter abolition of the Christian religion in any of its forms, whenever men's minds are prepared for this final stroke against it by the completion of the plan for bringing its ministers into universal contempt. Those who will not believe that the philosophical fanatics who lead in these matters have long harbored such a design are utterly ignorant of their character and proceedings.

These zealots do not hesitate to declare their opinion that a state can subsist better without any religion than with one, and that they can supply the place of whatever [219] good there may be in it by a project of their own—namely, by a kind of education they have devised, founded on a knowledge of men's physical wants and carried progressively to an enlightened self-interest, which, when properly understood, will, they tell us, coincide with a more enlarged and public interest. The scheme of this education has long been known. Lately they distinguish it (having acquired an entirely new nomenclature of technical terms) by the name of a *Civic Education.*

I hope their partisans in England (to whom I attribute very thoughtless conduct rather than the ultimate object of this detestable design) will succeed neither in plundering the clergy nor in introducing a principle of popular election into our bishoprics and parish livings. This, in the present condition of the world, would be the final corruption of the church, the utter ruin of the clerical character, and the most dangerous shock the state

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shock that the state ever received through a misunderstood arrangement of religion.

I know well enough that the bishoprics and cures, under kingly and seignoral patronage, as now they are in England, and as they have been lately in France, are sometimes acquired by unworthy methods; but the other mode of ecclesiastical canvas subjects them infinitely more surely and more generally to all the evil arts of low ambition, which, operating on and through greater numbers, will produce mischief in proportion.

Those of you who have robbed the clergy, think that they shall easily reconcile their conduct to all protestant nations; because the clergy, whom they have thus plundered, degraded, and [220] given over to mockery and scorn, are of the Roman Catholic, that is, of *their own* pretended persuasion. I have no doubt that some miserable bigots will be found here as well as elsewhere, who hate sects and parties different from their own, more than they love the substance of religion; and who are more angry with those who differ from them in their particular plans and systems, than displeased with those who attack the foundation of our common hope.

p. 220 These men will write and speak on the subject in the manner that is to be expected from their temper and character. Burnet says, that when he was in France, in the year 1683, "the method which carried over the men of the finest parts to popery was this—

they brought themselves to doubt of the whole Christian religion. When that was once done, it seemed a more indifferent thing of what side or form they continued outwardly." If this was then the ecclesiastic policy of France, it is what they have since but too much reason to repent of. They preferred atheism to a form of religion not agreeable to their ideas. They succeeded in destroying that form; and atheism has succeeded in destroying them.

I can readily give credit to Burnet's story; because I have observed too much of a similar spirit (for a little of it is "much too much") amongst ourselves. The humour, however, is not general.

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has ever received through a misconceived arrangement of religion.

I know well enough that bishoprics and livings under royal and seigneurial patronage, as they now are in England and as they have lately been in France, are sometimes obtained by unworthy means; but the other method, ecclesiastical canvassing, exposes them infinitely more surely and more generally to all the evil arts of low ambition, which, working on and through greater numbers, will produce mischief in proportion.

Those of you who have robbed the clergy think they will easily reconcile their conduct with all Protestant nations, because the clergy whom they have thus plundered, degraded, and [220] given over to mockery and scorn are of the Roman Catholic persuasion—that is, of *their own* pretended persuasion. I have no doubt that some wretched bigots will be found here as well as elsewhere, who hate sects and parties different from their own more than they love the substance of religion, and who are angrier with those who differ from them in their particular plans and systems than displeased with those who attack the foundation of our common hope.

These men will write and speak on the subject in the way one would expect from their temper and character. Burnet says that when he was in France, in the year 1683, "the method which carried over the men of the finest parts to popery was this—[39]

they brought themselves to doubt of the whole Christian religion. When that was once done, it seemed a more indifferent thing of what side or form they continued outwardly." If this was then the ecclesiastical policy of France, it is something they have since had only too much reason to repent. They preferred atheism to a form of religion not agreeable to their ideas. They succeeded in destroying that form; and atheism has succeeded in destroying them.

I can readily believe Burnet's story, because I have observed too much of a similar spirit (for a little of it is "much too much") among ourselves. The disposition, however, is not general.

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The teachers who reformed our religion in England bore no sort of resemblance to your present reforming doctors in Paris. Perhaps they were (like those whom they opposed) rather more than [221] could be wished under the influence of a party spirit; but they were most sincere believers; men of the most fervent and exalted piety; ready to die (as some of them did die) like true heroes in defence of their particular ideas of Christianity; as they would with equal fortitude, and more chearfully, for that stock of general truth, for the branches of which they contended with their blood.

p. 221 These men would have disavowed with horror those wretches who claimed a fellowship with them upon no other titles than those of their having pillaged the persons with whom they maintained controversies, and their having despised the common religion, for the purity of which they exerted themselves with a zeal, which unequivocally bespoke their highest reverence for the substance of that system which they wished to reform. Many of their descendants have retained the same zeal; but, (as less engaged in conflict) with more moderation. They do not forget that justice and mercy are substantial parts of religion. Impious men do not recommend themselves to their communion by iniquity and cruelty towards any description of their fellow creatures.

We hear these new teachers continually boasting of their spirit of toleration. That those persons should tolerate all opinions, who think none to be of estimation, is a matter of small merit. Equal neglect is not impartial kindness. The species of benevolence, which arises from contempt, is no true charity. There are in England abundance of men who tolerate in the true spirit of toleration. They think the dogmas of religion, [222] though in different degrees, are all of moment; and that amongst them there is, as amongst all things of value, a just ground of preference. They favour, therefore, and they tolerate. They tolerate, not because they despise opinions, but because they respect justice.

p. 222 They would reverently and affectionately protect all religions, because they love and venerate the

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The teachers who reformed our religion in England bore no resemblance whatever to your present reforming doctors in Paris. Perhaps they were (like those they opposed) rather more than [221] could be wished under the influence of a party spirit; but they were most sincere believers, men of the most fervent and exalted piety, ready to die (as some of them did die) like true heroes in defense of their particular ideas of Christianity—as they would have done, with equal fortitude and more cheerfully, for that stock of general truth whose branches they contended for with their blood.

These men would have disowned with horror those wretches who claimed fellowship with them on no other grounds than their having plundered the people with whom the reformers had carried on their controversies, and their having despised the common religion, for whose purity the reformers exerted themselves with a zeal that unmistakably showed their deepest reverence for the substance of the system they wished to reform. Many of their descendants have kept the same zeal, but (being less engaged in conflict) with more moderation. They do not forget that justice and mercy are substantial parts of religion. Impious men do not recommend themselves to their communion by iniquity and cruelty toward any class of their fellow creatures.

We hear these new teachers constantly boasting of their spirit of toleration. That those people should tolerate all opinions who think none of them of any value is a matter of small merit. Equal neglect is not impartial kindness. The kind of benevolence that springs from contempt is no true charity. There are in England plenty of men who tolerate in the true spirit of toleration. They think the dogmas of religion, [222] though in different degrees, are all of importance, and that among them there is, as among all things of value, a just ground of preference. They favor, therefore, and they tolerate. They tolerate, not because they despise opinions, but because they respect justice.

They would reverently and affectionately protect all religions, because they love and venerate the

39 Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715), Whig bishop of Salisbury; the passage is from his *History of His Own Time*.

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great principle upon which they all agree, and the great object to which they are all directed. They begin more and more plainly to discern, that we have all a common cause, as against a common enemy. They will not be so misled by the spirit of faction, as not to distinguish what is done in favour of their subdivision, from those acts of hostility, which, through some particular description, are aimed at the whole corps, in which they themselves, under another denomination, are included. It is impossible for me to say what may be the character of every description of men amongst us.

But I speak for the greater part; and for them, I must tell you, that sacrilege is no part of their doctrine of good works; that, so far from calling you into their fellowship on such title, if your professors are admitted to their communion, they must carefully conceal their doctrine of the lawfulness of the proscription of innocent men; and that they must make restitution of all stolen goods whatsoever. Till then they are none of ours.

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great principle on which they all agree and the great object toward which they are all directed. They begin more and more plainly to see that we all have a common cause, as against a common enemy. They will not be so misled by the spirit of faction as to fail to distinguish what is done in favor of their own subdivision from those acts of hostility which, through some particular denomination, are aimed at the whole body in which they themselves, under another name, are included. It is impossible for me to say what the character of every description of men among us may be.

But I speak for the greater part; and for them, I must tell you, sacrilege is no part of their doctrine of good works; so far from calling you into their fellowship on such a claim, if those who profess your principles are admitted to their communion, they must carefully conceal their doctrine of the lawfulness of proscribing innocent men, and they must make restitution of all stolen goods whatsoever. Till then they are none of ours.

CONFISCATION AS A PRECEDENT

Seizing property from any class threatens all property and every country burdened by public debt.

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You may suppose that we do not approve your confiscation of the revenues of bishops, and deans, and chapters, and parochial clergy possessing independent [223] estates arising from land, because we have the same sort of establishment in England. That objection, you will say, cannot hold as to the confiscation of the goods of monks and nuns, and the abolition of their order. It is true, that this particular part of your general confiscation does not affect England, as a precedent in point:

but the reason applies; and it goes a great way. The long parliament confiscated the lands of deans and chapters in England on the same ideas upon which your assembly set to sale the lands of the monastic orders.

p. 223 But it is in the principle of injustice that the danger lies, and not in the description of persons on whom it is first exercised. I see, in a country very near us, a course of policy pursued, which

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You may suppose that we disapprove of your confiscation of the revenues of bishops, and deans, and chapters, and parish clergy holding independent [223] estates in land, because we have the same sort of establishment in England. That objection, you will say, cannot apply to the confiscation of the goods of monks and nuns and the abolition of their order. It is true that this particular part of your general confiscation does not touch England as a direct precedent:

but the reasoning applies, and it goes a great way. The Long Parliament confiscated the lands of deans and chapters in England on the same ideas on which your Assembly put the lands of the monastic orders up for sale.[40]

But the danger lies in the principle of injustice, not in the kind of persons on whom it is first practiced. I see, in a country very near us, a course of policy pursued that defies justice, the common

40 The Long Parliament (1640–60) abolished deans and chapters and sold their lands in 1649.

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sets justice, the common concern of mankind, at defiance. With the national assembly of France, possession is nothing;

law and usage are nothing. I see the national assembly openly reprobate the doctrine of prescription, which[7] one of the greatest of their own lawyers tells us, with great truth, is a part of the law of nature. He tells us, that the positive ascertainment of its limits, and its security from invasion, were among the causes for which civil society itself has been instituted.

If prescription be once shaken, no species of property is secure, when it once becomes an object large enough to tempt the cupidity of indigent power. I see a practice perfectly correspondent to their contempt of this great fundamental part of natural law. I see the confiscators begin with bishops, and chapters, and monasteries; [224] but I do not see them end there.

p. 224

I see the princes of the blood, who, by the oldest usages of that kingdom, held large landed estates, (hardly with the compliment of a debate) deprived of their possessions, and in lieu of their stable independent property, reduced to the hope of some precarious, charitable pension, at the pleasure of an assembly, which of course will pay little regard to the rights of pensioners at pleasure, when it despises those of legal proprietors. Flushed with the insolence of their first inglorious victories, and pressed by the distresses caused by their lust of unhallowed lucre, disappointed but not discouraged, they have at length ventured completely to subvert all property of all descriptions throughout the extent of a great kingdom.

They have compelled all men, in all transactions of commerce, in the disposal of lands, in civil dealing, and through the whole communion of life, to accept as perfect payment and good and lawful tender, the symbols of their speculations on a projected sale of their plunder. What vestiges of liberty or property have they left? The tenant-right of a cabbage-garden,

a year's interest in a hovel, the good-will of an alehouse, or a baker's shop, the very shadow of a constructive property, are more ceremoniously

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concern of mankind. With the National Assembly of France, possession is nothing;

law and usage are nothing. I see the National Assembly openly condemn the doctrine of prescription, which[7] one of the greatest of their own lawyers tells us, with great truth, is a part of the law of nature. He tells us that fixing its limits with certainty, and securing it from invasion, were among the reasons for which civil society itself was instituted.

Once prescription is shaken, no kind of property is secure as soon as it becomes an object large enough to tempt the greed of needy power. I see a practice perfectly in keeping with their contempt for this great fundamental part of natural law. I see the confiscators begin with bishops, and chapters, and monasteries; [224] but I do not see them end there.

I see the princes of the blood, who by the oldest usages of that kingdom held large landed estates, stripped of their possessions (hardly with the courtesy of a debate), and, in place of their stable, independent property, reduced to hoping for some precarious charitable pension at the pleasure of an assembly that will naturally pay little regard to the rights of pensioners at pleasure when it despises those of legal proprietors. Flushed with the insolence of their first inglorious victories, and pressed by the distresses brought on by their lust for unhallowed gain, disappointed but not discouraged, they have at last ventured to overturn completely all property of every kind throughout the extent of a great kingdom.[41]

They have compelled all men, in every transaction of commerce, in the disposal of lands, in civil dealings, and throughout the whole intercourse of life, to accept as full payment and good and lawful tender the tokens of their speculation on a projected sale of their plunder. What traces of liberty or property have they left? The tenant's right to a cabbage garden,

a year's interest in a hovel, the goodwill of an alehouse or a baker's shop, the very shadow of a con-

41 The princes of the blood held "apanages," crown lands granted to younger members of the royal family; the Assembly abolished them in 1790.

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treated in our parliament than with you the oldest and most valuable landed possessions, in the hands of the most respectable personages, or than the whole body of the monied and commercial interest of your country.

We entertain an high opinion of the legislative authority; but we have never dreamt that parliaments had any right whatever to violate property, to [225] over-rule prescription or to force a currency of their own fiction in the place of that which is real, and recognized by the law of nations. But you, who began with refusing to submit to the most moderate restraints, have ended by establishing an unheard of despotism. I find the ground upon which your confiscators go is this; that indeed their proceedings could not be supported in a court of justice; but that the rules of prescription cannot bind a legislative assembly[8].

p. 225

So that this legislative assembly of a free nation sits, not for the security, but for the destruction of property, and not of property only, but of every rule and maxim which can give it stability, and of those instruments which can alone give it circulation.

4446

When the Anabaptists of Munster, in the sixteenth century, had filled Germany with confusion by their system of levelling and their wild opinions concerning property, to what country in Europe did not the progress of their fury furnish just cause of alarm? Of all things, wisdom is the most terrified with epidemical fanaticism, because of

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structive property, are treated with more ceremony in our Parliament than the oldest and most valuable landed possessions in the hands of the most respectable persons are treated with you, or than the whole body of the monied and commercial interest of your country is treated.[42]

We hold a high opinion of legislative authority; but we have never dreamed that parliaments had any right whatever to violate property, to [225] override prescription, or to force a currency of their own invention in place of the one that is real and recognized by the law of nations. But you, who began by refusing to submit to the most moderate restraints, have ended by establishing an unheard-of despotism. I find that the ground your confiscators stand on is this: that their proceedings, it is true, could not be upheld in a court of justice, but that the rules of prescription cannot bind a legislative assembly[8].

So this legislative assembly of a free nation sits, not for the security but for the destruction of property: and not of property only, but of every rule and maxim that can give it stability, and of the only instruments that can give it circulation.

When the Anabaptists of Münster, in the sixteenth century, had filled Germany with confusion by their system of leveling and their wild opinions about property, what country in Europe did the progress of their fury not give just cause for alarm? Of all things, wisdom is most terrified by epidemic fanaticism, because of all enemies it is

42 "Constructive property": property that exists only by legal inference.

44

[7] Domat.

[7] Domat.[43]

43 Jean Domat (1625–96), French jurist, author of *Les lois civiles dans leur ordre naturel* (The Civil Laws in Their Natural Order).

46

[8] Speech of Mr. Camus, published by order of the National Assembly.

[8] Speech of M. Camus, published by order of the National Assembly.[45]

45 Armand-Gaston Camus (1740–1804), lawyer and deputy, a leading figure in the Assembly's legislation on the church.

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all enemies it is that against which she is the least able to furnish any kind of resource. We cannot be ignorant of the spirit of atheistical fanaticism, that is inspired by a multitude of writings, dispersed with incredible assiduity and expence, and by sermons delivered in all the streets and places of public resort in Paris.	the one against which she is least able to find any resource. We cannot be unaware of the spirit of atheistic fanaticism that is being inspired by a multitude of writings, spread abroad with incredible diligence and expense, and by sermons delivered in all the streets and public places of Paris.[47]
These writings and sermons have filled the populace with a [226] black and savage atrocity of mind, which supersedes in them the common feelings of nature, as well as all sentiments of morality and religion;	These writings and sermons have filled the populace with a [226] black and savage atrocity of mind, which overrides in them the common feelings of nature as well as all sentiments of morality and religion;
insomuch that these wretches are induced to bear with a sullen patience the intolerable distresses brought upon them by the violent convulsions and permutations that have been made in property[9]? The spirit of proselytism attends this spirit of fanaticism. They have societies to cabal and correspond at home and abroad for the propagation of their tenets. The republic of Berne, one of [227] the happiest, the most prosperous, and the best governed countries upon earth, is one of the great objects, at the destruction of which they aim.	so much so that these wretches are brought to bear with sullen patience the intolerable distresses inflicted on them by the violent convulsions and reshufflings of property[9]. The spirit of proselytism goes along with this spirit of fanaticism. They have societies to plot and correspond at home and abroad for spreading their tenets. The republic of Bern, one of [227] the happiest, the most prosperous, and the best governed countries on earth, is one of the great objects whose destruction they aim at.[48]
p. 227 I am told they have in some measure succeeded in sowing there the seeds of discontent. They are busy throughout Germany. Spain and Italy have not been untried. England is not left out of the comprehensive scheme of their malignant charity; and in England we find those who stretch out their arms to them, who recommend their examples from more than one pulpit, and who choose, in more than one periodical meeting, publicly to correspond with them, to applaud them, and to hold them up as objects for imitation;	I am told they have to some extent succeeded in sowing the seeds of discontent there. They are busy throughout Germany. Spain and Italy have not gone untried. England is not left out of the comprehensive scheme of their malignant charity; and in England we find those who stretch out their arms to them, who recommend their example from more than one pulpit, and who choose, at more than one periodic meeting, publicly to correspond with them, to applaud them, and to hold them up as models for imitation;
who receive from them tokens of confraternity, and standards consecrated amidst their rites and mysteries[10]; who suggest to them leagues of perpetual amity, at the very time when the power, to which our constitution has exclusively delegated the federative capacity of this kingdom, may find it expedient to make war upon them.	who receive from them tokens of brotherhood, and banners consecrated amid their rites and mysteries[10]; who propose to them leagues of perpetual friendship at the very moment when the power to which our constitution has exclusively entrusted the federative capacity of this kingdom may find it expedient to make war on them.[49]

47 Radical Anabaptists seized the city of Münster in Westphalia in 1534–35 and set up a communistic theocracy before the city was retaken.
48 Bern was then an aristocratic republic and the largest canton of the Swiss Confederation.
49 "Federative" (Locke's term): the power of war, peace and treaties, which in Britain belongs to the Crown.
50 Toul, a cathedral town in Lorraine whose bishopric was suppressed under the new church settlement. The French is translated here.

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It is not my fear of the confiscation of our church property from this example in France that I dread, though I think this would be no trifling evil. The great source of my solicitude is, least it should ever be considered in England as the policy of a state, to seek a resource in confiscations of any kind;

or that any one description of citizens should be brought to regard any of the others as [228] their proper prey[11]. Nations are wading deeper and deeper into an ocean of boundless debt. Public debts, which at first were a security to governments, by interesting many in the public tranquillity, are likely in their excess to become the means of their subversion.

p. 228 If governments provide for these debts by heavy impositions, they perish by becoming odious to the people. If they do not provide for them, they will be undone by the efforts of the most dangerous of all parties; I mean an extensive discontented monied interest, injured and not destroyed. The men who compose this interest

What I dread is not that our church property may be confiscated on this French example, though I think that would be no trifling evil. The great source of my anxiety is lest it should ever come to be regarded in England as the policy of a state to seek a resource in confiscations of any kind;

or lest any one class of citizens should be brought to regard any of the others as [228] their proper prey[11]. Nations are wading deeper and deeper into an ocean of boundless debt. Public debts, which at first were a security to governments by giving many people a stake in the public tranquillity, are likely in their excess to become the means of overthrowing them.

If governments provide for these debts by heavy taxes, they perish by becoming odious to the people. If they do not provide for them, they will be undone by the efforts of the most dangerous of all parties: I mean an extensive, discontented monied interest, injured but not destroyed. The men who make up this interest look for their se-

55 In 1789–90 patriotic "federations" of National Guards met in towns across France, Nantes among them.

51

[9] Whether the following description is strictly true I know not; but it is what the publishers would have pass for true, in order to animate others. In a letter from Toul, given in one of their papers, is the following passage concerning the people of that district: "Dans la Révolution actuelle, ils ont résisté à toutes les *séductions du bigotisme, aux persécutions et aux tracasseries* des Ennemis de la Révolution.

[9] Whether the following description is strictly true I do not know; but it is what the publishers would have pass for true, in order to rouse others. In a letter from Toul, printed in one of their papers, is the following passage about the people of that district: "In the present Revolution they have resisted all the *seductions of bigotry, the persecutions and harassments* of the Enemies of the Revolution. [50]

52

Oubliant leurs plus grands intérêts pour rendre hommage aux vues d'ordre général qui ont determiné l'Assemblée Nationale, ils voient, *sans se plaindre,* supprimer cette foule d'établissemens ecclésiastiques par lesquels *ils subsistoient*; et même, en perdant leur siège épiscopal, la seule de toutes ces ressources qui pouvoit, ou plutôt *qui devoit, en toute équité,* leur être conservée; condamnés *à la plus effrayante misère,* sans avoir *été ni pu être entendus, ils ne murmurent point,* ils restent fidèles aux principes du plus pur patriotisme;

Forgetting their own greatest interests in order to pay homage to the views of general order that have guided the National Assembly, they watch, *without complaining,* the suppression of that host of ecclesiastical establishments by which *they made their living*; and even the loss of their episcopal see, the one resource among all of these that could, or rather *that in all equity ought to,* have been left to them; condemned *to the most frightful poverty,* without having *been heard, or been able to be heard, they do not murmur,* they remain faithful to the principles of the purest patriotism;

53

ils sont encore prêts à *verser leur sang* pour le maintien de la Constitution, qui va reduire leur Ville *à la plus déplorable nullité."* These people are not supposed to have endured those sufferings and injustices in a struggle for liberty, for the same account states truly that they had been always free; their patience in beggary and ruin, and their suffering, without remonstrance, the most flagrant and confessed injustice, if strictly true, can be nothing but the effect of this dire fanaticism.

they are still ready to *shed their blood* to uphold the Constitution, which is about to reduce their town *to the most deplorable insignificance."* These people are not supposed to have endured these sufferings and injustices in a struggle for liberty, for the same account states, truly, that they had always been free. Their patience in beggary and ruin, and their enduring without protest the most flagrant and admitted injustice, if strictly true, can be nothing but the effect of this dreadful fanaticism.

54

A great multitude all over France is in the same condition and the same temper.

A great multitude all over France is in the same condition and the same frame of mind.

56

[10] See the proceedings of the confederation at *Nantz.*

[10] See the proceedings of the federation at *Nantes.* [55]

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look for their security, in the first instance, to the fidelity of government; in the second, to its power.	curity first to the good faith of government, and second to its power.
If they find the old governments effete, worn out, and [229] with their springs relaxed, so as not to be of sufficient vigour for their purposes, they may seek new ones that shall be possessed of more energy; and this energy will be derived, not from an acquisition of resources, but from a contempt of justice. Revolutions are favourable to confiscation;	If they find the old governments effete, worn out, and [229] with their springs slackened, so that they lack the vigor for their purposes, they may seek new ones possessed of more energy; and this energy will come, not from acquiring resources, but from contempt of justice. Revolutions are favorable to confiscation;
and it is impossible to know under what obnoxious names the next confiscations will be authorised. I am sure that the principles predominant in France extend to very many persons and descriptions of persons in all countries who think their innoxious indolence their security. This kind of innocence in proprietors may be argued into inutility; and inutility into an unfitness for their estates.	and it is impossible to know under what odious names the next confiscations will be authorized. I am sure that the principles now dominant in France reach a great many persons, and classes of persons, in every country, who think their harmless idleness their security. This kind of innocence in proprietors may be argued into uselessness, and uselessness into unfitness to hold their estates.
p. 229 Many parts of Europe are in open disorder. In many others there is a hollow murmuring under ground; a confused movement is felt, that threatens a general earthquake in the political world. Already confederacies and correspondences of the most extraordinary nature are forming, in several countries[12]. In such a state of things we ought to hold ourselves upon our guard. In all mutations (if mutations must be) the circumstance which will serve most to blunt the edge of their mischief, and to promote what good may be in them, is, that they should find us with our minds tenacious of justice, and tender of property.	Many parts of Europe are in open disorder. In many others there is a hollow murmuring underground; a confused movement is felt that threatens a general earthquake in the political world. Already confederacies and correspondences of the most extraordinary nature are forming in several countries[12]. In such a state of things we ought to keep on our guard. In all changes (if changes there must be), the circumstance that will do most to blunt the edge of their mischief, and to promote whatever good may be in them, is that they should find us with minds tenacious of justice and tender of property.

57 Cicero, *De officiis* (On Duties) 2.79–80, rendered in English; Lysander here is the ephor who backed Agis IV's redistribution of land.

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But it will be argued, that this confiscation in France ought not to alarm other nations. They say it is not made from wanton rapacity; that it is a [230] great measure of national policy, adopted to remove an extensive, inveterate, superstitious mischief. It is with the greatest difficulty that I am able to separate policy from justice. Justice is itself the great standing policy of civil society; and any eminent departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all.

But it will be argued that this confiscation in France ought not to alarm other nations. They say it does not come from wanton greed; that it is a [230] great measure of national policy, adopted to remove an extensive, inveterate, superstitious evil. I find it extremely difficult to separate policy from justice. Justice is itself the great standing policy of civil society; and any marked departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all.

p. 230

When men are encouraged to go into a certain mode of life by the existing laws, and protected in that mode as in a lawful occupation—when they have accommodated all their ideas, and all their habits to it—when the law had long made their adherence to its rules a ground of reputation, and their departure from them a ground of disgrace and even of penalty—I am sure it is unjust in legislature, by an arbitrary act, to offer a sudden violence to their minds and their feelings; forcibly to degrade them from their state and

When men are encouraged by the existing laws to enter a certain way of life, and protected in it as a lawful occupation—when they have fitted all their ideas and all their habits to it—when the law has long made their keeping its rules a ground of reputation, and their breaking them a ground of disgrace and even of penalty—I am sure it is unjust for the legislature, by an arbitrary act, to do sudden violence to their minds and feelings; to degrade them by force from their state and condition, and to brand with shame and infamy the

59 A spear set up in the forum marked a public auction of confiscated property; the two occasions are Sulla's and Caesar's confiscations. Aratus (271–213 BC) restored exiles at Sicyon by compensating both old and new owners.
61 "Some Original Writings of the Order of Illuminati" and "System and Consequences of the Order of Illuminati," on the Bavarian secret society suppressed in 1785.
58

[11] "Si plures sunt ii quibus improbe datum est, quam illi quibus injuste ademptum est, idcirco plus etiam valent? Non enim numero haec judicantur sed pondere. Quam autem habet aequitatem, ut agrum multis annis, aut etiam saeculis ante possessum, qui nullum habuit habeat; qui autem habuit amittat. Ac, propter hoc injuriae genus, Lacedaemonii Lysandrum Ephorum expulerunt: Agin regem (quod nunquam antea apud eos acciderat) necaverunt: exque eo tempore tantae discordiae secutae sunt, ut et tyranni exsisterint, et optimates exterminarentur, et preclarissime constituta respublica dilaberetur. Nec vero solum ipsa ceci it, sed etiam reliquam Graeciam evertit contagionibus malorum, quae a Lacedaemoniis profectae manarunt latius."

[11] "If those to whom property has been wrongfully given are more numerous than those from whom it has been unjustly taken, do they therefore count for more? These things are judged not by number but by weight. And what equity is there in this: that a man who never had land should possess a field held for many years or even centuries, while the man who had it loses it? It was for this kind of wrong that the Spartans banished the ephor Lysander and put King Agis to death (a thing that had never happened among them before); and from that time such discords followed that tyrants arose, the nobles were driven out, and a most admirably constituted commonwealth fell to pieces. Nor did it fall alone: it also overthrew the rest of Greece by the contagion of evils that spread from the Spartans and flowed far and wide."[57]

60

—After speaking of the conduct of the model of true patriots, Aratus of Sycion, which was in a very different spirit, he says, "Sic par est agere cum civibus; non ut bis jam vidimus, hastam in foro ponere et bona civium voci subjicere praeconis. At ille Graecus (id quod fuit sapientis et praestantis viri) omnibus consulendum esse putavit: eaque est summa ratio et sapientia boni civis, commoda civium non divellere, sed omnes eadem aequitate continere." Cic. Off. l. 2.

—After speaking of the conduct of that model of true patriots, Aratus of Sicyon, which was in a very different spirit, he says: "This is the right way to deal with fellow citizens—not, as we have already seen twice, to plant the spear in the forum and put citizens' goods under the auctioneer's cry. But that Greek (as befitted a wise and excellent man) thought that the interests of all must be consulted; and this is the highest reason and wisdom of a good citizen: not to tear apart the interests of citizens, but to hold them all together by the same equity." Cicero, *De officiis*, book 2.[59]

62

[12] See two books intitled, Enige Originalschriften des Illuminatenordens.—System und Folgen des Illuminatenordens.

[12] See two books entitled *Einige Originalschriften des Illuminatenordens* and *System und Folgen des Illuminatenordens*.[61]

63

Munchen 1787.

Munich, 1787.

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condition, and to stigmatize with shame and infamy that character and those customs which before had been made the measure of their happiness and honour.

If to this be added an expulsion from their habitations, and a confiscation of all their goods, I am not sagacious enough to discover how this despotic sport, made of the feelings, consciences, prejudices, and properties of men, can be discriminated from the rankest tyranny.

If the injustice of the course pursued in France be clear, the policy of the measure, that is, the public benefit to be expected from it, ought to be at least as evident, and at least as important.

To a man who acts under the influence of no passion, who [231] has nothing in view in his projects but the public good, a great difference will immediately strike him, between what policy would dictate on the original introduction of such institutions, and on a question of their total abolition, where they have cast their roots wide and deep, and where by long habit things more valuable than themselves are so adapted to them, and in a manner interwoven with them, that the one cannot be destroyed without notably impairing the other. He might be embarrassed, if the case were really such as sophisters represent it in their paltry style of debating.

p. 231 But in this, as in most questions of state, there is a middle. There is something else than the mere alternative of absolute destruction, or unreformed existence. *Spartam nactus es; hanc exorna.* This is, in my opinion, a rule of profound sense, and ought never to depart from the mind of an honest reformer. I cannot conceive how any man can have brought himself to that pitch of presumption, to consider his country as nothing but *carte blanche,* upon which he may scribble whatever he pleases.

A man full of warm speculative benevolence may wish his society otherwise constituted than he finds it; but a good patriot, and a true politician, always considers how he shall make the most of the existing materials of his country. A disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a

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character and customs that had before been made the measure of their happiness and honor.

If to this is added their expulsion from their homes and the confiscation of all their goods, I am not shrewd enough to discover how this despotic sport made of men's feelings, consciences, prejudices and properties can be told apart from the rankest tyranny.

If the injustice of the course pursued in France is clear, the policy of the measure—that is, the public benefit to be expected from it—ought to be at least as evident, and at least as important.

A man who acts under the influence of no passion, who [231] has nothing in view in his projects but the public good, will at once be struck by a great difference between what policy would dictate when such institutions are first introduced, and what it would dictate on the question of abolishing them entirely, once they have struck their roots wide and deep, and once, by long habit, things more valuable than themselves have been so adapted to them, and in a manner so interwoven with them, that the one cannot be destroyed without seriously impairing the other. He might be at a loss if the case were really as the sophists represent it in their paltry style of debating.

But in this, as in most questions of state, there is a middle way. There is something besides the bare alternative of absolute destruction or unreformed existence. *Sparta is your lot; make it beautiful.* This is, in my opinion, a rule of profound sense, and it ought never to leave the mind of an honest reformer. I cannot conceive how any man can have worked himself up to such a pitch of presumption as to regard his country as nothing but a *carte blanche* on which he may scribble whatever he pleases.[64]

A man full of warm speculative benevolence may wish his society were constituted otherwise than he finds it; but a good patriot and a true politician always considers how he can make the most of the existing materials of his country. A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve, taken together,

64 Latin version of a line from Euripides' lost *Telephus*, quoted by Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* 4.6): make the best of the place that has fallen to you.

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statesman. Every thing else is vulgar in the conception, perilous in the execution.

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would be my standard of a statesman. Everything else is vulgar in the conception, perilous in the execution.

REFORM WITHOUT DESTRUCTION: THE MONASTERIES

Wise statesmen would have reformed and used the monasteries and church estates rather than sold them.

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There are moments in the fortune of states when particular men are called to make improvements [232] by great mental exertion. In those moments, even when they seem to enjoy the confidence of their prince and country, and to be invested with full authority they have not always apt instruments. A politician, to do great things, looks for a *power,* what our workmen call a *purchase*; and if he finds that power, in politics as in mechanics he cannot be at a loss to apply it. In the monastic institutions, in my opinion, was found a great *power* for the mechanism of politic benevolence.

p. 232 There were revenues with a public direction; there were men wholly set apart and dedicated to public purposes, without any other than public ties and public principles; men without the possibility of converting the estate of the community into a private fortune; men denied to self-interests, whose avarice is for some community;

men to whom personal poverty is honour, and implicit obedience stands in the place of freedom. In vain shall a man look to the possibility of making such things when he wants them. The winds blow as they list. These institutions are the products of enthusiasm; they are the instruments of wisdom. Wisdom cannot create materials; they are the gifts of nature or of chance; her pride is in the use.

The perennial existence of bodies corporate and their fortunes, are things particularly suited to a man who has long views; who meditates designs that require time in fashioning; and which propose duration when they are accomplished. He is not deserving to rank high, or even to be mentioned in the order of great statesmen, who, having obtained the command and direction of such a power as [233] existed in the wealth, the

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There are moments in the fortunes of states when particular men are called on to make improvements [232] by great mental exertion. In those moments, even when they seem to enjoy the confidence of their prince and their country, and to be invested with full authority, they do not always have the right instruments. A politician who would do great things looks for a *power*, what our workmen call a *purchase*; and if he finds that power, in politics as in mechanics he will have no trouble applying it. In the monastic institutions, in my opinion, a great *power* was to be found for the machinery of political benevolence.[65]

Here were revenues with a public direction. Here were men wholly set apart and dedicated to public purposes, with no ties and no principles but public ones; men with no possibility of turning the estate of the community into a private fortune; men who had renounced self-interest, whose avarice is for some community;

men to whom personal poverty is an honor, and in whom implicit obedience takes the place of freedom. A man will look in vain for some way to make such things when he wants them. The winds blow as they please. These institutions are the products of enthusiasm; they are the instruments of wisdom. Wisdom cannot create its materials; they are the gifts of nature or of chance. Her pride is in the use.

The perpetual existence of corporate bodies and their fortunes is particularly suited to a man who takes long views, who plans designs that need time in the shaping and that are meant to last once accomplished. He does not deserve to rank high, or even to be mentioned among great statesmen, who, having gained command and direction of such a power as [233] existed in the wealth, the discipline, and the habits of corporations like those

65 A "purchase" is a workman's term for a hold or leverage that lets force be applied.

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discipline, and the habits of such corporations, as those which you have rashly destroyed, cannot find any way of converting it to the great and lasting benefit of his country. On the view of this subject a thousand uses suggest themselves to a contriving mind.	you have rashly destroyed, cannot find any way of turning it to the great and lasting benefit of his country. On a view of this subject, a thousand uses suggest themselves to an inventive mind.
p. 233 To destroy any power, growing wild from the rank productive force of the human mind, is almost tantamount, in the moral world, to the destruction of the apparently active properties of bodies in the material. It would be like the attempt to destroy (if it were in our competence to destroy) the expansive force of fixed air in nitre, or the power of steam, or of electricity, or of magnetism. These energies always existed in nature, and they were always discernible.	To destroy any power that grows wild from the rank, productive force of the human mind is, in the moral world, almost the same as destroying the evidently active properties of bodies in the material world. It would be like trying to destroy (if it were in our power to destroy them) the expansive force of fixed air in nitre, or the power of steam, or of electricity, or of magnetism. These energies always existed in nature, and they could always be perceived.[66]
They seemed, some of them unserviceable, some noxious, some no better than a sport to children; until contemplative ability, combining with practic skill, tamed their wild nature, subdued them to use, and rendered them at once the most powerful and the most tractable agents, in subservience to the great views and designs of men. Did fifty thousand persons,	Some of them seemed useless, some harmful, some no better than toys for children, until contemplative ability, joined with practical skill, tamed their wild nature, subdued them to use, and made them at once the most powerful and the most tractable agents, serving the great views and designs of men. Did fifty thousand persons,
whose mental and whose bodily labour you might direct, and so many hundred thousand a year of a revenue, which was neither lazy nor superstitious, appear too big for your abilities to wield? Had you no way of using the men but by converting monks into pensioners? Had you no way of turning the revenue to account, but through the improvident resource of a [234] spendthrift sale?	whose mental and bodily labor you might have directed, and so many hundred thousand a year of a revenue that was neither lazy nor superstitious, seem too big for your abilities to wield? Had you no way of using the men except by turning monks into pensioners? Had you no way of turning the revenue to account except through the improvident resource of a [234] spendthrift sale?
p. 234 If you were thus destitute of mental funds, the proceeding is in its natural course. Your politicians do not understand their trade; and therefore they sell their tools.	If you were that destitute of mental resources, the proceeding follows its natural course. Your politicians do not understand their trade, and so they sell their tools.
But the institutions savour of superstition in their very principle; and they nourish it by a permanent and standing influence. This I do not mean to dispute; but this ought not to hinder you from deriving from superstition itself any resources which may thence be furnished for the public advantage. You derive benefits from many dispositions and many passions of the human mind, which are of as doubtful a colour in the	But these institutions smack of superstition in their very principle, and they nourish it by a permanent and standing influence. I do not mean to dispute this. But it ought not to stop you from drawing from superstition itself whatever resources it may furnish for the public advantage. You draw benefits from many dispositions and many passions of the human mind that are of as doubtful a color, to the moral eye, as superstition

66 "Fixed air" was the 18th-century name for carbon dioxide. By "fixed air in nitre" Burke means the gas released explosively from saltpeter, as in gunpowder.

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moral eye, as superstition itself. It was your business to correct and mitigate every thing which was noxious in this passion, as in all the passions. But is superstition the greatest of all possible vices? In its possible excess I think it becomes a very great evil.

It is, however, a moral subject; and of course admits of all degrees and all modifications. Superstition is the religion of feeble minds; and they must be tolerated in an intermixture of it, in some trifling or some enthusiastic shape or other, else you will deprive weak minds of a resource found necessary to the strongest. The body of all true religion consists, to be sure, in obedience to the will of the sovereign of the world; in a confidence in his declarations; and an imitation of his perfections. The rest is our own. It may be prejudicial to the great end; it may be auxiliary.

Wise men, who as such, are not *admirers* (not admirers at least of the *Munera Terrae*) are not violently attached to these things, nor do they [235] violently hate them. Wisdom is not the most severe corrector of folly. They are the rival follies, which mutually wage so unrelenting a war; and which make so cruel a use of their advantages, as they can happen to engage the immoderate vulgar on the one side or the other in their quarrels.

p. 235 Prudence would be neuter; but if, in the contention between fond attachment and fierce antipathy concerning things in their nature not made to produce such heats, a prudent man were obliged to make a choice of what errors and excesses of enthusiasm he would condemn or bear, perhaps he would think, that which builds, to be more tolerable than that which demolishes—that which adorns a country, than that which deforms it—that which endows, than that which plunders—that which disposes to mistaken beneficence, than that which stimulates to real injustice— that which leads a man to refuse to himself lawful pleasures, than that which snatches from others the scanty subsistence of their self-denial.

Such, I think, is very nearly the state of the question between the ancient founders of monkish superstition, and the superstition of the pretended philosophers of the hour.

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itself. It was your business to correct and soften everything harmful in this passion, as in all the passions. But is superstition the greatest of all possible vices? In its possible excess, I think it becomes a very great evil.

It is, however, a moral matter, and so it admits of all degrees and all modifications. Superstition is the religion of feeble minds, and they must be allowed some mixture of it, in one shape or another, trifling or enthusiastic, or you will deprive weak minds of a resource that even the strongest find necessary. The substance of all true religion consists, to be sure, in obedience to the will of the sovereign of the world, in trust in his declarations, and in imitation of his perfections. The rest is our own. It may hinder the great end; it may help it.

Wise men, who as such are not *admirers* (not admirers, at least, of *the gifts of the earth*), are not violently attached to these things, nor do they [235] violently hate them. Wisdom is not the harshest corrector of folly. It is the rival follies that wage so unrelenting a war on each other, and that make so cruel a use of their advantages whenever they manage to enlist the intemperate multitude on one side or the other of their quarrels.[67]

Prudence would stay neutral. But if, in the contest between doting attachment and fierce antipathy over things not by nature made to produce such heat, a prudent man were forced to choose which errors and excesses of enthusiasm he would condemn and which he would bear, perhaps he would think the one that builds more tolerable than the one that demolishes—the one that adorns a country than the one that disfigures it—the one that endows than the one that plunders—the one that inclines to mistaken generosity than the one that spurs to real injustice—the one that leads a man to deny himself lawful pleasures than the one that snatches from others the meager subsistence of their self-denial.

That, I think, is very nearly the state of the question between the ancient founders of monkish superstition and the superstition of the pretended philosophers of the hour.

67 Burke alludes to Horace, *Epistles* 1.6, which opens "*Nil admirari*" ("to admire nothing") and goes on to ask what one should think of the *munera terrae*, "the gifts of the earth."

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For the present I postpone all consideration of the supposed public profit of the sale, which however I conceive to be perfectly delusive. I shall here only consider it as a transfer of property. On the policy of that transfer I shall trouble you with a few thoughts.

In every prosperous community something more is produced than goes to the immediate support of [236] the producer. This surplus forms the income of the landed capitalist. It will be spent by a proprietor who does not labour. But this idleness is itself the spring of labour; this repose the spur to industry. The only concern of the state is, that the capital taken in rent from the land, should be returned again to the industry from whence it came; and that its expenditure should be with the least possible detriment to the morals of those who expend it, and to those of the people to whom it is returned.

p. 236 In all the views of receipt, expenditure, and personal employment, a sober legislator would carefully compare the possessor whom he was recommended to expel, with the stranger who was proposed to fill his place. Before the inconveniences are incurred which *must* attend all violent revolutions in property through extensive confiscation, we ought to have some rational assurance that the purchasers of the confiscated property will be in a considerable degree more laborious,

more virtuous, more sober, less disposed to extort an unreasonable proportion of the gains of the labourer, or to consume on themselves a larger share than is fit for the measure of an individual, or that they should be qualified to dispense the surplus in a more steady and equal mode, so as to answer the purposes of a politic expenditure, than the old possessors, call those possessors, bishops, or canons, or commendatory abbots, or monks, or what you please.

The monks are lazy. Be it so. Suppose them no otherwise employed than by singing in the choir. They are as usefully employed as those who neither sing nor say. [237] As usefully even as those who sing upon the stage. They are as usefully employed as if they worked from dawn to dark in the innumerable servile, degrading, unseemly, unmanly, and often most unwholesome and pestiferous occupations, to which by the social

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For now I postpone all consideration of the supposed public profit of the sale, which I take, however, to be wholly illusory. Here I shall consider it only as a transfer of property. On the policy of that transfer I shall trouble you with a few thoughts.

In every prosperous community, more is produced than goes to the immediate support of [236] the producer. This surplus forms the income of the landed capitalist. It will be spent by a proprietor who does not labor. But this idleness is itself the spring of labor; this repose is the spur to industry. The state's only concern is that the capital taken as rent from the land should be returned to the industry it came from, and that it should be spent with the least possible harm to the morals of those who spend it, and of the people to whom it returns.

In every respect of income, expenditure, and personal employment, a sober legislator would carefully compare the possessor he was being urged to expel with the stranger proposed to take his place. Before we incur the inconveniences that *must* attend every violent revolution in property through widespread confiscation, we ought to have some rational assurance that the purchasers of the confiscated property will be considerably more industrious,

more virtuous, more sober, less disposed to extort an unreasonable share of the laborer's earnings or to consume on themselves more than is fit for one individual, or that they will be better qualified to distribute the surplus in a steadier and more even way, so as to serve the purposes of a politic expenditure, than the old possessors—call those possessors bishops, or canons, or commendatory abbots, or monks, or what you please.

The monks are lazy. So be it. Suppose they do nothing but sing in the choir. They are as usefully employed as those who neither sing nor say. [237] As usefully, even, as those who sing on the stage. They are as usefully employed as if they worked from dawn to dark in the countless servile, degrading, unseemly, unmanly, and often most unwholesome and pestilential occupations to which

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oeconomy so many wretches are inevitably doomed.

p. 237 If it were not generally pernicious to disturb the natural course of things, and to impede, in any degree, the great wheel of circulation which is turned by the strangely directed labour of these unhappy people, I should be infinitely more inclined forcibly to rescue them from their miserable industry, than violently to disturb the tranquil repose of monastic quietude. Humanity, and perhaps policy, might better justify me in the one than in the other. It is a subject on which I have often reflected, and never reflected without feeling from it.

I am sure that no consideration, except the necessity of submitting to the yoke of luxury, and the despotism of fancy, who in their own imperious way will distribute the surplus product of the soil, can justify the toleration of such trades and employments in a well-regulated state. But, for this purpose of distribution, it seems to me, that the idle expences of monks are quite as well directed as the idle expences of us lay-loiterers.

When the advantages of the possession, and of the project, are on a par, there is no motive for a change. But in the present case, perhaps they are not upon a par, and the difference is in favour of the possession. It does not appear to me, that the expences of those whom you are going to expel, do, in fact, take a course so directly and so generally leading to vitiate and [238] degrade and render miserable those through whom they pass, as the expences of those favourites whom you are intruding into their houses.

p. 238 Why should the expenditure of a great landed property, which is a dispersion of the surplus product of the soil, appear intolerable to you or to me, when it takes its course through the accumulation of vast libraries, which are the history of the force and weakness of the human mind; through great collections of antient records, medals, and coins, which attest and explain laws and customs;

through paintings and statues, that, by imitating nature, seem to extend the limits of creation; through grand monuments of the dead, which continue the regards and connexions of life beyond the grave; through collections of the specimens of nature, which become a

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the social economy inevitably dooms so many wretches.

If it were not generally harmful to disturb the natural course of things, and to impede in any degree the great wheel of circulation that is turned by the strangely directed labor of these unhappy people, I would be infinitely more inclined to rescue them by force from their miserable industry than to disturb violently the tranquil repose of monastic quiet. Humanity, and perhaps policy, would better justify me in the one than in the other. It is a subject I have often reflected on, and never without feeling.

I am sure that nothing can justify tolerating such trades and employments in a well-regulated state, except the necessity of submitting to the yoke of luxury and the despotism of fancy, which in their own imperious way will distribute the surplus product of the soil. But for this purpose of distribution, it seems to me that the idle expenses of monks are quite as well directed as the idle expenses of us lay idlers.

When the advantages of the existing possession and of the project are equal, there is no motive for a change. But in the present case perhaps they are not equal, and the difference favors the possession. It does not seem to me that the spending of those you are about to expel actually takes a course so directly and so generally tending to corrupt and [238] degrade and make miserable those it passes through, as the spending of the favorites you are thrusting into their houses.

Why should the expenditure of a great landed property, which is a dispersion of the surplus product of the soil, seem intolerable to you or to me, when it takes its course through the accumulation of vast libraries, which are the history of the strength and weakness of the human mind; through great collections of ancient records, medals, and coins, which attest and explain laws and customs;

through paintings and statues that, by imitating nature, seem to extend the limits of creation; through grand monuments of the dead, which carry the regards and connections of life beyond the grave; through collections of specimens of nature, which become a representative assembly

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representative assembly of all the classes and families of the world, that by disposition facilitate, and, by exciting curiosity, open the avenues to science?	of all the classes and families of the world, and which by their arrangement make science easier and, by exciting curiosity, open the avenues to it?
If, by great permanent establishments, all these objects of expence are better secured from the inconstant sport of personal caprice and personal extravagance, are they worse than if the same tastes prevailed in scattered individuals? Does not the sweat of the mason and carpenter, who toil in order to partake the sweat of the peasant, flow as pleasantly and as salubriously, in the construction and repair of the majestic edifices of religion, as in the painted booths and sordid sties of vice and luxury;	If great permanent establishments secure all these objects of expense better against the fickle play of personal whim and personal extravagance, are they worse than if the same tastes prevailed in scattered individuals? Does not the sweat of the mason and the carpenter, who toil so as to share in the sweat of the peasant, flow as pleasantly and as healthily in building and repairing the majestic edifices of religion as in the painted booths and sordid sties of vice and luxury;
as honourably and as profitably in repairing those sacred works, which grow hoary with innumerable years, as on the momentary receptacles of transient voluptuousness; in opera-houses, and brothels, and gaming-houses, [239] and club-houses, and obelisks in the Champ de Mars?	as honorably and as profitably in repairing those sacred works that grow hoary with countless years as on the momentary receptacles of passing voluptuousness—in opera houses, and brothels, and gaming houses, [239] and clubhouses, and obelisks in the Champ de Mars?[68]
p. 239 Is the surplus product of the olive and the vine worse employed in the frugal sustenance of persons, whom the fictions of a pious imagination raises to dignity by construing in the service of God, than in pampering the innumerable multitude of those who are degraded by being made useless domestics subservient to the pride of man? Are the decorations of temples an expenditure less worthy a wise man than ribbons, and laces, and national cockades, and petits maisons, and petit soupers, and all the innumerable fopperies and follies in which opulence sports away the burthen of its superfluity?	Is the surplus product of the olive and the vine worse employed in the frugal sustenance of persons whom the fictions of a pious imagination raise to dignity by regarding them as engaged in the service of God, than in pampering the countless multitude of those who are degraded by being made useless servants to the pride of man? Are the decorations of temples an expenditure less worthy of a wise man than ribbons, and laces, and national cockades, and little pleasure houses, and intimate suppers, and all the countless fopperies and follies in which wealth sports away the burden of its superfluity?[69]
We tolerate even these; not from love of them, but for fear of worse. We tolerate them, because property and liberty, to a degree, require that toleration. But why proscribe the other, and surely, in every point of view, the more laudable use of estates? Why, through the violation of all property, through an outrage upon every principle of liberty, forcibly carry them from the better to the worse?	We tolerate even these, not from love of them but for fear of worse. We tolerate them because property and liberty, to a degree, require that toleration. But why proscribe the other use of estates, which is surely in every respect the more praiseworthy? Why, through the violation of all property and an outrage on every principle of liberty, forcibly carry them from the better to the worse?
This comparison between the new individuals and the old corps is made upon a supposition that	This comparison between the new individuals and the old corporations assumes that no reform could

68 The Champ de Mars in Paris was decorated with temporary monuments for the Festival of the Federation, July 14, 1790.
69 Burke's French is *petits maisons* and *petit soupers*: private houses kept for discreet pleasures, and late, intimate supper parties.

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no reform could be made in the latter. But in a question of reformation, I always consider corporate bodies, whether sole or consisting of many, to be much more susceptible of a public direction by the power of the state, in the use of their property, and in the regulation of modes and habits of life in their members, than private citizens ever can be, or perhaps ought to be; and this [240] seems to me a very material consideration for those who undertake any thing which merits the name of a politic enterprize.—So far as to the estates of monasteries.

p. 240 With regard to the estates possessed by bishops and canons, and commendatory abbots, I cannot find out for what reason some landed estates may not be held otherwise than by inheritance. Can any philosophic spoiler undertake to demonstrate the positive or the comparative evil, of having a certain, and that too a large portion of landed property, passing in succession thro' persons whose title to it is, always in theory, and often in fact, an eminent degree of piety, morals, and learning; a property which, by its destination, in their turn, and on the score of merit, gives to the noblest families renovation and support, to the lowest the means of dignity and elevation;

a property, the tenure of which is the performance of some duty, (whatever value you may choose to set upon that duty) and the character of whose proprietors demands at least an exterior decorum and gravity of manners; who are to exercise a generous but temperate hospitality; part of whose income they are to consider as a trust for charity; and who, even when they fail in their trust, when they slide from their character, and degenerate into a mere common secular nobleman or gentleman, are in no respect worse than those who may succeed them in their forfeited possessions?

Is it better that estates should be held by those who have no duty than by those who have one?—by those whose character and destination point to virtues, than by those who have no [241] rule and direction in the expenditure of their estates but their own will and appetite? Nor are these estates held altogether in the character or with the evils supposed inherent in mortmain. They pass from

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be made in the latter. But in a question of reform, I always consider corporate bodies, whether sole or consisting of many, to be far more open to public direction by the power of the state, in the use of their property and in the regulation of the ways and habits of life of their members, than private citizens ever can be, or perhaps ought to be; and this [240] seems to me a very important consideration for anyone who undertakes anything that deserves the name of a political enterprise.—So much for the estates of monasteries.[70]

As for the estates held by bishops and canons and commendatory abbots, I cannot discover any reason why some landed estates may not be held otherwise than by inheritance. Can any philosophic despoiler undertake to demonstrate the positive or the comparative evil of having a certain portion of landed property, and a large one at that, pass in succession through persons whose title to it is—always in theory, and often in fact—an eminent degree of piety, morals, and learning; a property which by its purpose, in turn and on the ground of merit, gives the noblest families renewal and support, and the lowest the means of dignity and advancement;

a property held on condition of performing some duty (whatever value you may choose to set on that duty), and whose proprietors' character demands at least an outward decorum and gravity of manners; who are to exercise a generous but temperate hospitality; who are to regard part of their income as a trust for charity; and who, even when they fail in their trust, when they slip from their character and degenerate into a mere ordinary secular nobleman or gentleman, are in no respect worse than those who may succeed them in their forfeited possessions?

Is it better for estates to be held by those who have no duty than by those who have one?—by those whose character and calling point to virtues, than by those who have no [241] rule or direction in spending their estates but their own will and appetite? Nor are these estates held entirely in the manner, or with the evils, supposed to be inherent

70 In English law a "corporation sole" is a single office-holder with perpetual succession, such as a bishop; a corporation aggregate consists of many members.

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hand to hand with a more rapid circulation than any other.	in mortmain. They pass from hand to hand in a quicker circulation than any other.[71]
p. 241 No excess is good; and therefore too great a proportion of landed property may be held officially for life; but it does not seem to me of material injury to any commonwealth, that there should exist some estates that have a chance of being acquired by other means than the previous acquisition of money.	No excess is good, and so too great a proportion of landed property may be held by office for life. But it does not seem to me any serious injury to a commonwealth that there should be some estates that can be acquired by some other means than first acquiring money.

71 "Mortmain" (literally "dead hand") is the holding of land by a corporation, especially the church, so that it can never be sold or inherited.

The New Constitution Examined

The legislature built on territory, population and contribution; the cement of paper money and Paris; the executive, the judges, the army and the finances; Burke's last word.

WHAT THE ASSEMBLY HAS DONE

The Assembly seized power by usual arts but legislates by untried theory, destroying instead of reforming.

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This letter is grown to a great length, though it is indeed short with regard to the infinite extent of the subject. Various avocations have from time to time called my mind from the subject. I was not sorry to give myself leisure to observe whether, in the proceedings of the national assembly, I might not find reasons to change or to qualify some of my first sentiments. Every thing has confirmed me more strongly in my first opinions.

It was my original purpose to take a view of the principles of the national assembly with regard to the great and fundamental establishments; and to compare the whole of what you have substituted in the place of what you have destroyed, with the several members of our British constitution. But this plan is of greater extent than at first I computed, and I find that you have little desire to take the advantage of any examples. At present I must content myself with some remarks upon your establishments; reserving for another time what I [242] proposed to say concerning the spirit of our British monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, as practically they exist.

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I have taken a review of what has been done by the governing power in France. I have certainly spoke of it with freedom. Those whose principle it is to despise the antient permanent sense of mankind, and to set up a scheme of society on new principles, must naturally expect that such of us who think better of the judgment of the human race than of theirs,

should consider both them and their devices, as men and schemes upon their trial. They must take it for granted that we attend much to their reason, but not at all to their authority. They have not one of the great influencing prejudices of

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This letter has grown very long, though it is in fact short compared with the endless extent of the subject. Various other business has from time to time drawn my mind away from it. I was not sorry to give myself time to see whether, in the proceedings of the National Assembly, I might find reasons to change or qualify some of my first views. Everything has confirmed me more strongly in my first opinions.

My original plan was to survey the principles of the National Assembly with regard to the great and fundamental institutions, and to compare the whole of what you have put in place of what you have destroyed with the several parts of our British constitution. But this plan is larger than I first reckoned, and I find that you have little wish to profit from any examples. For now I must content myself with some remarks on your new institutions, and keep for another time what I [242] meant to say about the spirit of our British monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, as they actually work in practice.

I have reviewed what has been done by the governing power in France. I have certainly spoken of it freely. Those whose principle is to despise the ancient, enduring sense of mankind, and to set up a scheme of society on new principles, must naturally expect that those of us who think better of the judgment of the human race than of theirs

will regard both them and their inventions as men and schemes on trial. They must take it for granted that we pay close attention to their reasoning, but none at all to their authority. They have not one of the great prejudices that sway mankind on

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mankind in their favour. They avow their hostility to opinion.

Of course they must expect no support from that influence, which, with every other authority, they have deposed from the seat of its jurisdiction.

I can never consider this assembly as any thing else than a voluntary association of men, who have availed themselves of circumstances, to seize upon the power of the state. They have not the sanction and authority of the character under which they first met. They have assumed another of a very different nature;

and have completely altered and inverted all the relations in which they originally stood. They do not hold the authority they exercise under any constitutional law of the state. They have departed from the instructions of the people by whom [243] they were sent; which instructions, as the assembly did not act in virtue of any antient usage or settled law, were the sole source of their authority.

p. 243 The most considerable of their acts have not been done by great majorities; and in this sort of near divisions, which carry only the constructive authority of the whole, strangers will consider reasons as well as resolutions.

If they had set up this new experimental government as a necessary substitute for an expelled tyranny, mankind would anticipate the time of prescription, which, through long usage, mellows into legality governments that were violent in their commencement. All those who have affections which lead them to the conservation of civil order would recognize, even in its cradle, the child as legitimate, which has been produced from those principles of cogent expediency to which all just governments owe their birth, and on which they justify their continuance.

But they will be late and reluctant in giving any sort of countenance to the operations of a power, which has derived its birth from no law and no necessity; but which on the contrary has had its origin in those vices and sinister practices by which the social union is often disturbed and sometimes destroyed. This assembly has hardly a year's prescription. We have their own word for it

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their side. They openly declare their hostility to opinion.

Naturally, then, they can expect no support from that influence which, along with every other authority, they have thrown down from its seat of jurisdiction.

I can never regard this assembly as anything other than a voluntary association of men who have taken advantage of circumstances to seize the power of the state. They do not have the sanction and authority of the capacity in which they first met. They have assumed another of a very different nature,

and have completely altered and turned upside down all the relations in which they originally stood. They do not hold the authority they exercise under any constitutional law of the state. They have departed from the instructions of the people who [243] sent them; and those instructions, since the assembly did not act by virtue of any ancient usage or settled law, were the sole source of their authority.

The most important of their acts have not been passed by large majorities; and in close divisions of this sort, which carry the authority of the whole body only by legal inference, outsiders will weigh the reasons as well as the resolutions.

If they had set up this new experimental government as a necessary substitute for an overthrown tyranny, mankind would anticipate the work of prescription, which, through long usage, mellows into legality governments that were violent in their beginnings. All those whose affections lead them to preserve civil order would recognize the child as legitimate, even in its cradle, if it had been born of those principles of compelling necessity to which all just governments owe their birth, and by which they justify their continuance.

But they will be slow and reluctant to give any kind of support to the operations of a power that was born of no law and no necessity, but on the contrary had its origin in those vices and sinister practices by which the union of society is often disturbed and sometimes destroyed. This assembly has scarcely a year's prescription. We have their own word for it that they have made a re-

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that they have made a revolution. To make a revolution is a measure which, *prima fronte,* requires an apology. To make a revolution is to subvert the antient state of our country; and no common reasons are called for to justify so violent a proceeding.

The sense of mankind [244] authorizes us to examine into the mode of acquiring new power, and to criticise on the use that is made of it with less awe and reverence than that which is usually conceded to a settled and recognized authority.

p. 244 In obtaining and securing their power, the assembly proceeds upon principles the most opposite from those which appear to direct them in the use of it. An observation on this difference will let us into the true spirit of their conduct. Every thing which they have done, or continue to do, in order to obtain and keep their power, is by the most common arts. They proceed exactly as their ancestors of ambition have done before them. Trace them through all their artifices, frauds, and violences, you can find nothing at all that is new. They follow precedents and examples with the punctilious exactness of a pleader. They never depart an iota from the authentic formulas of tyranny and usurpation.

But in all the regulations relative to the public good, the spirit has been the very reverse of this. There they commit the whole to the mercy of untried speculations; they abandon the dearest interests of the public, to those loose theories to which none of them would chuse to trust the slightest of his private concerns. They make this difference, because in their desire of obtaining and securing power they are thoroughly in earnest; there they travel in the beaten road. The public interests, because about them they have no real solicitude, they abandon wholly to chance; I say to chance, because their schemes have nothing in experience to prove their tendency beneficial.

p. 245 We must always see with a pity not unmixed with respect, the errors of those who are timid and doubtful of themselves with regard to points wherein the happiness of mankind is concerned. But in these gentlemen there is nothing of the tender parental solicitude which fears to cut up the infant for the sake of an experiment. In the vastness of their promises, and the confidence of

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volution. To make a revolution is a step that, on the face of it, requires an apology. To make a revolution is to overturn the ancient state of our country; and no ordinary reasons are needed to justify so violent a proceeding.

The sense of mankind [244] entitles us to examine how new power was acquired, and to criticize the use made of it, with less awe and reverence than is usually granted to a settled and recognized authority.

In gaining and securing their power, the assembly acts on principles the most opposite to those that seem to guide them in using it. A look at this difference will let us into the true spirit of their conduct. Everything they have done, or continue to do, to gain and keep their power is done by the most ordinary arts. They proceed exactly as their forebears in ambition did before them. Trace them through all their tricks, frauds, and violence, and you will find nothing at all that is new. They follow precedents and examples with the punctilious exactness of a lawyer pleading a case. They never depart one iota from the authentic formulas of tyranny and usurpation.

But in all the measures concerning the public good, the spirit has been the very reverse. There they hand everything over to the mercy of untried speculations; they abandon the dearest interests of the public to loose theories to which none of them would choose to trust the smallest of his private affairs. They make this difference because in their desire to gain and secure power they are thoroughly in earnest; there they travel the beaten road. The public interests, because they have no real concern about them, they abandon wholly to chance—I say to chance, because their schemes have nothing in experience to show that they tend to do good.

We must always regard with a pity not unmixed with respect the errors of those who are timid and doubtful of themselves on points where the happiness of mankind is at stake. But in these gentlemen there is nothing of the tender parental anxiety that fears to cut up the infant for the sake of an experiment. In the vastness of their promises and the confidence of their predictions, they far outdo

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their predictions, they far outdo all the boasting of empirics. The arrogance of their pretensions, in a manner provokes, and challenges us to an enquiry into their foundation.

I am convinced that there are men of considerable parts among the popular leaders in the national assembly. Some of them display eloquence in their speeches and their writings. This cannot be without powerful and cultivated talents. But eloquence may exist without a proportionable degree of wisdom. When I speak of ability, I am obliged to distinguish. What they have done towards the support of their system bespeaks no ordinary men.

In the system itself, taken as the scheme of a republic constructed for procuring the prosperity and security of the citizen, and for promoting the strength and grandeur of the state, I confess myself unable to find out any thing which displays, in a single instance, the work of a comprehensive and disposing mind, or even the provisions of a vulgar prudence.

Their purpose every where seems to have been to evade and slip aside from *difficulty*. This it has been the glory of the great masters in all the arts to confront, and to overcome; and when they had overcome the first difficulty, to turn [246] it into an instrument for new conquests over new difficulties; thus to enable them to extend the empire of their science; and even to push forward beyond the reach of their original thoughts, the land marks of the human understanding itself. Difficulty is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better too.

p. 246 *Pater ipse colendi haud facilem esse viam voluit.* He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper. This amicable conflict with difficulty obliges us to an intimate acquaintance with our object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations. It will not suffer us to be superficial. It is the want of nerves of understanding for such a task; it is the degenerate fondness for tricking short-cuts, and little fallacious facilities, that has in so many parts of the world created governments with arbitrary powers. They have created the late arbitrary monarchy of France. They have created the arbitrary republic of Paris.

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all the boasting of quacks. The arrogance of their claims in a way provokes us, and challenges us, to inquire into their foundations.

I am convinced that there are men of considerable ability among the popular leaders in the National Assembly. Some of them show eloquence in their speeches and writings. That cannot be without powerful and cultivated talents. But eloquence may exist without a proportionate degree of wisdom. When I speak of ability, I must make distinctions. What they have done to keep their system standing shows they are no ordinary men.

In the system itself, taken as the plan of a republic built to secure the prosperity and safety of the citizen and to promote the strength and greatness of the state, I confess I am unable to find anything that shows, in a single instance, the work of a comprehensive and ordering mind, or even the provisions of common prudence.

Their aim everywhere seems to have been to dodge and slip aside from *difficulty*. Yet it has been the glory of the great masters in all the arts to confront difficulty and overcome it; and, having overcome the first difficulty, to turn [246] it into an instrument for new conquests over new difficulties; and so to extend the empire of their science, and even to push forward the landmarks of human understanding itself beyond the reach of their own original thoughts. Difficulty is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme decree of a parental guardian and lawgiver, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better too.

The Father himself did not wish the way of tillage to be easy. He who wrestles with us strengthens our sinews and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper. This friendly struggle with difficulty forces us into an intimate acquaintance with our object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations. It will not let us be superficial. It is the lack of intellectual sinew for such a task—it is the degenerate fondness for tricky shortcuts and petty, deceptive conveniences—that has in so many parts of the world created governments with arbitrary powers. They created the late arbitrary monarchy

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With them defects in wisdom are to be supplied by the plenitude of force. They get nothing by it. Commencing their labours on a principle of sloth, they have the common fortune of slothful men. The difficulties which they rather had eluded than escaped, meet them again in their course; they multiply and thicken on them; they are involved, through a labyrinth of confused detail, in an industry without limit, and without direction; and, in conclusion, the whole of their work becomes feeble, vitious, and insecure.

p. 247 It is this inability to wrestle with difficulty which has obliged the arbitrary assembly of France to commence their schemes of reform with abolition and total destruction. But is it in destroying and pulling down that skill is displayed? Your mob can do this as well at least as your assemblies. The shallowest understanding, the rudest hand, is more than equal to that task. Rage and phrenzy will pull down more in half an hour, than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in an hundred years. The errors and defects of old establishments are visible and palpable.

It calls for little ability to point them out; and where absolute power is given, it requires but a word wholly to abolish the vice and the establishment together. The same lazy but restless disposition, which loves sloth and hates quiet, directs these politicians, when they come to work,

for supplying the place of what they have destroyed. To make every thing the reverse of what they have seen is quite as easy as to destroy. No difficulties occur in what has never been tried. Criticism is almost baffled in discovering the defects of what has not existed; and eager enthusiasm, and cheating hope, have all the wide field of imagination in which they may expatiate with little or no opposition.

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of France. They have created the arbitrary republic of Paris.[1]

With them, defects in wisdom are to be made up by an abundance of force. They gain nothing by it. Beginning their labors on a principle of laziness, they share the common fate of lazy men. The difficulties they had dodged rather than escaped meet them again along the way; they multiply and crowd in on them; they become entangled, through a labyrinth of confused detail, in a toil without limit and without direction; and in the end the whole of their work turns out feeble, faulty, and insecure.

It is this inability to wrestle with difficulty that has forced the arbitrary assembly of France to begin their schemes of reform with abolition and total destruction. But is it in destroying and pulling down that skill is shown? Your mob can do this at least as well as your assemblies. The shallowest understanding, the crudest hand, is more than equal to that task. Rage and frenzy will pull down more in half an hour than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in a hundred years. The errors and defects of old institutions are visible and obvious.

It takes little ability to point them out; and where absolute power is given, a single word is enough to abolish both the abuse and the institution together. The same lazy but restless disposition, which loves idleness and hates peace, guides these politicians when they come to the work

of filling the place of what they have destroyed. To make everything the reverse of what they have seen is quite as easy as to destroy. No difficulties arise in what has never been tried. Criticism is almost at a loss to find the defects of what has never existed; and eager enthusiasm and deceiving hope have the whole wide field of imagination in which to roam with little or no opposition.

1 Virgil, Georgics 1.121–22: “Pater ipse colendi haud facilem esse viam voluit.”

TO PRESERVE AND TO REFORM

Real reform preserves while it improves, works slowly, and draws on many minds over time.

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At once to preserve and to reform is quite another thing. When the useful parts of an old establishment are kept, and what is superadded is to be fitted to what is retained, a vigorous mind, steady persevering attention, various powers of comparison and combination, and the resources [248] of an understanding fruitful in expedients are to be exercised; they are to be exercised in a continued conflict with the combined force of opposite vices; with the obstinacy that rejects all improvement, and the levity that is fatigued and disgusted with every thing of which it is in possession. But you may object— "A process of this kind is slow.

p. 248 It is not fit for an assembly, which glories in performing in a few months the work of ages. Such a mode of reforming, possibly might take up many years." Without question it might; and it ought. It is one of the excellencies of a method in which time is amongst the assistants, that its operation is slow, and in some cases almost imperceptible. If circumspection and caution are a part of wisdom, when we work only upon inanimate matter, surely they become a part of duty too, when the subject of our demolition and construction is not brick and timber, but sentient beings, by the sudden alteration of whose state, condition, and habits, multitudes may be rendered miserable.

But it seems as if it were the prevalent opinion in Paris, that an unfeeling heart, and an undoubting confidence, are the sole qualifications for a perfect legislator. Far different are my ideas of that high office. The true lawgiver ought to have an heart full of sensibility. He ought to love and respect his kind, and to fear himself. It may be allowed to his temperament to catch his ultimate object with an intuitive glance; but his movements towards it ought to be deliberate. Political arrangement, as it is a work for social ends, is to be only wrought by social means. [249] There mind must conspire with mind.

p. 249 Time is required to produce that union of minds which alone can produce all the good we aim at. Our patience will atchieve more than our force. If

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To preserve and to reform at the same time is quite another matter. When the useful parts of an old institution are kept, and what is added must be fitted to what is retained, a vigorous mind, steady and persevering attention, varied powers of comparison and combination, and the resources [248] of an understanding fertile in expedients all have to be exercised; and they have to be exercised in a continual struggle against the combined force of opposite vices: the obstinacy that rejects all improvement, and the frivolity that grows tired of and disgusted with everything it possesses. But you may object: "A process of this kind is slow.

It does not suit an assembly that glories in accomplishing in a few months the work of ages. Such a way of reforming might take many years." No doubt it might; and it ought to. It is one of the merits of a method in which time is among the helpers that it works slowly, and in some cases almost imperceptibly. If circumspection and caution are part of wisdom when we work only on lifeless matter, surely they become part of duty too when the object of our demolition and construction is not brick and timber but sentient beings, whose sudden change of state, condition, and habits may make multitudes miserable.

But it seems to be the prevailing opinion in Paris that an unfeeling heart and an undoubting confidence are the only qualifications for a perfect legislator. Very different are my ideas of that high office. The true lawgiver ought to have a heart full of sensibility. He ought to love and respect his kind, and to fear himself. His temperament may be allowed to grasp his ultimate object at an intuitive glance; but his movements toward it ought to be deliberate. Political arrangement, being a work for social ends, can be brought about only by social means. [249] There mind must work together with mind.

Time is needed to produce that union of minds which alone can produce all the good we aim at. Our patience will achieve more than our force. If I

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I might venture to appeal to what is so much out of fashion in Paris, I mean to experience, I should tell you, that in my course I have known, and, according to my measure, have co-operated with great men; and I have never yet seen any plan which has not been mended by the observations of those who were much inferior in understanding to the person who took the lead in the business.

By a slow but well-sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched; the good or ill success of the first, gives light to us in the second;

and so, from light to light, we are conducted with safety through the whole series. We see, that the parts of the system do not clash. The evils latent in the most promising contrivances are provided for as they arise. One advantage is as little as possible sacrificed to another. We compensate, we reconcile, we balance. We are enabled to unite into a consistent whole the various anomalies and contending principles that are found in the minds and affairs of men. From hence arises, not an excellence in simplicity, but one far superior, an excellence in composition.

Where the great interests of mankind are concerned through a long succession of generations, that succession ought to be admitted into some share in the councils which are so deeply to affect them. If justice requires this, the work itself requires the aid of more minds than one age can furnish. It is from this view of things [250] that the best legislators have been often satisfied with the establishment of some sure, solid, and ruling principle in government; a power like that which some of the philosophers have called a plastic nature; and having fixed the principle, they have left it afterwards to its own operation.

p. 250 To proceed in this manner, that is, to proceed with a presiding principle, and a prolific energy, is with me the criterion of profound wisdom. What your politicians think the marks of a bold, hardy genius, are only proofs of a deplorable want of ability. By their violent haste, and their defiance of the process of nature,

they are delivered over blindly to every projector and adventurer, to every alchymist and empiric.

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may venture to appeal to something so out of fashion in Paris—I mean experience—I would tell you that in my career I have known great men, and in my own measure have worked with them; and I have never yet seen any plan that was not improved by the observations of those far inferior in understanding to the person who led the business.

By slow but well-sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched; the good or bad success of the first gives us light for the second;

and so, from light to light, we are led safely through the whole series. We see that the parts of the system do not clash. The evils hidden in the most promising contrivances are dealt with as they arise. One advantage is sacrificed to another as little as possible. We compensate, we reconcile, we balance. We are able to unite into a consistent whole the various anomalies and contending principles found in the minds and affairs of men. From this arises not an excellence in simplicity, but one far superior: an excellence in composition.

Where the great interests of mankind are at stake through a long succession of generations, that succession ought to be given some share in the councils that are to affect them so deeply. If justice requires this, the work itself requires the help of more minds than one age can supply. It is from this view of things [250] that the best legislators have often been content to establish some sure, solid, and ruling principle in government—a power like what some philosophers have called a plastic nature—and, having fixed the principle, have afterwards left it to its own operation.[2]

To proceed in this way—that is, to proceed with a presiding principle and a fertile energy—is for me the test of profound wisdom. What your politicians take for the marks of a bold, daring genius are only proofs of a deplorable lack of ability. By their violent haste, and their defiance of the process of nature,

they are handed over blindly to every schemer and adventurer, to every alchemist and quack.

2 "Plastic nature": a formative power working within things, a notion associated with the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth.

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They despair of turning to account any thing that is common. Diet is nothing in their system of remedy. The worst of it is, that this their despair of curing common distempers by regular methods, arises not only from defect of comprehension, but, I fear, from some malignity of disposition.

Your legislators seem to have taken their opinions of all professions, ranks, and offices, from the declamations and buffooneries of satirists; who would themselves be astonished if they were held to the letter of their own descriptions. By listening only to these, your leaders regard all things only on the side of their vices and faults, and view those vices and faults under every colour of exaggeration.

It is undoubtedly true, though it may seem paradoxical; but in general, those who are habitually employed in finding and displaying faults, are unqualified for the work of reformation: [251] because their minds are not only unfurnished with patterns of the fair and good, but by habit they come to take no delight in the contemplation of those things. By hating vices too much, they come to love men too little. It is therefore not wonderful, that they should be indisposed and unable to serve them. From hence arises the complexional disposition of some of your guides to pull every thing in pieces. At this malicious game they display the whole of their *quadrimanous* activity.

p. 251 As to the rest, the paradoxes of eloquent writers, brought forth purely as a sport of fancy, to try their talents, to rouze attention, and excite surprize, are taken up by these gentlemen, not in the spirit of the original authors, as means of cultivating their taste and improving their style. These paradoxes become with them serious grounds of action,

upon which they proceed in regulating the most important concerns of the state. Cicero ludicrously describes Cato as endeavouring to act in the commonwealth upon the school paradoxes which exercised the wits of the junior students in the stoic philosophy. If this was true of Cato, these gentlemen copy after him in the manner of some persons who lived about his time—*pede nudo Catonem.* Mr.

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They despair of making use of anything that is ordinary. Diet has no place in their system of remedies. The worst of it is that this despair of curing common illnesses by regular methods arises not only from a lack of understanding but, I fear, from some malice of disposition.

Your legislators seem to have taken their opinions of all professions, ranks, and offices from the declamations and buffooneries of satirists, who would themselves be astonished if they were held to the letter of their own descriptions. By listening only to these, your leaders see everything only from the side of its vices and faults, and view those vices and faults in every color of exaggeration.

It is undoubtedly true, though it may seem paradoxical, that in general those who are habitually employed in finding and displaying faults are unfit for the work of reform, [251] because their minds are not only unstocked with patterns of the fair and the good, but by habit they come to take no delight in contemplating such things. By hating vices too much, they come to love men too little. It is therefore no wonder that they should be disinclined and unable to serve them. Hence arises the temperamental disposition of some of your guides to pull everything to pieces. At this malicious game they display the whole of their *four-handed* activity.[3]

As for the rest, the paradoxes of eloquent writers, brought out purely as a play of fancy, to try their talents, to rouse attention, and to excite surprise, are taken up by these gentlemen not in the spirit of the original authors, as a means of cultivating their taste and improving their style. With them these paradoxes become serious grounds of action,

on which they proceed in regulating the most important concerns of the state. Cicero humorously describes Cato as trying to act in the commonwealth on the school paradoxes that exercised the wits of junior students of Stoic philosophy. If this was true of Cato, these gentlemen copy him in the manner of certain people who lived around his time—they ape Cato with a bare foot. Mr.[4]

3 Burke's "quadrimanous" means four-handed, like an ape: the reformers tear things apart with monkey-like busyness.

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Hume told me, that he had from Rousseau himself the secret of his principles of composition. That acute, though eccentric, observer had perceived, that to strike and interest the public, the marvellous must be produced; that the marvellous of the heathen mythology had long since lost its effect; that giants, magicians, fairies, and heroes of romance [252] which succeeded, had exhausted the portion of credulity which belonged to their age;	Hume told me that he had learned from Rousseau himself the secret of his principles of composition. That acute, though eccentric, observer had perceived that to strike and interest the public, the marvelous must be produced; that the marvelous of pagan mythology had long since lost its effect; that the giants, magicians, fairies, and heroes of romance [252] which followed it had exhausted the share of credulity that belonged to their age;[5]
that now nothing was left to a writer but that species of the marvellous, which might still be produced, and with as great an effect as ever, though in another way; that is, the marvellous in life, in manners, in characters, and in extraordinary situations, giving rise to new and unlooked-for strokes in politics and morals.	that now nothing was left to a writer but that kind of the marvelous which might still be produced, and with as great an effect as ever, though in another way: that is, the marvelous in life, in manners, in characters, and in extraordinary situations, giving rise to new and unexpected strokes in politics and morals.
p. 252 I believe, that were Rousseau alive, and in one of his lucid intervals, he would be shocked at the practical phrenzy of his scholars, who in their paradoxes are servile imitators; and even in their incredulity discover an implicit faith.	I believe that, were Rousseau alive and in one of his lucid intervals, he would be shocked at the practical frenzy of his disciples, who in their paradoxes are servile imitators, and even in their unbelief reveal an implicit faith.
Men who undertake considerable things, even in a regular way, ought to give us ground to presume ability. But the physician of the state, who, not satisfied with the cure of distempers, undertakes to regenerate constitutions, ought to shew uncommon powers. Some very unusual appearances of wisdom ought to display themselves on the face of the designs of those who appeal to no practice, and who copy after no model. Has any such been manifested?	Men who undertake considerable things, even in a regular way, ought to give us ground to presume ability. But the physician of the state who, not satisfied with curing diseases, undertakes to regenerate constitutions ought to show uncommon powers. Some very unusual signs of wisdom ought to appear on the face of the designs of those who appeal to no practice and copy no model. Has any such wisdom been shown?
I shall take a view (it shall for the subject be a very short one) of what the assembly has done, with regard, first, to the constitution of the legislature; in the next place, to that of the executive power; then to that of the judicature; afterwards to the model of the army; and conclude with the system of finance, to see whether we can discover in any part of their schemes the portentous ability, which may justify these bold undertakers in the superiority which they assume over mankind.	I shall take a view (and for the subject it shall be a very short one) of what the Assembly has done with regard, first, to the constitution of the legislature; next, to that of the executive power; then to that of the judiciary; afterward to the model of the army; and I shall conclude with the system of finance. I want to see whether we can discover in any part of their schemes the portentous ability that might justify these bold undertakers in the superiority they assume over mankind.

4 Cicero mocks Cato's Stoic paradoxes in *Pro Murena* 61–66. The Latin *pede nudo Catonem* is from Horace, *Epistles* 1.19.12–14, on imitators who copy Cato's bare feet and scanty toga but not his virtue.

5 David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, sheltered Rousseau in England in 1766 before the two quarreled bitterly.

THE LEGISLATURE: TERRITORY, POPULATION, CONTRIBUTION

The new electoral system built on territory, population, and tax contribution is inconsistent and divides France.

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p. 253 It is in the model of the sovereign and presiding part of this new republic, that we should expect their grand display. Here they were to prove their title to their proud demands. For the plan itself at large, and for the reasons on which it is grounded, I refer to the journals of the assembly of the 29th of September 1789, and to the subsequent proceedings which have made any alterations in the plan. So far as in a matter somewhat confused I can see light, the system remains substantially as it has been originally framed.

My few remarks will be such as regard its spirit, its tendency, and its fitness for framing a popular commonwealth, which they profess theirs to be, suited to the ends for which any commonwealth, and particularly such a commonwealth, is made. At the same time, I mean to consider its consistency with itself, and its own principles.

Old establishments are tried by their effects. If the people are happy, united, wealthy, and powerful, we presume the rest. We conclude that to be good from whence good is derived. In old establishments various correctives have been found for their aberrations from theory. Indeed they are the results of various necessities and expediences. They are not often constructed after any theory; theories are rather drawn from them. In them we often see the end best obtained, where the means seem not perfectly reconcileable to what we may fancy was the original scheme. The means taught by experience may be better suited to political ends than those contrived in the original project.

They again re-act upon the primitive constitution, and [254] sometimes improve the design itself from which they seem to have departed. I think all this might be curiously exemplified in the British constitution. At worst, the errors and deviations of every kind in reckoning are found and computed, and the ship proceeds in her course. This is the case of old establishments; but in a new and merely theoretic system, it is expected

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It is in the model of the sovereign and presiding part of this new republic that we should expect their grand display. Here they were to prove their title to their proud claims. For the plan itself in full, and for the reasons on which it is grounded, I refer to the journals of the Assembly of September 29, 1789, and to the later proceedings that have made any changes in the plan. So far as I can see light in a somewhat confused matter, the system remains substantially as it was originally framed.[6]

My few remarks will concern its spirit, its tendency, and its fitness for framing a popular commonwealth, which they profess theirs to be, suited to the ends for which any commonwealth, and particularly such a commonwealth, is made. At the same time I mean to consider its consistency with itself and with its own principles.

Old establishments are tested by their effects. If the people are happy, united, wealthy, and powerful, we presume the rest. We conclude that what good is derived from must be good. In old establishments various correctives have been found for their departures from theory. Indeed, they are the results of various necessities and expediencies. They are seldom built according to any theory; theories are rather drawn from them. In them we often see the end best achieved where the means seem not perfectly reconcilable with what we may imagine was the original scheme. The means taught by experience may be better suited to political ends than those devised in the original project.

They in turn react on the original constitution, and [254] sometimes improve the very design from which they seem to have departed. I think all this might be illustrated in fine detail in the British constitution. At worst, the errors and deviations of every kind in the reckoning are found and computed, and the ship proceeds on her course. This is the case with old establishments. But in a new and merely theoretical system, it is expected that

6 On September 29, 1789, the Assembly's constitutional committee, through its spokesman Jacques-Guillaume Thouret, presented its plan for representation and the new division of France.

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that every contrivance shall appear, on the face of it, to answer its end; especially where the projectors are no way embarrassed with an endeavour to accommodate the new building to an old one, either in the walls or on the foundations.	every contrivance shall appear, on its face, to answer its end—especially where the projectors are in no way hampered by any effort to fit the new building to an old one, either in the walls or in the foundations.
p. 254 The French builders, clearing away as mere rubbish whatever they found, and, like their ornamental gardeners, forming every thing into an exact level, propose to rest the whole local and general legislature on three bases of three different kinds; one geometrical, one arithmetical, and the third financial; the first of which they call the *basis of territory*; the second, the *basis of population*; and the third, the *basis of contribution.* For the accomplishment of the first of these purposes they divide the area of their country into eighty-one pieces, regularly square, of eighteen leagues by eighteen.	The French builders, clearing away as mere rubbish whatever they found, and, like their ornamental gardeners, reducing everything to an exact level, propose to rest the whole local and general legislature on three bases of three different kinds: one geometrical, one arithmetical, and the third financial. The first they call the *basis of territory*; the second, the *basis of population*; and the third, the *basis of contribution.* To accomplish the first of these purposes they divide the area of their country into eighty-one pieces, regularly square, of eighteen leagues by eighteen.[7]
These large divisions are called *Departments.* These they portion, proceeding by square measurement, into seventeen hundred and twenty districts called *Communes.* These again they subdivide, still proceeding by square measurement, into smaller districts called *Cantons,* making in all 6,400.	These large divisions are called *Departments.* These they divide, proceeding by square measurement, into seventeen hundred and twenty districts called *Communes.* These again they subdivide, still proceeding by square measurement, into smaller districts called *Cantons,* making 6,400 in all.
At first view this geometrical basis of theirs presents not much to admire or to blame. It calls [255] for no great legislative talents. Nothing more than an accurate land surveyor, with his chain, sight, and theodolite, is requisite for such a plan as this. In the old divisions of the country various accidents at various times, and the ebb and flow of various properties and jurisdictions, settled their bounds. These bounds were not made upon any fixed system undoubtedly. They were subject to some inconveniencies; but they were inconveniencies for which use had found remedies, and habit had supplied accommodation and patience.	At first view this geometrical basis of theirs offers little to admire or to blame. It calls [255] for no great legislative talents. Nothing more than an accurate land surveyor, with his chain, sight, and theodolite, is needed for such a plan as this. In the old divisions of the country, various accidents at various times, and the ebb and flow of various properties and jurisdictions, settled their boundaries. These boundaries were certainly not made on any fixed system. They were subject to some inconveniences. But they were inconveniences for which use had found remedies, and to which habit had brought accommodation and patience.
p. 255 In this new pavement of square within square, and this organisation and semiorganisation made on the system of Empedocles and Buffon, and not upon any politic principle, it is impossible that innumerable local inconveniencies, to which men are not habituated, must not arise. But these I	In this new pavement of square within square, and this organization and semi-organization made on the system of Empedocles and Buffon, and not on any political principle, innumerable local inconveniences, to which men are not accustomed, cannot fail to arise. But these I pass over, because to

7 Burke follows the committee's first plan. A French league was roughly two and a half to three miles. The Assembly in the end created eighty-three departments of irregular shape.

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pass over, because it requires an accurate knowledge of the country, which I do not possess, to specify them.

When these state surveyors came to take a view of their work of measurement, they soon found, that in politics, the most fallacious of all things was geometrical demonstration. They had then recourse to another basis (or rather buttress) to support the building which tottered on that false foundation. It was evident, that the goodness of the soil, the number of the people, their wealth, and the largeness of their contribution, made such infinite variations between square and square as to render mensuration a ridiculous standard of power in the commonwealth, and equality in geometry the most unequal of all measures in the distribution [256] of men. However, they could not give it up.

p. 256 But dividing their political and civil representation into three parts, they allotted one of those parts to the square measurement, without a single fact or calculation to ascertain whether this territorial proportion of representation was fairly assigned, and ought upon any principle really to be a third. Having however given to geometry this portion (of a third for her dower) out of compliment I suppose to that sublime science, they left the other two to be scuffled for between the other parts, of population and contribution.

When they came to provide for population, they were not able to proceed quite so smoothly as they had done in the field of their geometry. Here their arithmetic came to bear upon their juridical metaphysics. Had they stuck to their metaphysic principles, the arithmetical process would be simple indeed. Men, with them, are strictly equal, and are entitled to equal rights in their own government. Each head, on this system, would have its vote, and every man would vote directly for the person who was to represent him in the legislature. "But soft—by regular degrees, not yet." This metaphysic principle, to which law, custom, usage, policy, reason, were to yield, is to yield itself to their pleasure.

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specify them requires an accurate knowledge of the country, which I do not possess.[8]

When these state surveyors came to look over their work of measurement, they soon found that in politics the most deceptive of all things was geometrical demonstration. They then resorted to another basis (or rather buttress) to support the building that tottered on that false foundation. It was evident that the goodness of the soil, the number of the people, their wealth, and the size of their contribution made such infinite variations between square and square as to make measurement a ridiculous standard of power in the commonwealth, and equality in geometry the most unequal of all measures in the distribution [256] of men. Still, they could not give it up.

Instead, dividing their political and civil representation into three parts, they allotted one of those parts to the square measurement. They did so without a single fact or calculation to establish whether this territorial proportion of representation was fairly assigned, and ought on any principle really to be a third. Having, however, given geometry this portion (a third, for her dower), out of compliment, I suppose, to that sublime science, they left the other two to be scuffled for between the other parts, population and contribution.[9]

When they came to provide for population, they could not proceed quite so smoothly as they had in the field of their geometry. Here their arithmetic came to bear on their juridical metaphysics. Had they stuck to their metaphysical principles, the arithmetical process would have been simple indeed. Men, for them, are strictly equal and are entitled to equal rights in their own government. On this system each head would have its vote, and every man would vote directly for the person who was to represent him in the legislature. "But soft—by regular degrees, not yet." This metaphysical principle, to which law, custom, usage, policy, and reason were all to yield, must itself yield to their pleasure.[10]

8 Empedocles, the Greek philosopher of the fifth century BC, had living things assembled from separately formed parts. Buffon, the French naturalist, built living bodies out of "organic molecules."
9 Under English law a widow's dower was a third of her husband's estate.
10 Adapted from Pope, *Epistle to Burlington*: "But soft—by regular approach—not yet."

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There must be many degrees, and some stages, before the representative can come in contact with his constituent. Indeed, as we shall soon see, these two persons are to have no sort of communion with each other. First, the voters in the *Canton,* who compose what they call *primary assemblies,* are to have a *qualification.* What! a [257] qualification on the indefeasible rights of men? Yes; but it shall be a very small qualification. Our injustice shall be very little oppressive; only the local valuation of three days labour paid to the public. Why, this is not much, I readily admit, for any thing but the utter subversion of your equalising principle.

p. 257 As a qualification it might as well be let alone; for it answers no one purpose for which qualifications are established: and, on your ideas, it excludes from a vote, the man of all others whose natural equality stands the most in need of protection and defence;

I mean the man who has nothing else but his natural equality to guard him. You order him to buy the right, which you before told him nature had given to him gratuitously at his birth, and of which no authority on earth could lawfully deprive him. With regard to the person who cannot come up to your market, a tyrannous aristocracy, as against him, is established by you who pretend to be its sworn foe.

The gradation proceeds. These primary assemblies of the *Canton* elect deputies to the *Commune*; one for every two hundred qualified inhabitants. Here is the first medium put between the primary elector and the representative legislator; and here a new turnpike is fixed for taxing the rights of men with a second qualification: for none can be elected into the *Commune* who does not pay the amount of ten days labour. Nor have we yet done. There is still to be another gradation. These *Communes,* chosen by the *Canton,* choose to the *Department*; and the deputies of the *Department* choose their [258] deputies to the *National Assembly.* Here is a third barrier of a senseless qualification.

p. 258 Every deputy to the national assembly must pay, in direct contribution, to the value of a *mark of*

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There must be many degrees, and some stages, before the representative can come into contact with his constituent. Indeed, as we shall soon see, these two persons are to have no sort of communion with each other. First, the voters in the *Canton,* who make up what they call *primary assemblies,* are to have a *qualification.* What! a [257] qualification on the indefeasible rights of men? Yes; but it shall be a very small qualification. Our injustice shall be only a little oppressive: merely the local value of three days' labor paid to the public. Why, this is not much, I readily admit, for anything but the utter subversion of your equalizing principle.[11]

As a qualification it might as well be left alone, for it serves none of the purposes for which qualifications are established. And on your own ideas it excludes from a vote the man of all others whose natural equality most needs protection and defense—

I mean the man who has nothing but his natural equality to guard him. You order him to buy the right which you had already told him nature gave him free at his birth, and of which no authority on earth could lawfully deprive him. As for the person who cannot come up to your market, you, who claim to be the sworn enemy of a tyrannical aristocracy, have established one against him.

The gradation goes on. These primary assemblies of the *Canton* elect deputies to the *Commune,* one for every two hundred qualified inhabitants. Here is the first intermediary placed between the primary elector and the representative legislator. And here a new turnpike is set up to tax the rights of men with a second qualification: for no one can be elected to the *Commune* who does not pay the amount of ten days' labor. Nor are we done yet. There is still to be another gradation. These *Communes,* chosen by the *Canton,* choose to the *Department*; and the deputies of the *Department* choose their [258] deputies to the *National Assembly.* Here is a third barrier of a senseless qualification.[12]

Every deputy to the National Assembly must pay, in direct tax, the value of a *mark of silver.* Of all

11 This was the tax qualification for an "active citizen": a direct tax equal to three days' local wages.
12 A turnpike was a toll gate on a road.

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silver. Of all these qualifying barriers we must think alike; that they are impotent to secure independence; strong only to destroy the rights of men.

In all this process, which in its fundamental elements affects to consider only *population* upon a principle of natural right, there is a manifest attention to *property*; which, however just and reasonable on other schemes, is on theirs perfectly unsupportable.

When they come to their third basis, that of *Contribution,* we find that they have more completely lost sight of their rights of men. This last basis rests *entirely* on property. A principle totally different from the equality of men, and utterly irreconcileable to it, is thereby admitted; but no sooner is this principle, which is a principle regarding property, admitted, than (as usual) it is subverted; and it is not subverted, (as we shall presently see,) to approximate the inequality of riches to the level of nature. The additional share in the third portion of representation, (a portion reserved exclusively for the higher contribution,) is made to regard the *district* only, and not the individuals in it who pay.

It is easy to perceive, by the course of their reasonings, how much they were embarrassed by their contradictory ideas of the rights of men and the privileges of riches. The committee of constitution do as good as admit that they are wholly irreconcileable. [259] "The relation, with regard to the contributions, is without doubt *null* (say they) when the question is on the balance of the political rights as between individual and individual; without which *personal equality would be destroyed,* and *an aristocracy of the rich* would be established.

p. 259 But this inconvenience entirely disappears when the proportional relation of the contribution is only considered in the *great masses,* and is solely between province and province; it serves in that case only to form a just reciprocal proportion between the cities, without affecting the personal rights of the citizens."

Here the principle of *contribution,* as taken between man and man, is reprobated as *null,* and

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these qualifying barriers we must think the same: that they are powerless to secure independence, and strong only to destroy the rights of men.[13]

In all this process, which in its fundamental elements claims to consider only *population* on a principle of natural right, there is a manifest attention to *property*. However just and reasonable on other schemes, on theirs this is perfectly indefensible.

When they come to their third basis, that of *Contribution,* we find that they have lost sight of their rights of men still more completely. This last basis rests *entirely* on property. A principle totally different from the equality of men, and utterly irreconcilable with it, is thereby admitted. But no sooner is this principle, which concerns property, admitted than (as usual) it is subverted; and it is not subverted (as we shall see in a moment) to bring the inequality of riches closer to the level of nature. The additional share in the third portion of representation (a portion reserved exclusively for the higher contribution) is made to depend on the *district* only, and not on the individuals in it who pay.

It is easy to see, from the course of their reasoning, how much they were embarrassed by their contradictory ideas of the rights of men and the privileges of riches. The committee of constitution all but admit that the two are wholly irreconcilable. [259] "The relation with regard to contributions is without doubt *null* (they say) when the question is the balance of political rights as between individual and individual; without which *personal equality would be destroyed,* and *an aristocracy of the rich* would be established.

But this inconvenience entirely disappears when the proportional relation of the contribution is considered only in the *great masses,* and solely between province and province. In that case it serves only to form a just reciprocal proportion between the cities, without affecting the personal rights of the citizens."

Here the principle of *contribution,* taken between man and man, is condemned as *null* and destruct-

13 The *marc d'argent* was equivalent to about fifty livres in tax, far beyond most Frenchmen.

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destructive to equality; and as pernicious too; because it leads to the establishment of an *aristocracy of the rich.* However, it must not be abandoned. And the way of getting rid of the difficulty is to establish the inequality as between department and department, leaving all the individuals in each department upon an exact par. Observe, that this parity between individuals had been before destroyed when the qualifications within the departments were settled; nor does it seem a matter of great importance whether the equality of men be injured by masses or individually.

An individual is not of the same importance in a mass represented by a few, as in a mass represented by many. It would be too much to tell a man jealous of his equality, that the elector has the same franchise who votes for three members as he who votes for ten.

Now take it in the other point of view, and suppose [260] their principle of representation according to contribution, that is, according to *riches,* to be well founded, and to be a necessary basis for the republic, how have they provided for the rich by giving to the district, that is to say, to the poor in the district of *Canton* and *Commune,* who are the majority, the power of making an additional number of members on account of the superior contribution of the wealthy? Suppose one man (it is an easy supposition) to contribute ten times more than ten of his neighbours. For this contribution he has one vote out of ten.

p. 260 The poor outvote him by nine voices in virtue of his superior contribution, for (say) *ten* members, instead of out-voting him for only one member. Why are the rich complimented with an aristocratic preference, which they can never feel either as a gratification to pride, or as a security to fortune? The rich indeed require an additional security from the dangers to which they are exposed when a popular power is prevalent; but it is impossible to divine, on this system of unequal masses, how they are protected; because the aristocratic mass is generated from democratic principles; and the prevalence in the general representation has no sort of connection with those on account of whose property this superiority is given.

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ive of equality, and as harmful too, because it leads to the establishment of an *aristocracy of the rich.* Still, it must not be abandoned. The way to get rid of the difficulty is to establish the inequality between department and department, leaving all the individuals in each department on an exact par. Note that this parity between individuals had already been destroyed when the qualifications within the departments were settled. Nor does it seem to matter much whether the equality of men is injured in masses or individually.

An individual does not carry the same importance in a mass represented by a few as in a mass represented by many. It would be too much to tell a man jealous of his equality that the elector who votes for three members has the same franchise as the one who votes for ten.

Now take it from the other point of view, and suppose [260] their principle of representation according to contribution, that is, according to *riches,* to be well founded and a necessary basis for the republic. How have they provided for the rich by giving to the district, that is to say, to the poor in the district of the *Canton* and the *Commune,* who are the majority, the power of electing an additional number of members on account of the greater contribution of the wealthy? Suppose one man (it is an easy supposition) contributes ten times more than ten of his neighbors. For this contribution he has one vote out of ten.

The poor outvote him by nine voices, by virtue of his greater contribution, for (say) *ten* members, instead of outvoting him for only one member. Why are the rich complimented with an aristocratic preference which they can never feel either as a gratification to their pride or as a security for their fortune? The rich do indeed need additional security against the dangers they are exposed to when a popular power prevails. But it is impossible to guess how, on this system of unequal masses, they are protected, because the aristocratic mass is generated from democratic principles, and the preponderance in the general representation has no connection whatever with those on account of whose property this superiority is given.

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If the contrivers of this scheme meant any sort of favour to the rich in consequence of their contribution, they ought to have conferred the privilege either on the individual rich, or on some class formed of rich persons; because the contest between the rich and the poor is not a struggle between corporation and corporation, but a contest between men [261] and men; a competition not between districts, but between descriptions. It would answer its purpose better if the scheme was inverted; that the votes of the masses were rendered equal; and that the votes within each mass were proportioned to property. In any other light, I see nothing but danger from the inequality of the masses.

p. 261 If indeed the masses were to provide for the general treasury by distinct contingents, and that the revenue had not (as it has) many impositions running through the whole, which affect men individually, and not corporately, and which, by their nature, confound all territorial limits, something might be said for the basis of contribution as founded on masses. But of all things,

this representation, to be measured by contribution, is the most difficult to settle upon principles of equity, in a country which considers its districts as members of an whole. For a great city, such as Bourdeaux or Paris, appears to pay a vast body of duties, almost out of all assignable proportion to other places, and its mass is considered accordingly.

But are these cities the true contributors in that proportion? No. The consumers of the commodities imported into Bourdeaux, who are scattered through all France, pay the import duties of Bourdeaux. The produce of the vintage in Guienne and Languedoc give to that city the means of its contribution growing out of an export commerce. The landholders who spend their estates in Paris, and are thereby the creators of that city, contribute for Paris from the provinces out of which their revenues arise.

If in equity this basis of contribution, as locally [262] ascertained by masses, be inequitable, it is impolitic too. If it be one of the objects to preserve

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If the designers of this scheme meant any kind of favor to the rich in return for their contribution, they ought to have conferred the privilege either on rich individuals or on some class made up of rich persons. The contest between the rich and the poor is not a struggle between corporation and corporation, but a contest between men [261] and men: a competition not between districts, but between classes of people. The scheme would serve its purpose better if it were inverted, so that the votes of the masses were made equal and the votes within each mass were proportioned to property. In any other light, I see nothing but danger in the inequality of the masses.

If, indeed, the masses were to supply the general treasury by separate quotas, and if the revenue did not include (as it does) many taxes running through the whole country, which fall on men individually and not corporately, and which by their nature cut across all territorial boundaries, something might be said for the basis of contribution as founded on masses. But of all things,

this representation, to be measured by contribution, is the hardest to settle on principles of equity in a country that treats its districts as members of a whole. A great city such as Bordeaux or Paris appears to pay an enormous body of duties, almost out of all assignable proportion to other places, and its mass is reckoned accordingly.

But are these cities the true contributors in that proportion? No. The consumers of the goods imported into Bordeaux, who are scattered all over France, pay the import duties of Bordeaux. The produce of the vintage in Guienne and Languedoc gives that city the means of its contribution, which grows out of an export trade. The landowners who spend their incomes in Paris, and are thereby the creators of that city, contribute for Paris from the provinces their revenues come from.[14]

If in equity this basis of contribution, as locally [262] fixed by masses, is unjust, it is impolitic too. If one of the objects is to preserve the weak from being

14 Guienne (Guyenne) and Languedoc: wine-growing provinces of southwestern and southern France whose produce was shipped through Bordeaux.

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the weak from being crushed by the strong (as in all society undoubtedly it is) how are the smaller and poorer of those masses to be saved from the tyranny of the more wealthy? Is it by adding to their means of oppressing them? When we come to a balance of representation between corporate bodies, provincial interests, emulations, and jealousies are full as likely to arise among them as among individuals; and their divisions are likely to produce much hotter dissention, and something leading much more nearly to a war.

p. 262 To compare together the three bases, not on their political reason, but on the ideas on which the assembly works, and to try its consistency with itself, we cannot avoid observing, that the principle which the committee call the basis of *population,* does not begin to operate from the same point with the two other principles called the bases of *territory* and of *contribution,* which are both of an aristocratic nature. The consequence is, that where all three begin to operate together, there is the most absurd inequality produced by the operation of the former on the two latter principles.

Every canton contains four square leagues, and is estimated to contain, on the average, 4,000 inhabitants, or 680 voters in the *primary assemblies,* which vary in numbers with the population of the canton, and send *one deputy* to the *commune* for every 200 voters. *Nine cantons* make a *commune.*

Now let us take *a canton* containing *a sea-port town of trade,* or *a great manufacturing town.* Let us suppose the population of this canton to be [263] 12,700 inhabitants, or 2,193 voters, forming *three primary assemblies,* and sending *ten deputies* to the *commune.*

p. 263 Oppose to this *one* canton *two* others of the remaining eight in the same commune. These we may suppose to have their fair population of 4,000 inhabitants, and 680 voters each, or 8,000 inhabitants and 1,360 voters, both together. These will form only *two primary assemblies,* and send only *six* deputies to the *commune.*

When the assembly of the *commune* comes to vote on the *basis of territory,* which principle is first admitted to operate in that assembly, the *single canton* which has *half* the territory of the *other*

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crushed by the strong (as in all society it undoubtedly is), how are the smaller and poorer of these masses to be saved from the tyranny of the wealthier? Is it by adding to the wealthier masses' means of oppressing them? When we come to a balance of representation between corporate bodies, provincial interests, rivalries, and jealousies are fully as likely to arise among them as among individuals. Their divisions are likely to produce much hotter dissension, and something that comes much nearer to war.

Let us compare the three bases together, not on their political reason but on the ideas the Assembly works from, and test its consistency with itself. We cannot help observing that the principle the committee calls the basis of *population* does not begin to operate from the same point as the two other principles, called the bases of *territory* and of *contribution,* which are both aristocratic in nature. The consequence is that, where all three begin to operate together, the action of the first on the two latter principles produces the most absurd inequality.

Every canton covers four square leagues and is estimated to contain, on average, 4,000 inhabitants, or 680 voters in the *primary assemblies.* These assemblies vary in number with the population of the canton, and send *one deputy* to the *commune* for every 200 voters. *Nine cantons* make a *commune.*

Now let us take *a canton* containing *a seaport town of trade* or *a great manufacturing town.* Let us suppose the population of this canton to be [263] 12,700 inhabitants, or 2,193 voters, forming *three primary assemblies* and sending *ten deputies* to the *commune.*

Set against this *one* canton *two* others of the remaining eight in the same commune. We may suppose these to have their fair population of 4,000 inhabitants and 680 voters each, or 8,000 inhabitants and 1,360 voters together. These will form only *two primary assemblies* and send only *six* deputies to the *commune.*

When the assembly of the *commune* comes to vote on the *basis of territory,* which is the principle first admitted to operate in that assembly, the *single*

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two, will have *ten* voices to *six* in the election of *three deputies* to the assembly of the department, chosen on the express ground of a representation of territory.

This inequality, striking as it is, will be yet highly aggravated, if we suppose, as we fairly may, the *several* other cantons of the *commune* to fall proportionably short of the average population, as much as the *principal canton* exceeds it. Now, as to *the basis of contribution,* which also is a principle admitted first to operate in the assembly of the *commune.* Let us again take *one* canton, such as is stated above. If the whole of the direct contributions paid by a great trading or manufacturing town be divided equally among the inhabitants, each individual will be found to pay much more than an individual living in the country according to the same average.

The whole paid by the inhabitants of the former will be more than [264] the whole paid by the inhabitants of the latter— we may fairly assume one-third more. Then the 12,700 inhabitants, or 2,193 voters of the canton will pay as much as 19,050 inhabitants, or 3,289 voters of the *other cantons,* which are nearly the estimated proportion of inhabitants and voters of *five* other cantons.

p. 264 Now the 2,193 voters will, as I before said, send only *ten* deputies to the assembly; the 3,289 voters will send *sixteen.* Thus, for an *equal* share in the contribution of the whole *commune,* there will be a difference of *sixteen* voices to *ten* in voting for deputies to be chosen on the principle of representing the general contribution of the whole *commune.*

By the same mode of computation we shall find 15,875 inhabitants, or 2,741 voters of the *other* cantons, who pay *one-sixth* LESS to the contribution of the whole *commune,* will have *three* voices MORE than the 12,700 inhabitants, or 2,193 voters of the *one* canton.

Such is the fantastical and unjust inequality between mass and mass, in this curious repartition of the rights of representation arising out of *territory* and *contribution.* The qualifications which these confer are in truth negative

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canton, which has *half* the territory of the *other two,* will have *ten* voices to *six* in the election of *three deputies* to the assembly of the department, deputies chosen on the express ground of representing territory.

Striking as this inequality is, it will be greatly aggravated if we suppose, as we fairly may, that the *several* other cantons of the *commune* fall proportionably short of the average population by as much as the *principal canton* exceeds it. Now as to *the basis of contribution,* which is also a principle first admitted to operate in the assembly of the *commune.* Let us again take *one* canton, such as described above. If the whole of the direct taxes paid by a great trading or manufacturing town is divided equally among its inhabitants, each individual will be found to pay much more than an individual living in the country, on the same average.

The whole paid by the inhabitants of the former will be more than [264] the whole paid by the inhabitants of the latter; we may fairly assume one-third more. Then the 12,700 inhabitants, or 2,193 voters, of the canton will pay as much as 19,050 inhabitants, or 3,289 voters, of the *other cantons,* which is nearly the estimated number of inhabitants and voters of *five* other cantons.

Now the 2,193 voters will, as I said before, send only *ten* deputies to the assembly; the 3,289 voters will send *sixteen.* So, for an *equal* share in the contribution of the whole *commune,* there will be a difference of *sixteen* voices to *ten* in voting for deputies who are to be chosen on the principle of representing the general contribution of the whole *commune.*

By the same method of calculation we shall find that 15,875 inhabitants, or 2,741 voters, of the *other* cantons, who pay *one-sixth* LESS toward the contribution of the whole *commune,* will have *three* voices MORE than the 12,700 inhabitants, or 2,193 voters, of the *one* canton.

Such is the fantastic and unjust inequality between mass and mass in this curious distribution of the rights of representation arising from *territory* and *contribution.* The qualifications these confer are in truth negative qualifications, which

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qualifications, that give a right in an inverse proportion to the possession of them.

In this whole contrivance of the three bases, consider it in any light you please, I do not see a variety of objects, reconciled in one consistent whole, but several contradictory principles reluctantly and irreconcileably brought and held together by your philosophers, like wild beasts shut up in a cage, to [265] claw and bite each other to their mutual destruction.

p. 265 I am afraid I have gone too far into their way of considering the formation of a constitution. They have much, but bad, metaphysics; much, but bad, geometry; much, but false proportionate arithmetic; but if it were all as exact as metaphysics, geometry, and arithmetic ought to be, and if their schemes were perfectly consistent in all their parts, it would make only a more fair and sightly vision. It is remarkable, that in a great arrangement of mankind, not one reference whatsoever is to be found to any thing moral or any thing politic; nothing that relates to the concerns, the actions, the passions, the interests of men. *Hominem non sapiunt.*

You see I only consider this constitution as electoral, and leading by steps to the National Assembly. I do not enter into the internal government of the Departments, and their genealogy through the Communes and Cantons. These local governments are, in the original plan, to be as nearly as possible composed in the same manner and on the same principles with the elective assemblies. They are each of them bodies perfectly compact and rounded in themselves.

You cannot but perceive in this scheme, that it has a direct and immediate tendency to sever France into a variety of republics, and to render them totally independent of each other, without any direct constitutional means of coherence, connection, or subordination, except what may be derived from their acquiescence in the determinations of the general congress of [266] the ambassadors from each independent republic. Such in reality is the National Assembly, and such governments I admit do exist in the world, though

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give a right in inverse proportion to the possession of them.

Consider this whole contrivance of the three bases in any light you please. I do not see a variety of objects reconciled into one consistent whole. I see several contradictory principles, reluctantly and irreconcilably brought and held together by your philosophers, like wild beasts shut up in a cage, to [265] claw and bite one another to their mutual destruction.

I am afraid I have gone too far into their way of thinking about the making of a constitution. They have much metaphysics, but bad; much geometry, but bad; much proportionate arithmetic, but false. Yet if it were all as exact as metaphysics, geometry, and arithmetic ought to be, and if their schemes were perfectly consistent in all their parts, it would only make a fairer and more sightly vision. It is remarkable that in a great arrangement of mankind not one reference whatever is to be found to anything moral or anything political, nothing that relates to the concerns, the actions, the passions, the interests of men. *They have no taste of man.*[15]

You see that I consider this constitution only as electoral, leading by steps to the National Assembly. I do not go into the internal government of the departments and their genealogy through the communes and cantons. In the original plan, these local governments are to be composed as nearly as possible in the same manner and on the same principles as the elective assemblies. Each of them is a body perfectly compact and rounded in itself.

You cannot fail to see that this scheme has a direct and immediate tendency to split France into a number of republics and to make them wholly independent of one another. They would have no direct constitutional means of coherence, connection, or subordination, except what may come from their acquiescence in the decisions of the general congress of [266] the ambassadors from each independent republic. Such in reality is the National Assembly. Such governments, I admit, do

15 *Hominem non sapiunt*: Burke turns around Martial's boast about his own epigrams, "hominem pagina nostra sapit" ("our page tastes of man"), *Epigrams* 10.4.

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in forms infinitely more suitable to the local and habitual circumstances of their people.

p. 266 But such associations, rather than bodies politic, have generally been the effect of necessity, not choice; and I believe the present French power is the very first body of citizens, who, having obtained full authority to do with their country what they pleased, have chosen to dissever it in this barbarous manner.

It is impossible not to observe, that in the spirit of this geometrical distribution, and arithmetical arrangement, these pretended citizens treat France exactly like a country of conquest. Acting as conquerors, they have imitated the policy of the harshest of that harsh race.

The policy of such barbarous victors, who contemn a subdued people, and insult their feelings, has ever been, as much as in them lay, to destroy all vestiges of the antient country, in religion, in polity, in laws, and in manners; to confound all territorial limits; to produce a general poverty; to put up their properties to auction;

to crush their princes, nobles, and pontiffs; to lay low every thing which had lifted its head above the level, or which could serve to combine or rally, in their distresses, the disbanded people, under the standard of old opinion. They have made France free in the manner in which those sincere friends to the rights of mankind, the Romans, freed Greece, Macedon, and other nations.

They destroyed the bonds of their union, under 267 colour of providing for the independence of each of their cities.

p. 267 When the members who compose these new bodies of cantons, communes, and departments, arrangements purposely produced through the medium of confusion, begin to act, they will find themselves, in a great measure, strangers to one another. The electors and elected throughout, especially in the rural *cantons,* will be frequently without any civil habitudes or connections, or any of that natural discipline which is the soul of

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exist in the world, though in forms infinitely better suited to the local and habitual circumstances of their peoples.

But such associations, rather than bodies politic, have generally been the effect of necessity, not choice. I believe the present French power is the very first body of citizens who, having obtained full authority to do what they pleased with their country, have chosen to dismember it in this barbarous manner.

It is impossible not to observe that, in the spirit of this geometrical distribution and arithmetical arrangement, these pretended citizens treat France exactly like a conquered country. Acting as conquerors, they have imitated the policy of the harshest of that harsh race.

The policy of such barbarous victors, who despise a subdued people and insult their feelings, has always been, as far as lay in their power, to destroy every trace of the ancient country, in religion, in polity, in laws, and in manners; to confound all territorial boundaries; to produce a general poverty; to put up their properties at auction;

to crush their princes, nobles, and pontiffs; to lay low everything that had raised its head above the level, or that could serve to unite or rally the disbanded people, in their distress, under the standard of old opinion. They have made France free in the way in which those sincere friends of the rights of mankind, the Romans, freed Greece, Macedon, and other nations.

They destroyed the bonds of their union, under 267 pretense of providing for the independence of each of their cities.[16]

These new bodies of cantons, communes, and departments are arrangements deliberately produced through the medium of confusion. When their members begin to act, they will find themselves, to a great extent, strangers to one another. Throughout, and especially in the rural *cantons,* the electors and the elected will often lack any civil habits or connections, or any of that natural discipline which is the soul of a true republic. Ma-

16 Rome proclaimed the "freedom" of the Greek cities in 196 BC and, after defeating Macedon in 168 BC, broke the kingdom into four separate republics.

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a true republic. Magistrates and collectors of revenue are now no longer acquainted with their districts, bishops with their dioceses, or curates with their parishes. These new colonies of the rights of men bear a strong resemblance to that sort of military colonies which Tacitus has observed upon in the declining policy of Rome.	gistrates and tax collectors are no longer acquainted with their districts, bishops with their dioceses, or parish priests with their parishes. These new colonies of the rights of men bear a strong resemblance to the kind of military colonies that Tacitus remarks on in the declining policy of Rome.
In better and wiser days (whatever course they took with foreign nations) they were careful to make the elements of a methodical subordination and settlement to be coeval; and even to lay the foundations of civil discipline in the military[1]. But, when all the good arts had fallen into ruin, they proceeded, as your assembly does, upon the equality of men, and with as little judgment, and as little care for those things which make a republic tolerable [268] or durable. But in this, as well as almost every instance, your new commonwealth is born, and bred, and fed, in those corruptions which mark degenerated and worn out republics.	In better and wiser days (whatever course they took with foreign nations) they were careful to make the elements of a methodical subordination and of settlement come into being together, and even to lay the foundations of civil discipline in the military discipline[1]. But when all the good arts had fallen into ruin, they proceeded, as your Assembly does, on the equality of men, with as little judgment and as little care for the things that make a republic tolerable [268] or durable. In this, as in almost every instance, your new commonwealth is born, and bred, and fed in those corruptions which mark degenerate and worn-out republics.
p. 268 Your child comes into the world with the symptoms of death; the *facies Hippocratica* forms the character of its physiognomy, and the prognostic of its fate.	Your child comes into the world with the symptoms of death. The Hippocratic face gives its features their character and foretells its fate.[17]
19	
The confusion, which attends on all such proceedings, they even declare to be one of their objects, and they hope to secure their constitution by a terror of a return of those evils which	They even declare that the confusion which attends all such proceedings is one of their objects. They hope to secure their constitution by the terror of a return of the evils that attended its mak-

17 *Facies Hippocratica*: the pinched, sunken face of the dying, described by Hippocrates in his *Prognostic* as a sign of approaching death.

19

[1] Non, ut olim, universae legiones deducebantur cum tribunis, et centurionibus, et sui cujusque ordinis militibus, ut consensu et caritate rempublicam afficerent; sed ignoti inter se, diversis manipulis, sine rectore, sine affectibus mutuis, quasi ex alio genere mortalium, repente in unum collecti, numerus magis quam colonia. Tac. Annal, l. 14. sect. 27. All this will be still more applicable to the unconnected, rotatory, biennial national assemblies, in this absurd and senseless constitution.

[1] "Not, as of old, were whole legions settled with their tribunes and centurions and the soldiers of each rank, so that by their concord and affection they might form a commonwealth. Instead, men unknown to one another, from different companies, without a leader, without mutual attachment, were suddenly collected in one place as if from another race of mortals: a number rather than a colony." Tacitus, *Annals,* book 14, section 27. All this will apply still more to the unconnected, rotating, biennial national assemblies of this absurd and senseless constitution.[18]

18 Tacitus, *Annals* 14.27, on the failed settlement of veterans at Tarentum and Antium in AD 60.

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attended their making it. “By this,” say they, “its destruction will become difficult to authority, which cannot break it up without the entire disorganization of the whole state.” They presume, that if this authority should ever come to the same degree of power that they have acquired, it would make a more moderate and chastised use of it, and would piously tremble entirely to disorganise the state in the savage manner that they have done.

They expect, from the virtues of returning despotism, the security which is to be enjoyed by the offspring of their popular vices.

It is this resolution, to break their country into separate republics, which has driven them into the greatest number of their difficulties and contradictions. If it were not for this, all the questions of exact equality, and these balances never to be settled, of individual rights, population, and contribution, would be wholly useless. The representation, though derived from parts, would be a duty which equally regarded the whole. Each deputy to the assembly would be the representative of France, and of all its descriptions, of the many and of the [269] few, of the rich and of the poor, of the great districts and of the small.

p. 269 All these districts would themselves be subordinate to some standing authority, existing independently of them; an authority in which their representation, and every thing that belongs to it, originated, and to which it was pointed. This standing, unalterable, fundamental government would make, and it is the only thing which could make, that territory truly and properly an whole. With us, when we elect popular representatives, we send them to a council, in which each man individually is a subject, and submitted to a government complete in all its ordinary functions. With you the elective assembly is the sovereign, and the sole sovereign: all the members are therefore integral parts of this sole sovereignty. But with us it is totally different.

With us the representative, separated from the other parts, can have no action and no existence. The government is the point of reference of the several members and districts of our representation. This is the center of our unity. This government of reference is a trustee for the *whole,* and not for the parts. So is the other branch

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ing. “By this,” they say, “its destruction will become difficult to authority, which cannot break it up without the entire disorganization of the whole state.” They presume that if this authority should ever attain the same degree of power they have acquired, it would make a more moderate and chastened use of it, and would piously tremble to disorganize the state entirely in the savage manner they have done.

They expect from the virtues of a returning despotism the security that is to be enjoyed by the offspring of their popular vices.

It is this resolve to break their country up into separate republics that has driven them into most of their difficulties and contradictions. But for this, all the questions of exact equality, and these never-to-be-settled balances of individual rights, population, and contribution, would be wholly useless. Representation, though drawn from the parts, would be a duty that regarded the whole equally. Each deputy to the assembly would be the representative of France and of all its classes of people—of the many and of the [269] few, of the rich and of the poor, of the great districts and of the small.

All these districts would themselves be subordinate to some standing authority, existing independently of them: an authority in which their representation, and everything belonging to it, originated, and toward which it was directed. This standing, unalterable, fundamental government would make that territory truly and properly a whole, and it is the only thing that could. With us, when we elect popular representatives, we send them to a council in which each man individually is a subject, submitted to a government complete in all its ordinary functions. With you the elective assembly is the sovereign, and the sole sovereign; all its members are therefore integral parts of this sole sovereignty. But with us it is totally different.

With us the representative, separated from the other parts, can have no action and no existence. The government is the point of reference for the several members and districts of our representation. This is the center of our unity. This government of reference is a trustee for the *whole,* and

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of our public council, I mean the house of lords. With us the king and the lords are several and joint securities for the equality of each district, each province, each city. When did you hear in Great Britain of any province suffering from the inequality of its representation; what district from having no representation at all?

Not only our monarchy and our peerage secure the equality on which our unity depends, but it is the spirit of the house of commons itself. The very inequality of [270] representation, which is so foolishly complained of, is perhaps the very thing which prevents us from thinking or acting as members for districts. Cornwall elects as many members as all Scotland. But is Cornwall better taken care of than Scotland? Few trouble their heads about any of your bases, out of some giddy clubs. Most of those, who wish for any change, upon any plausible grounds, desire it on different ideas.

p. 270

Your new constitution is the very reverse of ours in its principle; and I am astonished how any persons could dream of holding out any thing done in it as an example for Great Britain. With you there is little, or rather no, connection between the last representative and the first constituent. The member who goes to the national assembly is not chosen by the people, nor accountable to them. There are three elections before he is chosen: two sets of magistracy intervene between him and the primary assembly, so as to render him, as I have said, an ambassador of a state, and not the representative of the people within a state.

By this the whole spirit of the election is changed; nor can any corrective your constitution-mongers have devised render him any thing else than what he is. The very attempt to do it would inevitably introduce a confusion, if possible, more horrid than the present. There is no way to make a connexion between the original constituent and the representative, but by the circuitous means which may lead the candidate to apply in the first instance to the primary electors, in order that by their authoritative instructions (and something more perhaps) these primary electors may force

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not for the parts. So is the other branch of our public council—I mean the House of Lords. With us the king and the lords are, severally and jointly, guarantees of the equality of each district, each province, each city. When did you ever hear in Great Britain of any province suffering from the inequality of its representation, or of any district suffering from having no representation at all?

Not only do our monarchy and our peerage secure the equality on which our unity depends; it is the spirit of the House of Commons itself. The very inequality of [270] representation, which is so foolishly complained of, is perhaps the very thing that keeps us from thinking or acting as members for districts. Cornwall elects as many members as all Scotland. But is Cornwall better cared for than Scotland? Outside a few giddy clubs, few people trouble their heads about any of your bases. Most of those who wish for any change, on any plausible grounds, want it for different reasons.[20]

Your new constitution is the very reverse of ours in its principle, and I am astonished that anyone could dream of holding up anything done in it as an example for Great Britain. With you there is little, or rather no, connection between the last representative and the first constituent. The member who goes to the National Assembly is not chosen by the people, nor is he accountable to them. There are three elections before he is chosen: two sets of magistracy stand between him and the primary assembly, so as to make him, as I have said, an ambassador of a state, and not the representative of the people within a state.

By this the whole spirit of the election is changed; nor can any corrective your constitution-mongers have devised make him anything other than what he is. The very attempt would inevitably bring in a confusion, if possible, more horrid than the present one. There is no way to make a connection between the original constituent and the representative except by roundabout means: the candidate would have to apply in the first instance to the primary electors, so that by their authoritative instructions (and something more, perhaps) these

20 Your bases: the three French bases of representation—territory, population, and tax contribution—discussed in the preceding pages.

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the two succeeding bodies of [271] electors to make a choice agreeable to their wishes. But this would plainly subvert the whole scheme.

p. 271 It would be to plunge them back into that tumult and confusion of popular election, which, by their interposed gradation elections, they mean to avoid, and at length to risque the whole fortune of the state with those who have the least knowledge of it, and the least interest in it. This is a perpetual dilemma, into which they are thrown by the vicious, weak, and contradictory principles they have chosen. Unless the people break up and level this gradation, it is plain that they do not at all substantially elect to the assembly; indeed they elect as little in appearance as reality.

What is it we all seek for in an election? To answer its real purposes, you must first possess the means of knowing the fitness of your man; and then you must retain some hold upon him by personal obligation or dependence. For what end are these primary electors complimented, or rather mocked, with a choice? They can never know any thing of the qualities of him that is to serve them, nor has he any obligation whatsoever to them. Of all the powers unfit to be delegated by those who have any real means of judging, that most peculiarly unfit is what relates to a *personal* choice.

In case of abuse, that body of primary electors never can call the representative to an account for his conduct. He is too far removed from them in the chain of representation. If he acts improperly at the end of his two years lease, it does not concern him for two years more. By the new French constitution, the best and the wisest representative go [272] equally with the worst into this *Limbus Patrum.* Their bottoms are supposed foul, and they must go into dock to be refitted. Every man who has served in an assembly is ineligible for two years after. Just as these magistrates begin to learn their trade, like chimney-sweepers, they are disqualified for exercising it.

p. 272 Superficial, new, petulant acquisition, and interrupted, dronish, broken, ill recollection, is to

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primary electors might force the two succeeding bodies of [271] electors to make a choice agreeable to their wishes. But this would plainly subvert the whole scheme.

It would plunge them back into that tumult and confusion of popular election which they mean to avoid by their interposed gradation of elections, and would in the end risk the whole fortune of the state with those who have the least knowledge of it and the least interest in it. This is a perpetual dilemma, into which they are thrown by the vicious, weak, and contradictory principles they have chosen. Unless the people break up and level this gradation, it is plain that they do not in substance elect to the assembly at all; indeed they elect as little in appearance as in reality.

What is it we all seek in an election? To answer its real purposes, you must first have the means of knowing your man's fitness; and then you must keep some hold on him through personal obligation or dependence. For what purpose are these primary electors complimented, or rather mocked, with a choice? They can never know anything of the qualities of the man who is to serve them, nor has he any obligation whatsoever to them. Of all the powers unfit to be delegated by those who have any real means of judging, the most peculiarly unfit is the one that concerns a *personal* choice.

In case of abuse, that body of primary electors can never call the representative to account for his conduct. He is too far removed from them in the chain of representation. If he acts improperly at the end of his two years' lease, it does not concern him for two years more. By the new French constitution, the best and wisest representatives go [272] equally with the worst into this *Limbus Patrum*. Their bottoms are supposed foul, and they must go into dock to be refitted. Every man who has served in an assembly is ineligible for two years afterward. Just as these magistrates begin to learn their trade, they are, like chimney sweeps, disqualified from practicing it.[21]

Superficial, raw, petulant learning, and interrupted, sluggish, broken, ill-kept recollection—this is

21 *Limbus Patrum*: the "limbo of the fathers," where in Catholic theology the righteous of the Old Testament awaited Christ. Chimney sweeps were small boys, who outgrew the work just as they mastered it.

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be the destined character of all your future governors. Your constitution has too much of jealousy to have much of sense in it. You consider the breach of trust in the representative so principally, that you do not at all regard the question of his fitness to execute it.

This purgatory interval is not unfavourable to a faithless representative, who may be as good a canvasser as he was a bad governor. In this time he may cabal himself into a superiority over the wisest and most virtuous. As, in the end, all the members of this elective constitution are equally fugitive, and exist only for the election, they may be no longer the same persons who had chosen him, to whom he is to be responsible when he solicits for a renewal of his trust.

To call all the secondary electors of the *Commune* to account, is ridiculous, impracticable, and unjust; they may themselves have been deceived in their choice, as the third set of electors, those of the *Department,* may be in theirs. In your elections responsibility cannot exist.

The legislators who framed the antient republics knew that their business was too arduous to be accomplished with no better apparatus than the metaphysics of an under-graduate, and the mathematics [273] and arithmetic of an exciseman. They had to do with men, and they were obliged to study human nature. They had to do with citizens, and they were obliged to study the effects of those habits which are communicated by the circumstances of civil life.

p. 273 They were sensible that the operation of this second nature on the first produced a new combination; and thence arose many diversities amongst men, according to their birth, their education, their professions, the periods of their lives, their residence in towns or in the country, their several ways of acquiring and of fixing property, and according to the quality of the property itself, all which rendered them as it were so many different species of animals.

From hence they thought themselves obliged to dispose their citizens into such classes, and to place them in such situations in the state as their peculiar habits might qualify them to fill, and to

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to be the destined character of all your future governors. Your constitution has too much jealousy in it to have much sense. You treat the representative's breach of trust as so much the principal concern that you pay no attention at all to the question of his fitness to carry out that trust.

This purgatorial interval is not unfavorable to a faithless representative, who may be as good a canvasser as he was a bad governor. In this time he may intrigue his way into a superiority over the wisest and most virtuous. And since, in the end, all the members of this elective constitution are equally fleeting, and exist only for the election, the people to whom he must answer when he solicits a renewal of his trust may no longer be the same people who chose him.

To call all the secondary electors of the *Commune* to account is ridiculous, impracticable, and unjust; they may themselves have been deceived in their choice, as the third set of electors, those of the *Department*, may be in theirs. In your elections responsibility cannot exist.

The legislators who framed the ancient republics knew that their business was too arduous to be accomplished with no better equipment than the metaphysics of an undergraduate and the mathematics [273] and arithmetic of an exciseman. They had to deal with men, and they were obliged to study human nature. They had to deal with citizens, and they were obliged to study the effects of those habits that are communicated by the circumstances of civil life.[22]

They were aware that the operation of this second nature on the first produced a new combination; and from this arose many diversities among men, according to their birth, their education, their professions, the periods of their lives, their residence in towns or in the country, their several ways of acquiring and fixing property, and the quality of the property itself—all of which made them, as it were, so many different species of animals.

From this they thought themselves obliged to arrange their citizens into such classes, and to place them in such stations in the state, as their particular habits might qualify them to fill; to allot them

22 Exciseman: an officer who collected excise duties, work that called for gauging casks and simple reckoning.

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allot to them such appropriated privileges as might secure to them what their specific occasions required, and which might furnish to each description such force as might protect it in the conflict caused by the diversity of interests, that must exist, and must contend in all complex society:

for the legislator would have been ashamed, that the coarse husbandman should well know how to assort and to use his sheep, horses, and oxen, and should have enough of common sense not to abstract and equalize them all into animals, without providing for each kind an appropriate food, care, and employment; whilst he, the oeconomist, disposer, and shepherd of his own kindred, subliming himself into an airy metaphysician, [274] was resolved to know nothing of his flocks, but as men in general.

p. 274 It is for this reason that Montesquieu observed very justly, that in their classification of the citizens, the great legislators of antiquity made the greatest display of their powers, and even soared above themselves. It is here that your modern legislators have gone deep into the negative series, and sunk even below their own nothing. As the first sort of legislators attended to the different kinds of citizens, and combined them into one commonwealth, the others, the metaphysical and alchemistical legislators, have taken the direct contrary course. They have attempted to confound all sorts of citizens, as well as they could, into one homogeneous mass; and then they divided this their amalgama into a number of incoherent republics.

They reduce men to loose counters merely for the sake of simple telling, and not to figures whose power is to arise from their place in the table. The elements of their own metaphysics might have taught them better lessons. The troll of their categorical table might have informed them that there was something else in the intellectual world besides *substance* and *quantity.* They might learn from the catechisms of metaphysics that there were eight heads more[2], in every complex deliberation, which they have never thought of, though these, of all the ten, are the subject on which the skill of man can operate any thing at all.

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such appropriate privileges as might secure to them what their specific needs required; and to furnish each class with such strength as might protect it in the conflict caused by the diversity of interests that must exist, and must contend, in every complex society:

for the legislator would have been ashamed that the coarse farmer should know well how to sort and use his sheep, horses, and oxen, and should have common sense enough not to abstract and equalize them all into animals without providing for each kind its appropriate food, care, and employment, while he, the steward, disposer, and shepherd of his own kindred, sublimating himself into an airy metaphysician, [274] resolved to know nothing of his flocks except as men in general.

It is for this reason that Montesquieu observed, very justly, that in their classification of the citizens the great legislators of antiquity made the greatest display of their powers, and even soared above themselves. It is here that your modern legislators have gone deep into the negative series, and sunk even below their own nothing. Whereas the first sort of legislators attended to the different kinds of citizens and combined them into one commonwealth, the others, the metaphysical and alchemical legislators, have taken the directly opposite course. They have tried to merge all sorts of citizens, as well as they could, into one homogeneous mass; and then they divided this amalgam of theirs into a number of incoherent republics.[23]

They reduce men to loose counters, merely for the sake of simple counting, and not to figures whose value is to arise from their place in the table. The elements of their own metaphysics might have taught them better lessons. The roll call of their table of categories might have told them that there was something else in the intellectual world besides *substance* and *quantity*. They might learn from the catechisms of metaphysics that there were eight more heads[2] in every complex deliberation, which they have never thought of, though these, of all the ten, are the subject on which human skill can work at all.[24]

23 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 2, chapter 2. "The negative series" is a mathematical jibe: numbers below zero.
24 The ten categories of Aristotle, the standard table of the school logic; Burke's "troll" means the recitation of the list.

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p. 275 So far from this able disposition of some of the old republican legislators, which follows with a solicitous accuracy, the moral conditions and propensities of men, they have levelled and crushed together all the orders which they found, even under the coarse unartificial arrangement of the monarchy, in which mode of government the classing of the citizens is not of so much importance as in a republic. It is true, however, that every such classification, if properly ordered, is good in all forms of government; and composes a strong barrier against the excesses of despotism, as well as it is the necessary means of giving effect and permanence to a republic.

For want of something of this kind, if the present project of a republic should fail, all securities to a moderated freedom fail along with it; all the indirect restraints which mitigate despotism are removed; insomuch that if monarchy should ever again obtain an entire ascendency in France, under this or under any other dynasty, it will probably be, if not voluntarily tempered at setting out, by the wise and virtuous counsels of the prince, the most completely arbitrary power that has ever appeared on earth. This is to play a most desperate game

Far from following the skillful arrangement of some of the old republican legislators, which tracks the moral conditions and propensities of men with anxious accuracy, they have leveled and crushed together all the orders they found, even under the coarse, unartful arrangement of the monarchy—a form of government in which the classing of citizens is not of so much importance as in a republic. It is true, however, that every such classification, if properly ordered, is good in all forms of government; it forms a strong barrier against the excesses of despotism, just as it is the necessary means of giving effect and permanence to a republic.

For want of something of this kind, if the present project of a republic should fail, all securities for a moderated freedom fail along with it; all the indirect restraints that mitigate despotism are removed; so much so that if monarchy should ever again gain an entire ascendancy in France, under this or any other dynasty, it will probably be—unless it is voluntarily tempered at the outset by the wise and virtuous counsels of the prince—the most completely arbitrary power that has ever appeared on earth. This is to play a most desperate game.

THE CEMENT: CONFISCATION, PAPER MONEY AND PARIS

Confiscation with paper money and the supremacy of Paris are meant to hold the new republics together.

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Finding no sort of principle of coherence with each other in the nature and constitution of the several new republics of France, I considered what cement the legislators had provided for them from any extraneous materials. Their confederations, their *spectacles,* their civic feasts, and their enthusiasm, I take no notice of; They are nothing but [276] mere tricks; but tracing their policy through their actions, I think I can

Finding no principle of coherence of any sort among the several new republics of France in their nature and constitution, I considered what cement the legislators had provided for them from outside materials. Their confederations, their *spectacles*, their civic feasts, and their enthusiasm I take no notice of; they are nothing but [276] mere tricks. But tracing their policy through their actions, I think I can make out the arrangements by

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[2] Qualitas, Relatio, Actio, Passio, Ubi, Quando, Situs, Habitus. | [2] Quality, Relation, Action, Passion, Place, Time, Position, State.[25]

25 Burke gives in Latin the remaining eight of Aristotle's ten categories (*Qualitas, Relatio, Actio, Passio, Ubi, Quando, Situs, Habitus*).

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distinguish the arrangements by which they propose to hold these republics together. The first, is the *confiscation,* with the compulsory paper currency annexed to it; the second, is the supreme power of the city of Paris; the third, is the general army of the state.

p. 276 Of this last I shall reserve what I have to say, until I come to consider the army as an head by itself.

As to the operation of the first (the confiscation and paper currency) merely as a cement, I cannot deny that these, the one depending on the other, may for some time compose some sort of cement, if their madness and folly in the management, and in the tempering of the parts together, does not produce a repulsion in the very outset.

But allowing to the scheme some coherence and some duration, it appears to me, that if, after a while, the confiscation should not be found sufficient to support the paper coinage (as I am morally certain it will not) then, instead of cementing, it will add infinitely to the dissociation, distraction, and confusion of these confederate republics, both with relation to each other, and to the several parts within themselves. But if the confiscation should so far succeed as to sink the paper currency, the cement is gone with the circulation. In the mean time its binding force will be very uncertain, and it will straiten or relax with every variation in the credit of the paper.

One thing only is certain in this scheme, which is an effect seemingly collateral, but direct, I have no doubt, in the minds of those who conduct this [277] business; that is, its effect in producing an *Oligarchy* in every one of the republics.

p. 277 A paper circulation, not founded on any real money deposited or engaged for, amounting already to four-and-forty millions of English money, and this currency by force substituted in the place of the coin of the kingdom, becoming thereby the substance of its revenue, as well as the medium of all its commercial and civil intercourse, must put the whole of what power, authority, and influence is left, in any form whatsoever it may assume, into the hands of the managers and conductors of this circulation.

In England we feel the influence of the bank; though it is only the center of a voluntary dealing.

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which they propose to hold these republics together. The first is the *confiscation*, with the compulsory paper currency attached to it; the second is the supreme power of the city of Paris; the third is the general army of the state.

Of this last I shall reserve what I have to say until I come to consider the army as a head of its own.

As for the operation of the first (the confiscation and paper currency) merely as a cement, I cannot deny that these, the one depending on the other, may for some time form some sort of cement—if their madness and folly in managing it, and in tempering the parts together, do not produce a repulsion at the very outset.

But granting the scheme some coherence and some duration, it seems to me that if, after a while, the confiscation should not prove sufficient to support the paper coinage (as I am morally certain it will not), then, instead of cementing, it will add infinitely to the dissociation, distraction, and confusion of these confederate republics, both in their relations with one another and among the several parts within each. But if the confiscation should succeed so far as to sink the paper currency, the cement is gone with the circulation. Meanwhile its binding force will be very uncertain, and it will tighten or loosen with every variation in the credit of the paper.

One thing only is certain in this scheme—an effect seemingly collateral, but, I have no doubt, direct in the minds of those who conduct this [277] business: namely, its effect in producing an *oligarchy* in every one of the republics.

A paper circulation not founded on any real money deposited or pledged, already amounting to forty-four million pounds in English money; this currency forcibly substituted for the coin of the kingdom, and thereby becoming the substance of its revenue as well as the medium of all its commercial and civil dealings—such a circulation must put the whole of whatever power, authority, and influence is left, in whatever form it may take, into the hands of the managers and conductors of this circulation.

In England we feel the influence of the bank, though it is only the center of voluntary dealings.

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He knows little indeed of the influence of money upon mankind, who does not see the force of the management of a monied concern, which is so much more extensive, and in its nature so much more depending on the managers than any of ours. But if we take into consideration the other part essentially connected with it (which consists in continually drawing out for sale portions of the confiscated land, this continual exchanging land for paper, and this mixing it into circulation) we may conceive something of the intensity of its operation.

By this means the spirit of money-jobbing and speculation goes into the mass of land itself, and incorporates with it. By this kind of operation, that species of property becomes (as it were) volatized; it assumes an unnatural and monstrous activity, and thereby throws into the hands of the several managers, principal and subordinate, Parisian and provincial, [278] all the representative of money, and perhaps a full tenth part of all the land in France, which has now acquired the worst and most pernicious part of the evil of a paper circulation, the greatest possible uncertainty in its value. They have reversed the Latonian kindness to the landed property of Delos.

p. 278 They have sent theirs to be blown about, like the light fragments of a wreck, *oras et littora circum.* The new dealers being all habitually adventurers, and without any fixed habits or local predilections, will purchase to job out again, as the market of paper, or of money, or of land shall present an advantage.

For though an holy bishop thinks that agriculture will derive great advantages from the "*enlightened*" usurers who are to purchase the church confiscations, I, who am not a good, but an old farmer, with great humility beg leave to tell his late lordship, that usury is not a tutor of agriculture; and if the word "enlightened" be understood according to the new dictionary, as it always is in your new schools, I cannot conceive how a man's not believing in God can teach him to cultivate the earth with the least of any additional skill or encouragement. "Diis immortalibus sero,"

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He knows little indeed of the influence of money on mankind who does not see the force that comes from managing a monied concern far more extensive than any of ours, and by its nature far more dependent on its managers. But if we take into account the other part essentially connected with it (the continual drawing out of portions of the confiscated land for sale, this continual exchange of land for paper, and this mixing of land into circulation), we may form some idea of how intensely it will operate.

By this means the spirit of money-jobbing and speculation enters into the mass of land itself and becomes part of it. Through this kind of operation that species of property becomes, as it were, volatilized. It takes on an unnatural and monstrous activity, and so throws into the hands of the various managers, principal and subordinate, Parisian and provincial, [278] everything that represents money, and perhaps a full tenth of all the land in France. That land has now acquired the worst and most pernicious part of the evil of a paper circulation: the greatest possible uncertainty in its value. They have reversed Latona's kindness to the landed property of Delos.[27]

They have sent theirs to be blown about like the light fragments of a wreck, *around the shores and coasts*. The new dealers, all adventurers by habit, with no fixed habits or local attachments, will buy in order to sell again, whenever the market in paper, or in money, or in land offers an advantage.[28]

For though a holy bishop thinks that agriculture will gain great advantages from the "*enlightened*" usurers who are to buy up the confiscated church lands, I, who am not a good farmer but an old one, with great humility beg leave to tell his late lordship that usury is no tutor of agriculture. And if the word "enlightened" is understood according to the new dictionary, as it always is in your new schools, I cannot conceive how a man's not believing in God can teach him to cultivate the earth with the least added skill or encouragement. "I sow for the immortal gods," said an old Roman, as

27 In Greek legend Delos was a floating island, made fast to the seabed so that Latona (Leto) could give birth there to Apollo and Artemis.

28 Virgil, Aeneid 3.75, describing Delos drifting before it was fixed in place.

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said an old Roman, when he held one handle of the plough, whilst Death held the other.

Though you were to join in the commission all the directors of the two academies to the directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte,* one old experienced peasant is worth them all. I have got more information, upon one curious and interesting branch of husbandry, in one short conversation with one Carthusian monk, than I have derived from all the Bank directors that I have ever conversed [279] with. However, there is no cause for apprehension from the meddling of money-dealers with rural oeconomy. These gentlemen are too wise in their generation.

p. 279 At first, perhaps, their tender and susceptible imaginations may be captivated with the innocent and unprofitable delights of a pastoral life; but in a little time they will find that agriculture is a trade much more laborious, and much less lucrative than that which they had left. After making its panegyric, they will turn their backs on it like their great precursor and prototype.—They may, like him, begin by singing "*Beatus ille*"—but what will be the end? "Sic cum locutus foenerator Alphius, Jam jam futurus rusticus Omnem relegit idibus pecuniam, Quaerit calendis ponere." They will cultivate the *caisse d'Eglise,* under the sacred auspices of this prelate, with much more profit than its vineyards or its corn-fields.

They will employ their talents according to their habits and their interests. They will not follow the plough whilst they can direct treasuries, and govern provinces.

Your legislators, in every thing new, are the very first who have founded a commonwealth upon gaming, and infused this spirit into it as its vital breath. The great object in these politics is to metamorphose France, from a great kingdom into one great play-table; to turn its inhabitants into a nation of gamesters; to make speculation as extensive as life; to mix it with all its concerns; and to divert the whole of the hopes and fears of [280] the people from their usual channels, into the

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he held one handle of the plow while Death held the other.[29]

Though you were to put all the directors of the two academies on the commission together with the directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, one old, experienced peasant is worth them all. I have gained more information on one curious and interesting branch of husbandry in one short conversation with a Carthusian monk than from all the bank directors I have ever conversed [279] with. However, there is no reason to fear that money-dealers will meddle with rural economy. These gentlemen are too wise in their generation.[30]

At first, perhaps, their tender and impressionable imaginations may be captivated by the innocent and unprofitable delights of pastoral life. But in a little while they will find that agriculture is a trade far more laborious and far less lucrative than the one they left. After singing its praises, they will turn their backs on it like their great forerunner and prototype. They may, like him, begin by singing "*Happy the man*," but what will be the end? "When the usurer Alphius had said all this, now on the very point of turning farmer, he called in all his money on the Ides, and on the Kalends looks to lend it out again." They will cultivate the *caisse d'Église*, under the sacred auspices of this prelate, with far more profit than its vineyards or its cornfields.[31]

They will employ their talents according to their habits and their interests. They will not follow the plow while they can direct treasuries and govern provinces.

Your legislators, new in everything, are the very first who have founded a commonwealth on gambling and breathed this spirit into it as its breath of life. The great aim of these politics is to transform France from a great kingdom into one great gaming table; to turn its inhabitants into a nation of gamblers; to make speculation as extensive as life; to mix it into all life's concerns; and to divert all the hopes and fears of [280] the people from

29 The bishop is Talleyrand, bishop of Autun, who proposed the confiscation of church property. The Roman's saying is from Cicero, On Old Age 7.25.

30 "Wise in their generation" echoes Luke 16:8.

31 Horace, Epodes 2, a hymn to country life that turns out to be spoken by a moneylender (lines 1 and 67–70). The *caisse d'Église* is the "church fund," a pun on the Caisse d'Escompte.

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impulses, passions, and superstitions of those who live on chances.	their usual channels into the impulses, passions, and superstitions of those who live on chance.
p. 280 They loudly proclaim their opinion, that this their present system of a republic cannot possibly exist without this kind of gaming fund; and that the very thread of its life is spun out of the staple of these speculations. The old gaming in funds was mischievous enough undoubtedly; but it was so only to individuals. Even when it had its greatest extent, in the Missisipi and South Sea, it affected but few, comparatively;	They loudly proclaim their opinion that their present system of a republic cannot possibly exist without this kind of gambling fund, and that the very thread of its life is spun from the raw stuff of these speculations. The old gambling in the funds was mischievous enough, no doubt, but only to individuals. Even at its greatest extent, in the Mississippi and South Sea schemes, it affected comparatively few;[32]
where it extends further, as in lotteries, the spirit has but a single object. But by bringing the currency of gaming into the minutest matters, and engaging every body in it, and in every thing, a more dreadful epidemic distemper of that kind is spread than yet has appeared in the world.	and where it extends further, as in lotteries, the spirit has only a single object. But by carrying the currency of gambling into the smallest matters, and drawing everybody into it, in everything, they have spread a more dreadful epidemic of this disease than the world has yet seen.
With you a man can neither earn nor buy his dinner, without a speculation. What he receives in the morning will not have the same value at night. What he is compelled to take as pay for an old debt, will not be received as the same when he is to contract a new one;	With you a man can neither earn nor buy his dinner without a speculation. What he receives in the morning will not have the same value at night. What he is compelled to take as payment for an old debt will not be accepted at the same value when he comes to contract a new one;
nor will it be the same when by prompt payment he would avoid contracting any debt at all. Industry must wither away. Oeconomy must be driven from your country. Careful provision will have no existence. Who will labour without knowing the amount of his pay? Who will study to encrease what none can estimate? who will accumulate, when he does not know the value of what he saves?	nor will it be worth the same when he tries to avoid contracting any debt at all by paying promptly. Industry must wither away. Thrift must be driven from your country. Careful provision for the future will cease to exist. Who will labor without knowing the amount of his pay? Who will strive to increase what no one can estimate? Who will accumulate when he does not know the value of what he saves?
If you abstract it from its uses in gaming, to accumulate your paper wealth, would be not the providence of a man, but the distempered instinct of a jackdaw.	Take away its uses in gambling, and to hoard your paper wealth would be not the foresight of a man but the diseased instinct of a jackdaw.
p. 281 The truly melancholy part of the policy of systematically making a nation of gamesters is this; that tho' all are forced to play, few can understand the game; and fewer still are in a condition to avail themselves of the knowledge. The many must be the dupes of the few who conduct the machine of these speculations. What effect it must have on the country-people is visible. When the peasant first brings his corn to market, the magistrate in the towns obliges him	The truly melancholy part of this policy of systematically making a nation of gamblers is that, though all are forced to play, few can understand the game, and fewer still are in a position to profit from the knowledge. The many must be the dupes of the few who run the machine of these speculations. What effect this must have on country people is plain to see. When the peasant first brings his corn to market, the magistrate in the town obliges him to take the assignat at face value;

32 John Law's Mississippi scheme in France and the South Sea Bubble in England both collapsed in 1720.

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to take the assignat at par; when he goes to the shop with this money, he finds it seven per cent the worse for crossing the way. This market he will not readily resort to again.

The townsman can calculate from day to day: not so the inhabitant of the country. The townspeople will be inflamed! they will force the country-people to bring their corn. Resistance will begin, and the murders of Paris and St. Dennis may be renewed through all France.

What signifies the empty compliments paid to the country by giving it perhaps more than its share in the theory of your representation? Where have you placed the real power over monied and landed circulation? Where have you placed the means of raising and falling the value of every man's freehold. The whole of the power obtained by this revolution will settle in the towns among the burghers, and the monied directors who lead them. The landed gentleman, the yeoman, and the peasant have, none of them, habits, or inclinations, or experience, which can lead them to any share in this the sole source of power and influence now left in France.

The very nature of a country life, [282] the very nature of landed property, in all the occupations, and all the pleasures they afford, render combination and arrangement (the sole way of procuring and exerting influence) in a manner impossible amongst country-people. Combine them by all the art you can, and all the industry, they are always dissolving into individuality. Any thing in the nature of incorporation is almost impracticable amongst them. Hope, fear, alarm, jealousy, the ephemerous tale that does its business and dies in a day, all these things, which are the reins and spurs by which leaders check or urge the minds of followers, are not easily employed, or hardly at all, amongst scattered people.

p. 282 They assemble, they arm, they act with the utmost difficulty, and at the greatest charge. Their efforts, if ever they can be commenced, cannot be sustained. They cannot proceed systematically. If the country gentlemen attempt an influence through the mere income of their property, what is it to that of those who have ten times their

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when he goes to the shop with this money, he finds it seven percent worse for crossing the street. He will not readily come back to this market.

The townsman can calculate from day to day; the countryman cannot. The townspeople will be inflamed! They will force the country people to bring in their corn. Resistance will begin, and the murders of Paris and Saint-Denis may be repeated throughout France.[33]

What do the empty compliments paid to the countryside amount to, when you give it perhaps more than its share in the theory of your representation? Where have you placed the real power over the circulation of money and land? Where have you placed the means of raising and lowering the value of every man's freehold? All the power obtained by this revolution will settle in the towns, among the burghers and the monied directors who lead them. The landed gentleman, the yeoman, and the peasant have none of them the habits, inclinations, or experience that could lead them to any share in this, the sole source of power and influence now left in France.

The very nature of country life, [282] the very nature of landed property, in all the occupations and all the pleasures they afford, make combination and organization (the only way of gaining and exercising influence) all but impossible among country people. Combine them with all the art and all the effort you can, and they are always dissolving back into individuals. Anything in the nature of incorporation is almost impracticable among them. Hope, fear, alarm, jealousy, the passing tale that does its work and dies in a day: all these, the reins and spurs by which leaders check or urge on the minds of their followers, are hard to use, or hardly usable at all, among a scattered people.

They assemble, they arm, they act only with the utmost difficulty and at the greatest expense. Their efforts, if they can ever be begun, cannot be sustained. They cannot proceed systematically. If the country gentlemen try to exert influence through the mere income of their property, what is that compared with the influence of those who

33 At Saint-Denis in August 1789 a municipal official was murdered by a crowd during a dispute over the price of bread.

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income to sell, and who can ruin their property by bringing their plunder to meet it at market. If he wishes to mortgage, he falls the value of his land, and raises the value of assignats. He augments the power of his enemy by the very means he must take to contend with him.

The country gentleman therefore, the officer by sea and land, the man of liberal views and habits, attached to no profession, will be as completely excluded from the government of his country as if he were legislatively proscribed. It is obvious, that in the towns, all the things which conspire against the country gentleman, combine in favour [283] of the money manager and director. In towns combination is natural. The habits of burghers, their occupations, their diversion, their business, their idleness, continually bring them into mutual contact. Their virtues and their vices are sociable;

they are always in garrison; and they come embodied and half disciplined into the hands of those who mean to form them for civil, or for military action.

p. 283 Those whose operations can take from, or add ten per cent. to, the possessions of every man in France, must be the masters of every man in France.

All these considerations leave no doubt on my mind, that if this monster of a constitution can continue, France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors of assignats, and trustees for the sale of church lands, attornies, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people. Here end all the deceitful dreams and visions of the equality and rights of men. In "the Serbonian bog" of this base oligarchy they are all absorbed, sunk, and lost for ever.

Though human eyes cannot trace them, one would be tempted to think some great offences in France must cry to heaven, which has thought fit to punish it with a subjection to a vile and

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have ten times their income to sell, and who can ruin the value of their property by bringing their plunder to compete with it on the market? If he wants to mortgage, he lowers the value of his land and raises the value of the assignats. He increases the power of his enemy by the very means he must use to contend with him.

The country gentleman, therefore, the officer by sea and land, the man of liberal views and habits attached to no profession, will be as completely excluded from the government of his country as if he were outlawed by statute. It is obvious that in the towns everything that conspires against the country gentleman combines in favor [283] of the money manager and director. In towns combination is natural. The habits of burghers, their occupations, their amusements, their business, their idleness, continually bring them into contact with one another. Their virtues and their vices are sociable;

they are always in garrison, and they come already embodied and half-disciplined into the hands of those who mean to shape them for civil or for military action.

Those whose operations can take ten percent from, or add ten percent to, the possessions of every man in France must be the masters of every man in France.

All these considerations leave me in no doubt that, if this monster of a constitution can last, France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns made up of directors of assignats and trustees for the sale of church lands, attorneys, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people. Here end all the deceitful dreams and visions of the equality and rights of men. In "the Serbonian bog" of this base oligarchy they are all swallowed up, sunk, and lost forever.[34]

Though human eyes cannot trace them, one would be tempted to think that some great offenses in France must cry out to heaven, which has seen fit to punish it with subjection to a vile and inglori-

34 "The Serbonian bog," a treacherous marsh in Egypt said to swallow whole armies, is from Milton, Paradise Lost 2.592.

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inglorious domination, in which no comfort or compensation is to be found in any, even of those false splendours, which, playing about other tyrannies, prevent mankind from feeling themselves [284] dishonoured even whilst they are oppressed.

p. 284 I must confess I am touched with a sorrow, mixed with some indignation, at the conduct of a few men, once of great rank, and still of great character, who, deluded with specious names, have engaged in a business too deep for the line of their understanding to fathom; who have lent their fair reputation, and the authority of their high-sounding names, to the designs of men with whom they could not be acquainted; and have thereby made their very virtues operate to the ruin of their country.

So far as to the first cementing principle.

The second material of cement for their new republic is the superiority of the city of Paris; and this I admit is strongly connected with the other cementing principle of paper circulation and confiscation. It is in this part of the project we must look for the cause of the destruction of all the old bounds of provinces and jurisdictions, ecclesiastical and secular, and the dissolution of all ancient combinations of things, as well as the formation of so many small unconnected republics. The power of the city of Paris is evidently one great spring of all their politics.

It is through the power of Paris, now become the center and focus of jobbing, that the leaders of this faction direct, or rather command the whole legislative and the whole executive government. Every thing therefore must be done which can confirm the authority of that city over the other republics. Paris is compact; she has an enormous strength, wholly disproportioned to the force of any of the square republics; and this strength is collected and condensed within a narrow compass.

p. 285 Paris has a natural and easy connexion of its parts, which will not be affected by any scheme of a geometrical constitution, nor does it much signify whether its proportion of representation be more or less, since it has the whole draft of fishes in its dragnet. The other divisions of the kingdom being hackled and torn to pieces, and

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ous domination, in which no comfort or compensation is to be found in any of those false splendors, even, which play about other tyrannies and keep mankind from feeling themselves [284] dishonored even while they are oppressed.

I must confess I am touched with sorrow, mixed with some indignation, at the conduct of a few men, once of great rank and still of great character, who, deluded by plausible names, have engaged in a business too deep for the line of their understanding to fathom; who have lent their good reputation and the authority of their high-sounding names to the designs of men they could not have known; and who have thereby made their very virtues work toward the ruin of their country.

So much for the first cementing principle.

The second material of cement for their new republic is the supremacy of the city of Paris; and this, I admit, is closely connected with the other cementing principle, paper circulation and confiscation. It is in this part of the project that we must look for the cause of the destruction of all the old boundaries of provinces and jurisdictions, ecclesiastical and secular, and of the dissolution of all the ancient combinations of things, as well as of the formation of so many small, unconnected republics. The power of the city of Paris is evidently one great mainspring of all their politics.

It is through the power of Paris, now become the center and focus of jobbing, that the leaders of this faction direct, or rather command, the whole legislative and the whole executive government. Everything must therefore be done that can confirm the authority of that city over the other republics. Paris is compact; she has an enormous strength, wholly out of proportion to the force of any of the square republics; and this strength is gathered and concentrated within a narrow compass.

Paris has a natural and easy connection among its parts, which no scheme of a geometrical constitution will affect; nor does it much matter whether its share of representation is greater or smaller, since it has the whole catch of fish in its dragnet. The other divisions of the kingdom, hacked and torn to pieces and cut off from all their habitual

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separated from all their habitual means, and even principles of union, cannot, for some time at least, confederate against her. It was plain that the new incorporation of the city of Paris could not completely and conclusively domineer over France in any other way than by breaking, in every other part of it, those connections which might balance her power.

Nothing was therefore to be left in all the subordinate members, but weakness, disconnection, and confusion. To confirm this part of the plan, the assembly has lately come to a resolution, that no two of their republics shall have the same commander in chief.

To a person who takes a view of the whole, the strength of Paris thus formed, will appear a system of general weakness. It is boasted, that the geometrical policy has been adopted, that all local ideas should be sunk, and that the people should no longer be Gascons, Picards, Bretons, Normans, but Frenchmen, with one country, one heart, and one assembly. But instead of being all Frenchmen, the greater likelihood is, that the inhabitants of that region will shortly have no country. No man ever was attached by a sense of pride, partiality, or real affection, to a description of square measurement. He never will glory in belonging to the Checquer, [286] No 71, or to any other badge-ticket.

p. 286 We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighbourhoods, and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting places. Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority,

were so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something which it could fill. The love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality. Perhaps it is a sort of elemental training to those higher and more large regards, by which alone men come to be affected, as with their own concern, in the prosperity of a kingdom so extensive as that of France.

In that general territory itself, as in the old name of provinces, the citizens are interested from old prejudices and unreasoned habits, and not on account of the geometric properties of its figure. The power and preeminence of Paris does

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means, and even principles, of union, cannot, for some time at least, combine against her. It was plain that the new corporation of the city of Paris could not completely and conclusively dominate France in any other way than by breaking, in every other part of it, those connections that might balance her power.

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We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighborhoods and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting places. Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority,

were so many little images of the great country, in which the heart found something it could fill. Love of the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality. Perhaps it is a sort of elementary training for those higher and larger regards by which alone men come to be moved, as by their own concern, by the prosperity of a kingdom as extensive as France.

In that general territory itself, as in the old names of the provinces, the citizens take an interest out of old prejudices and unreasoned habits, and not on account of the geometric properties of its shape. The power and preeminence of Paris cer-

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certainly press down and hold these republics together, as long as it lasts. But, for the reasons I have already given you, I think it cannot last very long.

Passing from the civil creating, and the civil cementing principles of this constitution, to the national assembly, which is to appear and act as sovereign, we see a body in its constitution with every possible power, and no possible external controul. We see a body without fundamental laws, without established maxims, without respected rules of proceeding, which nothing can keep firm to any system whatsoever. Their idea of their powers is always taken at the utmost stretch of legislative competency, [287] and their examples for common cases, from the exceptions of the most urgent necessity.

p. 287 The future is to be in most respects like the present assembly; but, by the mode of the new elections and the tendency of the new circulations, it will be purged of the small degree of internal controul existing in a minority chosen originally from various interests, and preserving something of their spirit. If possible, the next assembly must be worse than the present. The present, by destroying and altering every thing, will leave to their successors apparently nothing popular to do. They will be roused by emulation and example to enterprises the boldest and the most absurd. To suppose such an assembly sitting in perfect quietude is ridiculous.

Your all-sufficient legislators, in their hurry to do every thing at once, have forgot one thing that seems essential, and which, I believe, never has been, in the theory or the practice, omitted by any projector of a republic. They have forgot to constitute a *Senate,* or something of that nature and character. Never, before this time, was heard of a body politic composed of one legislative and active assembly, and its executive officers, without such a council; without something to which foreign states might connect themselves; something to which, in the ordinary detail of government, the people could look up; something which might give a bias and steadiness, and preserve something like consistency in the proceedings of state.

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tainly does press down on these republics and hold them together, as long as it lasts. But for the reasons I have already given you, I think it cannot last very long.

Passing from the civil creating, and the civil cementing principles of this constitution, to the National Assembly, which is to appear and act as sovereign, we see a body with every possible power in its constitution, and no possible external control. We see a body without fundamental laws, without established maxims, without respected rules of proceeding, which nothing can keep firm to any system whatsoever. Their idea of their powers is always taken at the utmost stretch of legislative competence, [287] and their examples for common cases from the exceptions of the most urgent necessity.

The future assembly is to be in most respects like the present one; but, by the mode of the new elections and the tendency of the new circulations, it will be purged of the small degree of internal control that exists in a minority chosen originally from various interests and still preserving something of their spirit. If possible, the next assembly must be worse than the present. The present one, by destroying and altering everything, will leave its successors apparently nothing popular to do. They will be roused by emulation and example to enterprises the boldest and the most absurd. To suppose such an assembly sitting in perfect quiet is ridiculous.

Your all-sufficient legislators, in their hurry to do everything at once, have forgotten one thing that seems essential, and which, I believe, no designer of a republic has ever omitted, in theory or in practice. They have forgotten to constitute a *Senate*, or something of that nature and character. Never before this time was there heard of a body politic composed of one legislative and active assembly, and its executive officers, without such a council; without something to which foreign states might connect themselves; something to which, in the ordinary detail of government, the people could look up; something which might give a bias and steadiness, and preserve something like consistency in the proceedings of state.

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Such a body kings generally have as a council. A monarchy may exist without it; but it seems to be in the very essence of a republican government. It [288] holds a sort of middle place between the supreme power exercised by the people, or immediately delegated from them, and the mere executive. Of this there are no traces in your constitution; and in providing nothing of this kind, your Solons and Numas have, as much as in any thing else, discovered a sovereign incapacity.	Kings generally have such a body as a council. A monarchy may exist without it; but it seems to be of the very essence of republican government. It [288] holds a sort of middle place between the supreme power exercised by the people, or immediately delegated by them, and the mere executive. Of this there are no traces in your constitution; and in providing nothing of the kind, your Solons and Numas have revealed, as much as in anything else, a sovereign incapacity.[35]

THE EXECUTIVE

The king is reduced to a powerless instrument, and his ministers bear responsibility without authority.

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p. 288 Let us now turn our eyes to what they have done towards the formation of an executive power. For this they have chosen a degraded king. This their first executive officer is to be a machine, without any sort of deliberative discretion in any one act of his function. At best he is but a channel to convey to the national assembly such matter as may import that body to know. If he had been made the exclusive channel, the power would not have been without its importance; though infinitely perilous to those who would choose to exercise it. But public intelligence and statement of facts may pass to the assembly, with equal authenticity, through any other conveyance.	Let us now turn our eyes to what they have done toward forming an executive power. For this they have chosen a degraded king. This, their first executive officer, is to be a machine, without any deliberative discretion in any single act of his function. At best he is only a channel to convey to the National Assembly such matter as that body may need to know. If he had been made the exclusive channel, the power would not have been without its importance, though infinitely perilous to those who might choose to exercise it. But public intelligence and statements of fact may pass to the assembly, with equal authenticity, through any other conveyance.
As to the means, therefore, of giving a direction to measures by the statement of an authorized reporter, this office of intelligence is as nothing.	As a means, therefore, of giving direction to measures through the statement of an authorized reporter, this office of intelligence is as nothing.
To consider the French scheme of an executive officer in its two natural divisions of civil and political—In the first it must be observed, that, according to the new constitution, the higher parts of judicature, in either of its lines, are not in the king. The king of France is not the fountain of justice. The judges, neither the original nor the appellate, are of his nomination. He neither proposes [289] the candidates, nor has a negative on the choice. He is not even the public prosecutor. He serves only as a notary to authenticate the choice made of the judges in the several districts. By his officers he is to execute their sentence.	To consider the French scheme of an executive officer in its two natural divisions, civil and political—In the first, it must be observed that, under the new constitution, the higher parts of the judiciary, in either of its lines, are not in the king. The king of France is not the fountain of justice. The judges, neither those of first instance nor those of appeal, are of his nomination. He neither proposes [289] the candidates nor has a veto on the choice. He is not even the public prosecutor. He serves only as a notary to authenticate the choice of judges made in the several districts. Through his officers he is to execute their sentences.

35 Solon was the lawgiver of ancient Athens; Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome, was credited with founding its laws and religion.

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p. 289 When we look into the true nature of his authority, he appears to be nothing more than a chief of bumbailiffs, serjeants at mace, catchpoles, jailers, and hangmen. It is impossible to place any thing called royalty in a more degrading point of view. A thousand times better it had been for the dignity of this unhappy prince, that he had nothing at all to do with the administration of justice, deprived as he is of all that is venerable, and all that is consolatory in that function, without power of originating any process; without a power of suspension, mitigation, or pardon. Every thing in justice that is vile and odious is thrown upon him.

It was not for nothing that the assembly has been at such pains to remove the stigma from certain offices, when they were resolved to place the person who lately had been their king in a situation but one degree above the executioner, and in an office nearly of the same quality. It is not in nature, that situated as the king of the French now is, he can respect himself, or can be respected by others.

View this new executive officer on the side of his political capacity, as he acts under the orders of the national assembly. To execute laws is a royal office; to execute orders is not to be a king. However, a political executive magistracy, though merely such, is a great trust. It is a trust indeed [290] that has much depending upon its faithful and diligent performance, both in the person presiding in it and in all his subordinates. Means of performing this duty ought to be given by regulation;

and dispositions towards it ought to be infused by the circumstances attendant on the trust. It ought to be environed with dignity, authority, and consideration, and it ought to lead to glory.

p. 290 The office of execution is an office of exertion. It is not from impotence we are to expect the tasks of power. What sort of person is a king to command executory service, who has no means whatsoever to reward it? Not in a permanent office; not in a grant of land; no, not in a pension of fifty pounds a year; not in the vainest and most trivial title. In France the king is no more the fountain of honour than he is the fountain of justice. All rewards, all

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When we look into the true nature of his authority, he appears to be nothing more than a chief of bumbailiffs, sergeants-at-mace, catchpoles, jailers, and hangmen. It is impossible to place anything called royalty in a more degrading light. It would have been a thousand times better for the dignity of this unhappy prince to have had nothing at all to do with the administration of justice, deprived as he is of all that is venerable and all that is consoling in that function, without power to originate any process, without a power of suspension, mitigation, or pardon. Everything in justice that is vile and odious is thrown upon him.[36]

It was not for nothing that the assembly took such pains to remove the stigma from certain offices, when they were resolved to place the person who had lately been their king in a situation only one degree above the executioner, and in an office of nearly the same quality. It is not in nature that, situated as the king of the French now is, he can respect himself or be respected by others.[37]

View this new executive officer on the side of his political capacity, as he acts under the orders of the National Assembly. To execute laws is a royal office; to execute orders is not to be a king. Still, a political executive magistracy, even if it is merely that, is a great trust. It is a trust indeed [290] on whose faithful and diligent performance much depends, both in the person presiding over it and in all his subordinates. Means of performing this duty ought to be given by regulation;

and dispositions toward it ought to be instilled by the circumstances that attend the trust. It ought to be surrounded with dignity, authority, and consideration, and it ought to lead to glory.

The office of execution is an office of exertion. It is not from impotence that we are to expect the tasks of power. What sort of person is a king to command executive service, when he has no means whatsoever of rewarding it? Not with a permanent office; not with a grant of land; no, not with a pension of fifty pounds a year; not with the vainest and most trivial title. In France the king is no

36 Bumbailiffs, sergeants-at-mace and catchpoles were the lowest officers of the law, who made arrests for debt and served writs.
37 By a decree of December 1789 the Assembly admitted executioners, among others formerly excluded, to full civic rights.

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distinctions are in other hands. Those who serve the king can be actuated by no natural motive but fear; by a fear of every thing except their master.

His functions of internal coercion are as odious, as those which he exercises in the department of justice. If relief is to be given to any municipality, the assembly gives it. If troops are to be sent to reduce them to obedience to the assembly, the king is to execute the order; and upon every occasion he is to be spattered over with the blood of his people. He has no negative; yet his name and authority is used to enforce every harsh decree. Nay, he must concur in the butchery of those who shall attempt to free him from his imprisonment, or shew the slightest attachment to his person or to his antient authority.

p. 291 Executive magistracy ought to be constituted in such a manner, that those who compose it should be disposed to love and to venerate those whom they are bound to obey. A purposed neglect, or, what is worse, a literal but perverse and malignant obedience,

must be the ruin of the wisest counsels. In vain will the law attempt to anticipate or to follow such studied neglects and fraudulent attentions. To make men act zealously is not in the competence of law. Kings, even such as are truly kings, may and ought to bear the freedom of subjects that are obnoxious to them. They may too, without derogating from themselves, bear even the authority of such persons if it promotes their service.

Louis the XIIIth mortally hated the cardinal de Richlieu; but his support of that minister against his rivals was the source of all the glory of his reign, and the solid foundation of his throne itself. Louis the XIVth, when come to the throne, did not love the cardinal Mazarin; but for his interests he preserved him in power. When old, he detested Louvois; but for years, whilst he faithfully served his greatness, he endured his person. When George the IId took Mr. Pitt, who certainly was not agreeable to him, into his councils, he did nothing which could humble a wise sovereign.

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more the fountain of honor than he is the fountain of justice. All rewards, all distinctions are in other hands. Those who serve the king can be moved by no natural motive but fear—a fear of everything except their master.

His functions of internal coercion are as odious as those he exercises in the department of justice. If relief is to be given to any municipality, the assembly gives it. If troops are to be sent to reduce them to obedience to the assembly, the king is to execute the order; and on every occasion he is to be spattered with the blood of his people. He has no veto; yet his name and authority are used to enforce every harsh decree. Nay, he must concur in the butchery of those who shall attempt to free him from his imprisonment, or show the slightest attachment to his person or to his ancient authority.

Executive magistracy ought to be constituted in such a way that those who compose it are disposed to love and to venerate those whom they are bound to obey. A purposeful neglect, or, what is worse, a literal but perverse and malignant obedience,

must be the ruin of the wisest counsels. In vain will the law attempt to anticipate or to follow such studied neglects and fraudulent attentions. To make men act zealously is not within the competence of law. Kings, even those who are truly kings, may and ought to bear the freedom of subjects who are disagreeable to them. They may also, without lowering themselves, bear even the authority of such persons if it promotes their service.

Louis XIII mortally hated Cardinal Richelieu; but his support of that minister against his rivals was the source of all the glory of his reign and the solid foundation of his throne itself. Louis XIV, when he came to the throne, did not love Cardinal Mazarin; but for his own interests he kept him in power. When old, he detested Louvois; but for years, while Louvois faithfully served his greatness, he endured his person. When George II took Mr. Pitt, who was certainly not agreeable to him, into his councils, he did nothing that could humble a wise sovereign.[38]

38 Louvois was Louis XIV's war minister (d. 1691). William Pitt the Elder was brought into office by a reluctant George II in 1756–57.

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But these ministers, who were chosen by affairs, not by affections, acted in the name of, and in trust for, kings; and not as their avowed, constitutional, and ostensible masters. I think it impossible that any king, when he has recovered his first terrors, can cordially infuse vivacity and vigour into measures which he knows [292] to be dictated by those who he must be persuaded are in the highest degree ill affected to his person. Will any ministers, who serve such a king (or whatever he may be called) with but a decent appearance of respect, cordially obey the orders of those whom but the other day in his name they had committed to the Bastile?

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will they obey the orders of those whom, whilst they were exercising despotic justice upon them, they conceived they were treating with lenity; and for whom, in a prison, they thought they had provided an asylum? If you expect such obedience, amongst your other innovations and regenerations, you ought to make a revolution in nature, and provide a new constitution for the human mind. Otherwise, your supreme government cannot harmonize with its executory system. There are cases in which we cannot take up with names and abstractions. You may call half a dozen leading individuals, whom we have reason to fear and hate, the nation. It makes no other difference, than to make us fear and hate them the more.

If it had been thought justifiable and expedient to make such a revolution by such means, and through such persons, as you have made yours, it would have been more wise to have completed the business of the fifth and sixth of October. The new executive officer would then owe his situation to his real masters;

and he might be bound in interest, in the society of crime, and (if in crimes there could be virtues) in gratitude, to serve those who had promoted him to a place of great lucre and great sensual indulgence; and of something more: For more he must have [293] received from those who certainly would not have limited an aggrandized creature, as they have done a submitting antagonist.

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But these ministers, who were chosen by affairs, not by affections, acted in the name of kings and in trust for them, and not as their avowed, constitutional, and ostensible masters. I think it impossible that any king, once he has recovered from his first terrors, can cordially infuse vivacity and vigor into measures which he knows [292] to be dictated by those whom he must be persuaded are in the highest degree ill-disposed toward his person. Will any ministers who serve such a king (or whatever he may be called) with even a decent appearance of respect cordially obey the orders of those whom only the other day they had committed to the Bastille in his name?

will they obey the orders of those whom, while they were exercising despotic justice upon them, they believed they were treating with leniency, and for whom they thought they had provided an asylum in a prison? If you expect such obedience, then among your other innovations and regenerations you ought to make a revolution in nature, and provide a new constitution for the human mind. Otherwise your supreme government cannot harmonize with its executive system. There are cases in which we cannot make do with names and abstractions. You may call half a dozen leading individuals, whom we have reason to fear and hate, the nation. It makes no other difference than to make us fear and hate them the more.

If it had been thought justifiable and expedient to make such a revolution by such means, and through such persons, as you have made yours, it would have been wiser to complete the business of the fifth and sixth of October. The new executive officer would then owe his situation to his real masters;

and he might be bound by interest, by the fellowship of crime, and (if there could be virtues in crimes) by gratitude, to serve those who had promoted him to a place of great lucre and great sensual indulgence—and of something more: for more he must have [293] received from those who certainly would not have limited a creature they had raised up as they have limited a submitting antagonist.[39]

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A king circumstanced as the present, if he is totally stupified by his misfortunes, so as to think it not the necessity, but the premium and privilege of life, to eat and sleep, without any regard to glory, never can be fit for the office. If he feels as men commonly feel, he must be sensible,

that an office so circumstanced is one in which he can obtain no fame or reputation. He has no generous interest that can excite him to action. At best, his conduct will be passive and defensive. To inferior people such an office might be matter of honour. But to be raised to it, and to descend to it, are different things, and suggest different sentiments.

Does he *really* name the ministers? They will have a sympathy with him. Are they forced upon him? The whole business between them and the nominal king will be mutual counteraction. In all other countries, the office of ministers of state is of the highest dignity. In France it is full of peril and incapable of glory. Rivals however they will have in their nothingness,

whilst shallow ambition exists in the world, or the desire of a miserable salary is an incentive to short-sighted avarice. Those competitors of the ministers are enabled by your constitution to attack them in their vital parts, whilst they have not the means of repelling their charges in any other than the degrading character of culprits.

The ministers of state in France are the only persons in that country who are incapable of a share in the national councils. What ministers! What [294] councils! What a nation!—But they are responsible. It is a poor service that is to be had from responsibility. The elevation of mind, to be derived from fear, will never make a nation glorious. Responsibility prevents crimes. It makes all attempts against the laws dangerous. But for a principle of active and zealous service, none but idiots could think of it.

p. 294 Is the conduct of a war to be trusted to a man who may abhor its principle; who, in every step he may take to render it successful, confirms the power of those by whom he is oppressed? Will foreign states seriously treat with him who has no prerogative of peace or war; no, not so much as in

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A king circumstanced as the present one is, if he is so totally stupefied by his misfortunes as to think it not the necessity but the reward and privilege of life to eat and sleep, without any regard to glory, can never be fit for the office. If he feels as men commonly feel, he must be aware

that an office so circumstanced is one in which he can obtain no fame or reputation. He has no generous interest that can excite him to action. At best his conduct will be passive and defensive. To inferior people such an office might be a matter of honor. But to be raised to it and to descend to it are different things, and suggest different feelings.

Does he *really* name the ministers? They will have a sympathy with him. Are they forced upon him? The whole business between them and the nominal king will be mutual counteraction. In all other countries the office of minister of state is of the highest dignity. In France it is full of peril and incapable of glory. Yet rivals they will have, even in their nothingness,

as long as shallow ambition exists in the world, or the desire of a miserable salary is an incentive to short-sighted avarice. Your constitution enables these competitors of the ministers to attack them in their vital parts, while the ministers have no means of answering the charges except in the degrading character of culprits.

The ministers of state in France are the only persons in that country who are barred from any share in the national councils. What ministers! What [294] councils! What a nation!—But they are responsible. It is a poor service that is to be had from responsibility. The elevation of mind to be derived from fear will never make a nation glorious. Responsibility prevents crimes. It makes all attempts against the laws dangerous. But as a principle of active and zealous service, none but idiots could think of it.[40]

Is the conduct of a war to be entrusted to a man who may abhor its principle; who, in every step he takes to make it successful, confirms the power of those by whom he is oppressed? Will foreign states seriously negotiate with one who has no prerogative of peace or war—no, not so much as a single

39 A veiled allusion to the Duke of Orléans, widely suspected of having instigated the October Days in hope of the crown.
40 In November 1789 the Assembly decreed that no deputy could become a minister, and ministers could not sit in the Assembly.

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a single vote by himself or his ministers, or by any one whom he can possibly influence. A state of contempt is not a state for a prince: better get rid of him at once.

I know it will be said, that these humours in the court and executive government will continue only through this generation; and that the king has been brought to declare the dauphin shall be educated in a conformity to his situation. If he is made to conform to his situation, he will have no education at all. His training must be worse even than that of an arbitrary monarch. If he reads,—whether he reads or not, some good or evil genius will tell him his ancestors were kings. Thenceforward his object must be to assert himself, and to avenge his parents. This you will say is not his duty.

That may be; but it is Nature; and whilst you pique Nature against you, you do unwisely to trust to Duty. In this futile scheme [295] of polity, the state nurses in its bosom, for the present, a source of weakness, perplexity, counteraction, inefficiency, and decay; and it prepares the means of its final ruin. In short, I see nothing in the executive force (I cannot call it authority) that has even an appearance of vigour, or that has the smallest degree of just correspondence or symmetry, or amicable relation, with the supreme power, either as it now exists, or as it is planned for the future government.

p. 295 You have settled, by an oeconomy as perverted as the policy, two establishments of government; one real, one fictitious. Both maintained at a vast expence; but the fictitious at, I think, the greatest. Such a machine as the latter is not worth the grease of its wheels. The expence is exorbitant; and neither the shew nor the use deserve the tenth part of the charge. Oh! but I don't do justice to the talents of the legislators. I don't allow, as I ought to do, for necessity. Their scheme of executive force was not their choice. This pageant must be kept. The people would not consent to part with it. Right; I understand you.

You do, in spite of your grand theories, to which you would have heaven and earth to bend, you do

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vote, by himself or his ministers, or by anyone he can possibly influence? A state of contempt is no state for a prince: better to get rid of him at once.

I know it will be said that these humors in the court and executive government will last only through this generation, and that the king has been brought to declare that the dauphin shall be educated in conformity with his situation. If he is made to conform to his situation, he will have no education at all. His training must be worse even than that of an arbitrary monarch. If he reads—whether he reads or not, some good or evil genius will tell him his ancestors were kings. From then on his object must be to assert himself and to avenge his parents. This, you will say, is not his duty.[41]

That may be; but it is Nature; and while you provoke Nature against you, you are unwise to trust to Duty. In this futile scheme [295] of polity the state nurses in its bosom, for the present, a source of weakness, perplexity, counteraction, inefficiency, and decay; and it prepares the means of its final ruin. In short, I see nothing in the executive force (I cannot call it authority) that has even an appearance of vigor, or that has the smallest degree of just correspondence or symmetry, or amicable relation, with the supreme power, either as it now exists or as it is planned for the future government.

By an economy as perverse as the policy, you have set up two establishments of government, one real and one fictitious. Both are kept up at vast expense, but the fictitious one, I think, at the greater. A machine like the latter is not worth the grease on its wheels. The expense is exorbitant, and neither the show nor the use is worth a tenth of the cost. Oh! but I am not doing justice to the talents of the legislators. I am not making the allowance I ought for necessity. Their scheme of executive force was not their choice. This pageant had to be kept. The people would not consent to part with it. Right; I understand you.

You do—in spite of your grand theories, to which you would have heaven and earth bend—you do

41 In his address to the Assembly of February 4, 1790, Louis XVI promised to raise his son, the dauphin, in the principles of the new constitution.

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know how to conform yourselves to the nature and circumstances of things. But when you were obliged to conform thus far to circumstances, you ought to have carried your submission farther, and to have made what you were obliged to take,

a proper instrument, and useful to its end. That was in your power. For instance, among many others, it was in [296] your power to leave to your king the right of peace and war. What! to leave to the executive magistrate the most dangerous of all prerogatives? I know none more dangerous; nor any one more necessary to be so trusted.

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I do not say that this prerogative ought to be trusted to your king, unless he enjoyed other auxiliary trusts along with it, which he does not now hold. But, if he did possess them, hazardous as they are undoubtedly, advantages would arise from such constitution, more than compensating the risque. There is no other way of keeping other potentates from intriguing distinctly and personally with the members of your assembly, from intermeddling in all your concerns, and fomenting, in the heart of your country, the most pernicious of all factions; factions in the interest and under the direction of foreign powers. From that worst of evils, thank God, we are still free.

Your skill, if you had any, would be well employed to find out indirect correctives and controls upon this perilous trust. If you did not like those which in England we have chosen, your leaders might have exerted their abilities in contriving better. If it were necessary to exemplify the consequences of such an executive government as yours, in the management of great affairs, I should refer you to the late reports of M. de Montmorin to the national assembly, and all the other proceedings relative to the differences between Great Britain and Spain. It would be treating your understanding with disrespect to point them out to you.

I hear that the persons who are called ministers have signified an intention of resigning their [297] places. I am rather astonished that they have not resigned long since. For the universe I would not have stood in the situation in which they have

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know how to conform yourselves to the nature and circumstances of things. But once you were obliged to conform this far to circumstances, you ought to have carried your submission further, and to have made what you were obliged to take

into a proper instrument, useful to its end. That was in your power. For instance, among many other things, it was in [296] your power to leave your king the right of peace and war. What! leave to the executive magistrate the most dangerous of all prerogatives? I know of none more dangerous, and of none that it is more necessary to entrust to him.

I do not say that this prerogative ought to be entrusted to your king unless he also held other, auxiliary trusts along with it, which he does not now hold. But if he did possess them, hazardous as they undoubtedly are, such a constitution would bring advantages more than making up for the risk. There is no other way of keeping foreign potentates from intriguing directly and personally with the members of your assembly, from meddling in all your concerns, and from fomenting in the heart of your country the most pernicious of all factions: factions in the interest and under the direction of foreign powers. From that worst of evils, thank God, we are still free.

Your skill, if you had any, would be well employed in finding indirect correctives and checks on this perilous trust. If you did not like the ones we have chosen in England, your leaders might have exerted their abilities in devising better. If it were necessary to illustrate what an executive government like yours does to the management of great affairs, I would refer you to M. de Montmorin's recent reports to the National Assembly, and to all the other proceedings concerning the dispute between Great Britain and Spain. It would be treating your understanding with disrespect to point them out to you.[42]

I hear that the persons who are called ministers have signified an intention of resigning their [297] places. I am rather astonished that they did not resign long ago. Not for the whole world would I have stood in the situation they have been in for

42 Armand Marc, comte de Montmorin, French foreign minister. The Nootka Sound crisis of 1790 between Britain and Spain raised the question of France's treaty obligations to Spain and led the Assembly to strip the king of sole power over war and peace (May 1790).

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been for this last twelvemonth. They wished well, I take it for granted, to the Revolution. Let this fact be as it may, they could not, placed as they were upon an eminence, though an eminence of humiliation, but be the first to see collectively, and to feel each in his own department, the evils which have been produced by that revolution.	this past year. They wished the Revolution well, I take it for granted. Be that as it may, placed as they were on an eminence, though an eminence of humiliation, they could not help being the first to see collectively, and to feel each in his own department, the evils that revolution has produced.
p. 297 In every step which they took, or forbore to take, they must have felt the degraded situation of their country, and their utter incapacity of serving it. They are in a species of subordinate servitude, in which no men before them were ever seen. Without confidence from their sovereign, on whom they were forced, or from the assembly who forced them upon him, all the noble functions of their office are executed by committees of the assembly, without any regard whatsoever to their personal, or their official authority. They are to execute, without power; they are to be responsible, without discretion; they are to deliberate, without choice.	In every step they took, or held back from taking, they must have felt the degraded situation of their country and their own utter incapacity to serve it. They are in a kind of subordinate servitude in which no men before them were ever seen. They have the confidence neither of their sovereign, on whom they were forced, nor of the assembly that forced them on him; and all the noble functions of their office are carried out by committees of the assembly, without any regard whatever to their personal or their official authority. They are to execute, without power; they are to be responsible, without discretion; they are to deliberate, without choice.
In their puzzled situation, under two sovereigns, over neither of whom they have any influence, they must act in such a manner as (in effect, whatever they may intend) sometimes to betray the one, sometimes the other, and always to betray themselves. Such has been their situation; such must be the situation of those who succeed them. I have much respect, and many good wishes, for Mr. Necker. I am obliged to him for attentions. I thought when his enemies [298] had driven him from Versailles, that his exile was a subject of most serious congratulation—*sed multae urbes et publica vota vicerunt.* He is now sitting on the ruins of the finances, and of the monarchy of France.	In their bewildering situation, under two sovereigns, over neither of whom they have any influence, they must act in such a way as (in effect, whatever they may intend) sometimes to betray the one, sometimes the other, and always to betray themselves. Such has been their situation; such must be the situation of those who succeed them. I have much respect and many good wishes for Mr. Necker. I am obliged to him for courtesies. When his enemies [298] had driven him from Versailles, I thought his exile a matter for the most serious congratulation—*but many cities and the prayers of the public prevailed.* He is now sitting on the ruins of the finances and of the monarchy of France.[43]
p. 298 A great deal more might be observed on the strange constitution of the executory part of the new government; but fatigue must give bounds to the discussion of subjects, which in themselves have hardly any limits.	A great deal more might be said about the strange constitution of the executive part of the new government; but fatigue must set bounds to the discussion of subjects that in themselves have hardly any limits.

43 Necker was dismissed on July 11, 1789, and recalled after the fall of the Bastille. The Latin is Juvenal, Satires 10.284: of Pompey, whose recovery from a fever, prayed for by the cities, spared him only for a worse end.

THE JUDGES

The independent parlements are replaced by elected local judges bound to obey the Assembly's orders.

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As little genius and talent am I able to perceive in the plan of judicature formed by the national assembly. According to their invariable course, the framers of your constitution have begun with the utter abolition of the parliaments. These venerable bodies, like the rest of the old government, stood in need of reform, even though there should be no change made in the monarchy. They required several more alterations to adapt them to the system of a free constitution. But they had particulars in their constitution, and those not a few, which deserved approbation from the wise. They possessed one fundamental excellence; they were independent.

The most doubtful circumstance attendant on their office, that of its being vendible, contributed however to this independency of character. They held for life. Indeed they may be said to have held by inheritance. Appointed by the monarch, they were considered as nearly out of his power. The most determined exertions of that authority against them only shewed their radical independence. They composed permanent bodies politic, constituted to resist arbitrary innovation; and from that corporate [299] constitution, and from most of their forms, they were well calculated to afford both certainty and stability to the laws. They had been a safe asylum to secure these laws in all the revolutions of humour and opinion.

p. 299 They had saved that sacred deposit of the country during the reigns of arbitrary princes, and the struggles of arbitrary factions. They kept alive the memory and record of the constitution. They were the great security to private property;

which might be said (when personal liberty had no existence) to be, in fact, as well guarded in France as in any other country. Whatever is supreme in a state, ought to have, as much as possible, its judicial authority so constituted as not only not to depend upon it, but in some sort to balance it. It ought to give a security to its justice against its power. It ought to make its judicature, as it were, something exterior to the state.

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I can perceive just as little genius and talent in the plan of judicature formed by the National Assembly. Following their invariable course, the framers of your constitution began by abolishing the parliaments outright. These venerable bodies, like the rest of the old government, needed reform, even if no change were to be made in the monarchy. They required a good many further alterations to fit them to the system of a free constitution. But there were features of their constitution, and not a few, that deserved the approval of the wise. They possessed one fundamental excellence: they were independent.

The most questionable feature of their office, that it could be bought and sold, nevertheless contributed to this independence of character. They held their places for life; indeed, they may be said to have held them by inheritance. Appointed by the monarch, they were regarded as almost beyond his power. The most determined exertions of that authority against them only showed how radically independent they were. They formed permanent bodies politic, constituted to resist arbitrary innovation; and from that corporate [299] constitution, and from most of their forms, they were well suited to give the laws both certainty and stability. They had been a safe asylum for those laws through all the revolutions of humor and opinion.

They had preserved that sacred deposit of the country through the reigns of arbitrary princes and the struggles of arbitrary factions. They kept alive the memory and record of the constitution. They were the great security of private property,

which (when personal liberty did not exist) might be said to have been in fact as well guarded in France as in any other country. Whatever is supreme in a state ought, as far as possible, to have its judicial authority so constituted that it not only does not depend on that supreme power but in some sort balances it. It ought to give its justice a security against its power. It ought to make its judicature, as it were, something outside the state.

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These parliaments had furnished, not the best certainly, but some considerable corrective to the excesses and vices of the monarchy. Such an independent judicature was ten times more necessary when a democracy became the absolute power of the country. In that constitution, elective, temporary, local judges, such as you have contrived, exercising their dependent functions in a narrow society, must be the worst of all tribunals. In them it will be vain to look for any appearance of justice towards strangers, towards the obnoxious rich, towards the minority of routed parties, towards all those who in the election have supported unsuccessful candidates. It will be impossible to keep the new tribunals clear of the worst spirit of faction.

All [300] contrivances by ballot, we know experimentally, to be vain and childish to prevent a discovery of inclinations. Where they may the best answer the purposes of concealment, they answer to produce suspicion, and this is a still more mischievous cause of partiality.

p. 300 If the parliaments had been preserved, instead of being dissolved at so ruinous a change to the nation, they might have served in this new commonwealth, perhaps not precisely the same (I do not mean an exact parallel) but near the same purposes as the court and senate of Areopagus did in Athens; that is, as one of the balances and correctives to the evils of a light and unjust democracy. Every one knows, that this tribunal was the great stay of that state; every one knows with what care it was upheld, and with what a religious awe it was consecrated.

The parliaments were not wholly free from faction, I admit; but this evil was exterior and accidental, and not so much the vice of their constitution itself, as it must be in your new contrivance of sexennial elective judicatories. Several English commend the abolition of the old tribunals, as supposing that they determined every thing by bribery and corruption. But they have stood the test of monarchic and republican scrutiny. The court was well disposed to prove corruption on those bodies when they were dissolved in 1771.—Those who have again

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These parliaments had supplied, not the best corrective certainly, but a considerable one, to the excesses and vices of the monarchy. Such an independent judicature was ten times more necessary once a democracy became the absolute power of the country. Under that constitution, elective, temporary, local judges such as you have devised, exercising their dependent functions in a narrow society, must be the worst of all tribunals. It will be vain to look to them for any appearance of justice toward strangers, toward the rich who have made themselves unpopular, toward the minority of defeated parties, toward everyone who supported unsuccessful candidates at the election. It will be impossible to keep the new tribunals clear of the worst spirit of faction.

All [300] devices by ballot, we know from experience, are vain and childish as means of keeping people's inclinations from being discovered. Where they best serve the purpose of concealment, they serve to produce suspicion, and that is a still more mischievous cause of partiality.

If the parliaments had been preserved, instead of being dissolved at such ruinous cost to the nation, they might have served in this new commonwealth perhaps not precisely the same purposes (I do not mean an exact parallel), but nearly the same purposes, as the court and senate of the Areopagus served in Athens: that is, as one of the balances and correctives to the evils of a fickle and unjust democracy. Everyone knows that this tribunal was the great support of that state; everyone knows with what care it was upheld, and with what religious awe it was consecrated.[44]

The parliaments were not wholly free from faction, I admit; but this evil was external and accidental, not so much a vice of their constitution itself as it must be in your new contrivance of elective courts with six-year terms. A number of Englishmen praise the abolition of the old tribunals on the supposition that they decided everything by bribery and corruption. But they have stood the test of both monarchic and republican scrutiny. The court was eager enough to prove corruption against those bodies when they were dissolved in 1771. Those who have dissolved them

44 The Areopagus: the ancient council and court of Athens, named for the hill on which it met.

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dissolved them would have done the same if they could—but both inquisitions having failed, I conclude, that gross pecuniary corruption must have been rather rare amongst them.	again would have done the same if they could. But since both inquisitions failed, I conclude that gross financial corruption must have been rather rare among them.[45]
p. 301 It would have been prudent, along with the parliaments, to preserve their antient power of registering, and of remonstrating at least, upon all the decrees of the national assembly, as they did upon those which passed in the time of the monarchy. It would be a means of squaring the occasional decrees of a democracy to some principles of general jurisprudence. The ruin of the antient democracies was, that they ruled, as you do, by occasional decrees, *psephismata.* This practice soon broke in upon the tenour and consistency of the laws; they abated the respect of the people towards them; and totally destroyed them in the end.	It would have been prudent to preserve, along with the parliaments, their ancient power of registering, and at least of remonstrating against, all the decrees of the National Assembly, as they did with the decrees passed under the monarchy. It would be a means of bringing the occasional decrees of a democracy into line with some principles of general jurisprudence. What ruined the ancient democracies was that they ruled, as you do, by occasional decrees, *psephismata.* This practice soon broke in on the tenor and consistency of the laws; it lessened the people's respect for them; and in the end it destroyed them altogether.[46]
Your vesting the power of remonstrance, which, in the time of the monarchy, existed in the parliament of Paris, in your principal executive officer, whom, in spite of common sense, you persevere in calling king, is the height of absurdity. You ought never to suffer remonstrance from him who is to execute. This is to understand neither council nor execution; neither authority nor obedience. The person whom you call king, ought not to have this power, or he ought to have more.	To vest the power of remonstrance, which under the monarchy belonged to the parliament of Paris, in your principal executive officer, whom, in spite of common sense, you persist in calling king, is the height of absurdity. You ought never to allow remonstrance from the one who is to execute. That is to understand neither counsel nor execution, neither authority nor obedience. The person you call king ought either not to have this power, or to have more.
Your present arrangement is strictly judicial. Instead of imitating your monarchy, and seating your judges on a bench of independence, your object is to reduce them to the most blind obedience. As you have changed all things, you have invented new principles of order. You first appoint judges, who, I suppose, are to determine according to law, and then you let them know, that, at some time or other, you intend to give them some law by which they are to determine. Any studies [302] which they have made (if any they have made) are to be useless to them.	Your present arrangement is strictly judicial. Instead of imitating your monarchy and seating your judges on a bench of independence, your aim is to reduce them to the blindest obedience. As you have changed everything, you have invented new principles of order. First you appoint judges, who, I suppose, are to decide according to law; and then you let them know that at some time or other you intend to give them some law by which they are to decide. Whatever studies [302] they have made (if they have made any) are to be useless to them.
p. 302 But to supply these studies, they are to be sworn to obey all the rules, orders, and instructions,	But to make up for those studies, they are to be sworn to obey all the rules, orders, and instruc-

45 In 1771 the chancellor Maupeou, with Louis XV's backing, dissolved the parlements and replaced them; Louis XVI restored them in 1774.

46 The parlements had to register royal edicts before they took effect and could address remonstrances to the king against them. *Psephismata* (Greek): decrees voted by the Athenian assembly for the occasion, as distinct from settled laws; Aristotle criticizes rule by them in the *Politics*.

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which from time to time they are to receive from the national assembly. These if they submit to, they leave no ground of law to the subject. They become complete, and most dangerous instruments in the hands of the governing power, which, in the midst of a cause, or on the prospect of it, may wholly change the rule of decision. If these orders of the National Assembly come to be contrary to the will of the people who locally choose those judges, such confusion must happen as is terrible to think of.

For the judges owe their place to the local authority; and the commands they are sworn to obey come from those who have no share in their appointment. In the mean time they have the example of the court of *Chatelet* to encourage and guide them in the exercise of their functions. That court is to try criminals sent to it by the National Assembly, or brought before it by other courses of delaction. They sit under a guard, to save their own lives. They know not by what law they judge, nor under what authority they act, nor by what tenure they hold. It is thought that they are sometimes obliged to condemn at peril of their lives.

This is not perhaps certain, nor can it be ascertained; but when they acquit, we know, they have seen the persons whom they discharge, with perfect impunity to the actors, hanged at the door of their court.

The assembly indeed promises that they will form a body of law, which shall be short, simple, clear, [303] and so forth. That is, by their short laws, they will leave much to the discretion of the judge; whilst they have exploded the authority of all the learning which could make judicial discretion, (a thing perilous at best) deserving the appellation of a *sound* discretion.

p. 303 It is curious to observe, that the administrative bodies are carefully exempted from the jurisdiction of these new tribunals. That is, those persons are exempted from the power of the laws, who ought to be the most entirely submitted to them. Those who execute public pecuniary trusts, ought of all men to be the most strictly held to their duty.

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tions they are to receive from time to time from the National Assembly. If they submit to these, they leave the subject no ground of law to stand on. They become complete and most dangerous instruments in the hands of the governing power, which, in the middle of a case, or with one in prospect, may change the rule of decision entirely. If these orders of the National Assembly turn out to be contrary to the will of the people who locally choose those judges, such confusion must follow as is terrible to think of.

For the judges owe their place to the local authority, while the commands they are sworn to obey come from those who have no share in appointing them. Meanwhile they have the example of the court of the *Châtelet* to encourage and guide them in the exercise of their functions. That court is to try criminals sent to it by the National Assembly or brought before it by other channels of accusation. Its judges sit under a guard, to save their own lives. They do not know by what law they judge, under what authority they act, or by what tenure they hold their places. It is thought that they are sometimes obliged to condemn at the peril of their lives.[47]

This is perhaps not certain, nor can it be established; but when they acquit, we know, they have seen the persons they discharged hanged at the door of their court, with perfect impunity for those who did it.

The assembly does indeed promise to form a body of law that shall be short, simple, clear, [303] and so forth. That is, by their short laws they will leave much to the discretion of the judge, while they have discredited the authority of all the learning that could make judicial discretion (a perilous thing at best) deserve to be called a *sound* discretion.

It is curious to observe that the administrative bodies are carefully exempted from the jurisdiction of these new tribunals. That is, the persons exempted from the power of the laws are the very ones who ought to be most entirely subject to them. Those who carry out public financial trusts ought, of all men, to be held most strictly to their duty.

47 The Châtelet: the old royal court of Paris, given jurisdiction in 1789 over crimes of "lèse-nation," and tried amid crowd pressure.

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One would have thought, that it must have been among your earliest cares, if you did not mean that those administrative bodies should be real sovereign independent states, to form an awful tribunal, like your late parliaments, or like our king's-bench, where all corporate officers might obtain protection in the legal exercise or their functions, and would find coercion if they trespassed against their legal duty. But the cause of the exemption is plain. These administrative bodies are the great instruments of the present leaders in their progress through democracy to oligarchy. They must therefore be put above the law. It will be said, that the legal tribunals which you have made are unfit to coerce them. They are undoubtedly.

They are unfit for any rational purpose. It will be said too, that the administrative bodies will be accountable to the general assembly. This I fear is talking, without much consideration, of the nature of that assembly [304] or of these corporations. However, to be subject to the pleasure of that assembly, is not to be subject to law, either for protection or for constraint.

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One would have thought that, unless you meant those administrative bodies to be really sovereign, independent states, one of your earliest cares must have been to form an awe-inspiring tribunal, like your late parliaments or like our King's Bench, where all corporate officers could obtain protection in the lawful exercise of their functions, and would meet with coercion if they transgressed their legal duty. But the reason for the exemption is plain. These administrative bodies are the great instruments of the present leaders in their progress through democracy to oligarchy. They must therefore be put above the law. It will be said that the courts of law you have made are unfit to coerce them. They undoubtedly are.[48]

They are unfit for any rational purpose. It will be said too that the administrative bodies will be accountable to the general assembly. This, I fear, is to speak without much consideration of the nature of that assembly [304] or of these corporations. In any case, to be subject to the pleasure of that assembly is not to be subject to law, either for protection or for restraint.

THE ARMY

The army is mutinous, and mixing soldiers with municipal clubs will end in rule by a popular general.

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p. 304 Has more wisdom been displayed in the constitution of your army than what is discoverable in your plan of judicature? The able arrangement of this part is the more difficult, and requires the greater skill and attention, not only as a great concern in itself, but as it is the third cementing principle in the new body of republicks, which you call the French nation. Truly it is not easy to divine what that army may become at last. You have voted a very large one, and on good appointments, at least fully equal to your apparent means of payment. But what is the principle of its discipline? or whom is it to obey?

You have got the wolf by the ears, and I wish you joy of the happy position in which you have chosen to place yourselves, and in which you are well circumstanced for a free deliberation, relatively to that army, or to any thing else.

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Has more wisdom been shown in the constitution of your army than can be found in your plan of judicature? Arranging this part ably is all the more difficult, and calls for all the more skill and attention. It is a great concern in itself, and it is also the third cementing principle in the new body of republics that you call the French nation. Truly it is not easy to guess what that army may become in the end. You have voted a very large one, and on good pay, at least fully equal to your apparent means of paying it. But what is the principle of its discipline? Or whom is it to obey?

You have got the wolf by the ears, and I wish you joy of the happy position you have chosen to put yourselves in, where you are so well placed for free deliberation about that army, or about anything else.[49]

48 The Court of King's Bench: the English superior court of common law, with authority over inferior courts and public officers.

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The minister and secretary of state for the war department, is M. de la Tour du Pin. This gentleman, like his colleagues in administration, is a most zealous assertor of the revolution, and a sanguine admirer of the new constitution, which originated in that event. His statement of facts, relative to the military of France, is important,

not only from his official and personal authority, but because it displays very clearly the actual condition of the army in France, and because it throws light on the principles upon which the assembly proceeds in the administration of this critical [305] object. It may enable us to form some judgment how far it may be expedient in this country to imitate the martial policy of France.

p. 305 M. de la Tour du Pin, on the 4th of last June, comes to give an account of the state of his department, as it exists under the auspices of the national assembly. No man knows it so well; no man can express it better. Addressing himself to the National Assembly, he says, "His Majesty has *this day* sent me to apprize you of the multiplied disorders of which *every day* he receives the most distressing intelligence. The army (le corps militaire) threatens to fall into the most turbulent anarchy.

Entire regiments have dared to violate at once the respect due to the laws, to the King, to the order established by your decrees, and to the oaths which they have taken with the most awful solemnity. Compelled by my duty to give you information of these excesses, my heart bleeds when I consider who they are that have committed them. Those, against whom it is not in my power to withhold the most grievous complaints, are a part of that very soldiery which to this day have been so full of honour and loyalty, and with whom, for fifty years, I have lived the comrade and the friend."

"What incomprehensible spirit of delirium and delusion has all at once led them astray? Whilst you are indefatigable in establishing uniformity in the empire, and moulding the whole into one coherent and consistent body; whilst the French are taught by you, at once the respect which the

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The minister and secretary of state for the war department is M. de la Tour du Pin. This gentleman, like his colleagues in the administration, is a most zealous champion of the revolution, and an ardent admirer of the new constitution that grew out of it. His statement of facts about the military of France is important,[50]

not only because of his official and personal authority, but because it shows very clearly the actual condition of the army in France. It also throws light on the principles by which the assembly proceeds in administering this critical [305] matter. It may help us judge how far it would be wise in this country to imitate the military policy of France.

On the 4th of last June, M. de la Tour du Pin comes to give an account of the state of his department as it exists under the auspices of the National Assembly. No man knows it so well; no man can express it better. Addressing the National Assembly, he says, "His Majesty has *this day* sent me to inform you of the multiplying disorders of which *every day* he receives the most distressing reports. The army (le corps militaire) threatens to fall into the most turbulent anarchy.

Entire regiments have dared to violate, all at once, the respect due to the laws, to the King, to the order established by your decrees, and to the oaths they have taken with the most awful solemnity. Duty compels me to inform you of these excesses, and my heart bleeds when I consider who has committed them. Those against whom I cannot hold back the most grievous complaints are part of that very soldiery which until this day has been so full of honor and loyalty, and among whom I have lived for fifty years as comrade and friend."

"What incomprehensible spirit of delirium and delusion has suddenly led them astray? While you labor tirelessly to establish uniformity throughout the empire, and to mold the whole into one coherent and consistent body; while you teach the French both the respect that the [306] laws owe to the

49 The Latin proverb "to hold a wolf by the ears" (Terence, *Phormio* 506) describes a danger one can neither keep hold of nor safely let go.

50 Jean-Frédéric de La Tour du Pin Gouvernet (1727–1794), minister of war from August 1789 to November 1790.

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[306] laws owe to the rights of man, and that which the citizens owe to the laws, the administration of the army presents nothing but disturbance and confusion.	rights of man and the respect that citizens owe to the laws, the administration of the army presents nothing but disturbance and confusion.
p. 306 I see in more than one corps the bonds of discipline relaxed or broken; the most unheard-of pretensions avowed directly and without any disguise; the ordinances without force; the chiefs without authority; the military chest and the colours carried off; the authority of the King himself [*risum teneatis*] proudly defied; the officers despised, degraded, threatened, driven away, and some of them prisoners in the midst of their corps, dragging on a precarious life in the bosom of disgust and humiliation. To fill up the measure of all these horrors, the commandants of places have had their throats cut, under the eyes, and almost in the arms of their own soldiers."	I see in more than one corps the bonds of discipline relaxed or broken; the most unheard-of claims declared openly and without any disguise; the ordinances without force; the commanders without authority; the regimental funds and the colors carried off; the authority of the King himself [*can you keep from laughing?*] proudly defied; the officers despised, degraded, threatened, driven away, and some of them prisoners in the midst of their own units, dragging out a precarious life amid disgust and humiliation. To fill up the measure of all these horrors, the commanders of garrison towns have had their throats cut before the eyes, and almost in the arms, of their own soldiers."[51]
"These evils are great; but they are not the worst consequences which may be produced by such military insurrections. Sooner or later they may menace the nation itself. *The nature of things requires,* that the army should never act but as *an instrument.* The moment that, erecting itself into a deliberative body, it shall act according to its own resolutions, the *government, be it what it may, will immediately degenerate into a military democracy*; a species of political monster, which has always ended by devouring those who have produced it."	"These evils are great; but they are not the worst consequences such military insurrections may produce. Sooner or later they may threaten the nation itself. *The nature of things requires* that the army should never act except as *an instrument.* The moment it sets itself up as a deliberative body and acts on its own resolutions, the *government, whatever it may be, will immediately degenerate into a military democracy*—a kind of political monster that has always ended by devouring those who produced it."
"After all this, who must not be alarmed at the irregular consultations, and turbulent committees, formed in some regiments by the [307] common soldiers and non-commissioned officers, without the knowledge, or even in contempt of the authority of their superiors; although the presence and concurrence of those superiors could give no authority to such monstrous democratic assemblies [comices.]"	"After all this, who can fail to be alarmed at the irregular consultations and turbulent committees formed in some regiments by the [307] common soldiers and noncommissioned officers, without the knowledge of their superiors, or even in contempt of their authority? And yet the presence and concurrence of those superiors could give no authority to such monstrous democratic assemblies [comices]."
p. 307 It is not necessary to add much to this finished picture: finished as far as its canvas admits; but, as I apprehend, not taking in the whole of the nature and complexity of the disorders of this military democracy, which, the minister at war truly and wisely observes, wherever it exists, must be the true constitution of the state, by	There is no need to add much to this finished picture. It is finished as far as its canvas allows; but, as I take it, it does not take in the whole nature and complexity of the disorders of this military democracy. As the minister of war truly and wisely observes, such a democracy, wherever it exists, must be the true constitution of the state, whatever

51 The bracketed interjection is Burke's own: *risum teneatis,* from Horace, *Ars Poetica* 5 ("could you keep from laughing, friends?").

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whatever formal appellation it may pass. For, though he informs the assembly, that the more considerable part of the army have not cast off their obedience, but are still attached to their duty, yet those travellers who have seen the corps whose conduct is the best, rather observe in them the absence of mutiny than the existence of discipline.

I cannot help pausing here for a moment, to reflect upon the expressions of surprise which this Minister has let fall, relative to the excesses he relates. To him the departure of the troops from their antient principles of loyalty and honour seems quite inconceivable. Surely those to whom he addresses himself know the causes of it but too well. They know the doctrines which they have preached,

the decrees which they have passed, the practices which they have countenanced. The soldiers remember the 6th of October. They recollect the French guards. They have not forgot the taking of the King's castles in Paris, and [308] at Marseilles. That they murdered, with impunity, the governors in both places, has not passed out of their minds.

p. 308 They do not abandon the principles laid down so ostentatiously and laboriously of the equality of men. They cannot shut their eyes to the degradation of the whole noblesse of France; and the suppression of the very idea of a gentleman. The total abolition of titles and distinctions is not lost upon them. But Mr. du Pin is astonished at their disloyalty, when the doctors of the assembly have taught them at the same time the respect due to laws. It is easy to judge which of the two sorts of lessons men with arms in their hands are likely to learn.

As to the authority of the King, we may collect from the minister himself (if any argument on that head were not quite superfluous) that it is not of more consideration with these troops, than it is with every body else. "The King," says he, "has over and over again repeated his orders to put a stop to these excesses: but, in so terrible a crisis *your* [the assembly's] concurrence is become indispensably necessary to prevent the evils

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formal name it goes by. He tells the assembly that the greater part of the army has not thrown off its obedience but is still attached to its duty. Yet travelers who have seen the units with the best conduct observe in them the absence of mutiny rather than the presence of discipline.

I cannot help pausing here for a moment to reflect on the expressions of surprise this minister has let fall about the excesses he relates. To him the troops' departure from their ancient principles of loyalty and honor seems quite inconceivable. Surely those he is addressing know its causes only too well. They know the doctrines they have preached,

the decrees they have passed, the practices they have countenanced. The soldiers remember the 6th of October. They remember the French Guards. They have not forgotten the taking of the King's castles in Paris and [308] at Marseilles. That they murdered the governors in both places with impunity has not passed out of their minds.[52]

They do not abandon the principles of the equality of men, laid down so ostentatiously and so laboriously. They cannot shut their eyes to the degradation of the whole nobility of France, and the suppression of the very idea of a gentleman. The total abolition of titles and distinctions is not lost on them. Yet Mr. du Pin is astonished at their disloyalty, because the doctors of the assembly have at the same time taught them the respect due to laws. It is easy to judge which of the two kinds of lessons men with arms in their hands are likely to learn.

As to the authority of the King, we may gather from the minister himself (if any argument on that point were not quite superfluous) that it counts for no more with these troops than it does with everybody else. "The King," he says, "has repeated his orders over and over again to put a stop to these excesses. But in so terrible a crisis *your* [the assembly's] concurrence has become indispensably necessary to prevent the evils that threaten the

52 The French Guards went over to the people in July 1789. At the Bastille (July 14, 1789) and at the Marseilles forts (seized April–May 1790) the commanders were killed.

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which menace the state. *You* unite to the force of the legislative power, *that of opinion* still more important." To be sure the army can have no opinion of the power or authority of the king.

Perhaps the soldier has by this time learned, that the assembly itself does not enjoy a much greater degree of liberty than that royal figure.

It is now to be seen what has been proposed in this exigency, one of the greatest that can happen in a state. The Minister requests the assembly [309] to array itself in all its terrors, and to call forth all its majesty. He desires that the grave and severe principles announced by them may give vigour to the King's proclamation. After this we should have looked for courts civil and martial;

breaking of some corps, decimating others, and all the terrible means which necessity has employed in such cases to arrest the progress of the most terrible of all evils; particularly, one might expect, that a serious inquiry would be made into the murder of commandants in the view of their soldiers.

p. 309 Not one word of all this, or of any thing like it. After they had been told that the soldiery trampled upon the decrees of the assembly promulgated by the King, the assembly pass new decrees; and they authorise the King to make new proclamations. After the Secretary at War had stated that the regiments had paid no regard to oaths *prêtés avec la plus imposante solemnité* — they propose—what? More oaths. They renew decrees and proclamations as they experience their insufficiency, and they multiply oaths in proportion as they weaken, in the minds of men, the sanctions of religion.

I hope that handy abridgments of the excellent sermons of Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot, and Helvetius, on the Immortality of the Soul, on a particular superintending Providence, and on a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, are sent down to the soldiers along with their civic oaths. Of this I have no doubt; as I understand, that a certain description of reading makes no inconsiderable part of their military exercises, and that they are full as well supplied with the ammunition of pamphlets as of cartridges.

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state. *You* join to the force of the legislative power *that of opinion,* which is still more important." To be sure, the army can have no opinion of the power or authority of the king.

Perhaps the soldier has learned by now that the assembly itself enjoys hardly more liberty than that royal figure.

Let us now see what has been proposed in this emergency, one of the greatest that can befall a state. The minister asks the assembly [309] to array itself in all its terrors and to call forth all its majesty. He wants the grave and severe principles they announce to give vigor to the King's proclamation. After this we should have looked for courts civil and martial;

the breaking of some corps, the decimating of others, and all the terrible means that necessity has used in such cases to halt the progress of the most terrible of all evils. In particular, one might expect a serious inquiry into the murder of commandants in full view of their soldiers.[53]

Not one word of all this, or of anything like it. After being told that the soldiery trampled on the decrees of the assembly promulgated by the King, the assembly passes new decrees, and authorizes the King to issue new proclamations. After the Secretary at War had stated that the regiments had paid no regard to oaths *taken with the most imposing solemnity*—they propose—what? More oaths. They renew decrees and proclamations as fast as they find them insufficient, and they multiply oaths in proportion as they weaken the sanctions of religion in men's minds.[54]

I hope that handy abridgments of the excellent sermons of Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot, and Helvétius on the Immortality of the Soul, on a particular superintending Providence, and on a Future State of Rewards and Punishments are sent down to the soldiers along with their civic oaths. Of this I have no doubt. I understand that a certain kind of reading makes up no small part of their military exercises, and that they are fully as well supplied with the ammunition of pamphlets as with cartridges.

53 To "break" a regiment was to disband it, and to "decimate" one was to execute every tenth man.
54 Burke quotes La Tour du Pin's French: *prêtés avec la plus imposante solemnité*.

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p. 310 To prevent the mischiefs arising from conspiracies, irregular consultations, seditious committees, and monstrous democratic assemblies ['comitia, comices'] of the soldiers, and all the disorders arising from idleness, luxury, dissipation, and insubordination, I believe the most astonishing means have been used, that ever occurred to men, even in all the inventions of this prolific age. It is no less than this:—The King has promulgated in circular letters to all the regiments his direct authority and encouragement, that the several corps should join themselves with the clubs and confederations in the several municipalities, and mix with them in their feasts and civic entertainments!	To prevent the mischiefs arising from conspiracies, irregular consultations, seditious committees, and monstrous democratic assemblies ['comitia, comices'] of the soldiers, and all the disorders arising from idleness, luxury, dissipation, and insubordination, I believe the most astonishing means have been used that ever occurred to men, even among all the inventions of this prolific age. It is no less than this: the King has sent circular letters to all the regiments giving his direct authority and encouragement for the various corps to join the clubs and confederations in the various municipalities, and to mix with them in their feasts and civic entertainments![55]
This jolly discipline, it seems, is to soften the ferocity of their minds; to reconcile them to their bottle companions of other descriptions; and to merge particular conspiracies in more general associations[3]. That this remedy would be pleasing to the soldiers, as they are described by Mr. de la Tour du Pin, I can readily believe; and that, however mutinous otherwise, they will dutifully submit themselves to *these* royal proclamations. But I should question whether all this civic swearing, clubbing, and feasting, would dispose them more than at present they are disposed, to an obedience to their officers; [311] or teach them better to submit to the austere rules of military discipline.	This jolly discipline, it seems, is to soften the ferocity of their minds, to reconcile them to their drinking companions of other descriptions, and to merge particular conspiracies in more general associations[3]. I can readily believe that this remedy would please the soldiers as M. de la Tour du Pin describes them. I can also believe that, however mutinous they are otherwise, they will dutifully submit to *these* royal proclamations. But I should question whether all this civic swearing, clubbing, and feasting would dispose them to obey their officers any more than they are disposed to now, [311] or teach them better to submit to the austere rules of military discipline.
p. 311 It will make them admirable citizens after the French mode, but not quite so good soldiers after any mode. A doubt might well arise, whether the conversations at these good tables, would fit them a great deal the better for the character of *mere instruments,* which this veteran officer and statesman justly observes, the nature of things always requires an army to be.	It will make them admirable citizens in the French manner, but not quite such good soldiers in any manner. A doubt might well arise whether the conversation at these good tables would fit them a great deal better for the character of *mere instruments,* which, as this veteran officer and statesman justly observes, the nature of things always requires an army to be.

55 *Comitia* were the popular assemblies of ancient Rome, and *comices* is the French equivalent.
56 Burke gives in French the passage from the King's circular letter to the regiments, and it is translated here.

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Concerning the likelihood of this improvement in discipline, by the free conversation of the soldiers with the municipal festive societies, which is thus officially encouraged by royal authority and sanction, we may judge by the state of the municipalities themselves, furnished to us by the war minister in this very speech. He conceives good hopes of the success of his endeavours towards restoring order *for the present* from the good disposition of certain regiments; but he finds something cloudy with regard to the future.

As to preventing the return of confusion "for this, the administration (says he) cannot be answerable to you, as long as they see the municipalities arrogate to themselves an authority over the troops, which your institutions have reserved wholly to the monarch. You have fixed the limits of the military authority and the municipal authority.

You have bounded the action, which you have permitted to the latter over the former, to the right of requisition; but never did the letter or the spirit of your decrees authorise the commons in these municipalities to break the officers, to try [312] them, to give orders to the soldiers, to drive them from the posts committed to their guard, to stop them in their marches ordered by the King, or, in a word, to enslave the troops to the caprice of each of the cities or even market towns through which they are to pass."

p. 312 Such is the character and disposition of the municipal society which is to reclaim the soldiery, to bring them back to the true principles of military subordination, and to render them machines in the hands of the supreme power of the country! Such are the distempers of the French troops! Such is their cure! As the army is, so is the navy. The municipalities supersede the

This improvement in discipline is to come through the free conversation of the soldiers with the festive municipal societies, which royal authority and sanction thus officially encourage. We may judge how likely it is from the state of the municipalities themselves, as the war minister describes it to us in this very speech. From the good disposition of certain regiments he conceives good hopes that his efforts to restore order will succeed *for the present*; but he finds the future somewhat cloudy.

As to preventing the return of confusion, "for this, the administration (he says) cannot be answerable to you, as long as they see the municipalities claiming for themselves an authority over the troops which your institutions have reserved wholly to the monarch. You have fixed the limits of the military authority and the municipal authority.

You have limited the action you permitted the latter over the former to the right of requisition. But never did the letter or the spirit of your decrees authorize the commons in these municipalities to cashier the officers, to try [312] them, to give orders to the soldiers, to drive them from the posts entrusted to their guard, to stop them on marches ordered by the King, or, in a word, to enslave the troops to the whim of each of the cities, or even market towns, through which they are to pass."

Such is the character and disposition of the municipal society that is to reclaim the soldiery, bring them back to the true principles of military subordination, and make them machines in the hands of the supreme power of the country! Such are the distempers of the French troops! Such is their cure! As the army is, so is the navy. The municipalities override the orders of the assembly, and the

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[3] Comme sa Majesté y a reconnu, non une systême d'associations particulières, mais une réunion de volontés de tous les Français pour la liberté et la prosperité communes, ainsi pour le maintien de l'ordre publique; il a pensé qu'il convenoit que chaque regiment prit part a ces fêtes civiques pour multiplier les rapports, et reserrer les liens d'union entre les citoyens et les troupes.—Lest I should not be credited, I insert the words, authorising the troops to feast with the popular confederacies.

[3] As His Majesty has recognized in them not a system of particular associations, but a union of the wills of all Frenchmen for liberty and the common prosperity, and so for the maintenance of public order, he has thought it fitting that every regiment should take part in these civic festivals, to multiply contacts and tighten the bonds of union between the citizens and the troops.—In case I should not be believed, I insert the words authorizing the troops to feast with the popular confederacies.[56]

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orders of the assembly, and the seamen in their turn supersede the orders of the municipalities.

From my heart I pity the condition of a respectable servant of the public, like this war minister, obliged in his old age to pledge the assembly in their civic cups, and to enter with an hoary head into all the fantastick vagaries of these juvenile politicians. Such schemes are not like propositions coming from a man of fifty years wear and tear amongst mankind.

They seem rather such as ought to be expected from those grand compounders in politics, who shorten the road to their degrees in the state; and have a certain inward fanatical assurance and illumination upon all subjects; upon the credit of which one of their doctors has thought fit, with great applause, and greater success, to caution the assembly not to attend to old men, or to any persons who valued themselves upon their experience. I suppose all the ministers of state must qualify, [313] and take this test; wholly abjuring the errors and heresies of experience and observation. Every man has his own relish.

p. 313 But I think, if I could not attain to the wisdom, I would at least preserve something of the stiff and peremptory dignity of age. These gentlemen deal in regeneration; but at any price I should hardly yield my rigid fibres to be regenerated by them; nor begin, in my grand climacteric, to squall in their new accents, or to stammer, in my second cradle, the elemental sounds of their barbarous metaphysics. *Si isti mihi largiantur ut repueriscam, et in eorum cunis vagiam, valde recusem!*

The imbecility of any part of the puerile and pedantic system, which they call a constitution, cannot be laid open without discovering the utter insufficiency and mischief of every other part with which it comes in contact, or that bears any the remotest relation to it. You cannot propose a remedy for the incompetence of the crown, without displaying the debility of the assembly. You cannot deliberate on the confusion of the army of the state, without disclosing the worse

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sailors in their turn override the orders of the municipalities.

From my heart I pity the plight of a respectable public servant like this war minister. In his old age he is obliged to pledge the assembly in their civic cups, and to enter with a hoary head into all the fantastic whims of these juvenile politicians. Such schemes are not like proposals coming from a man with fifty years' wear and tear among mankind.

They seem rather the kind of thing to be expected from those grand compounders in politics who shorten the road to their degrees in the state, and who have a certain inward fanatical assurance and illumination on all subjects. On the strength of it, one of their doctors has seen fit, with great applause and greater success, to warn the assembly not to listen to old men, or to anyone who prided himself on his experience. I suppose all the ministers of state must qualify, [313] and take this test, wholly abjuring the errors and heresies of experience and observation. Every man has his own taste.[58]

But I think that, if I could not attain the wisdom of age, I would at least keep something of its stiff and peremptory dignity. These gentlemen deal in regeneration; but at any price I should hardly yield my rigid fibers to be regenerated by them. Nor would I begin, in my grand climacteric, to squall in their new accents, or to stammer, in my second cradle, the elementary sounds of their barbarous metaphysics. *If they granted me the chance to become a boy again and wail in their cradle, I would firmly refuse!*[59]

The feebleness of any part of the puerile and pedantic system they call a constitution cannot be laid open without revealing the utter insufficiency and mischief of every other part it comes in contact with, or that bears even the remotest relation to it. You cannot propose a remedy for the incompetence of the crown without displaying the debility of the assembly. You cannot deliberate on the confusion in the army of the state without disclosing the worse disorders of the armed municipalit-

58 At the English universities a "grand compounder" was a man of means who paid higher fees for his degree. The "test" recalls the oaths of the Test Acts, which required office-holders to abjure certain doctrines.
59 The Latin is adapted from Cicero, *On Old Age* 83. The "grand climacteric" was the sixty-third year, thought a critical point in life, and Burke was then sixty-one.

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disorders of the armed municipalities. The military lays open the civil, and the civil betrays the military anarchy. I wish every body carefully to peruse the eloquent speech (such it is) of Mons. de la Tour du Pin.

He attributes the salvation of the municipalities to the good behaviour of some of the troops. These troops are to preserve the well-disposed part of those municipalities, which is confessed to be the weakest, from the pillage of the worst disposed, which is the strongest. But the municipalities affect a sovereignty, and [314] will command those troops which are necessary for their protection. Indeed they must command them or court them. The municipalities, by the necessity of their situation, and by the republican powers they have obtained, must, with relation to the military, be the masters, or the servants, or the confederates, or each successively; or they must make a jumble of all together, according to circumstances.

p. 314 What government is there to coerce the army but the municipality, or the municipality but the army? To preserve concord where authority is extinguished, at the hazard of all consequences, the assembly attempts to cure the distempers by the distempers themselves; and they hope to preserve themselves from a purely military democracy, by giving it a debauched interest in the municipal.

If the soldiers once come to mix for any time in the municipal clubs, cabals, and confederacies, an elective attraction will draw them to the lowest and most desperate part. With them will be their habits, affections, and sympathies. The military conspiracies, which are to be remedied by civic confederacies; the rebellious municipalities, which are to be rendered obedient by furnishing them with the means of seducing the very armies of the state that are to keep them in order; all these chimeras of a monstrous and portentous policy, must aggravate the confusions from which they have arisen. There must be blood.

The want of common judgment manifested in the construction of all their descriptions of forces, and in all their kinds of civil and judicial

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ies. The military lays open the civil anarchy, and the civil betrays the military. I wish everybody would carefully read the eloquent speech (for such it is) of M. de la Tour du Pin.

He attributes the salvation of the municipalities to the good conduct of some of the troops. These troops are to protect the well-disposed part of those municipalities, which is admitted to be the weakest, from pillage by the worst-disposed, which is the strongest. But the municipalities affect a sovereignty, and [314] will command the very troops they need for their protection. Indeed, they must either command them or court them. The municipalities, by the necessity of their situation and by the republican powers they have obtained, must stand toward the military as masters, or servants, or confederates, or each in turn; or they must make a jumble of all of these together, as circumstances dictate.

What government is there to coerce the army but the municipality, or the municipality but the army? To preserve concord where authority is extinguished, whatever the consequences, the assembly tries to cure the diseases by the diseases themselves; and they hope to save themselves from a purely military democracy by giving it a debauched interest in the municipal one.

If the soldiers once come to mix for any length of time in the municipal clubs, cabals, and confederacies, an elective attraction will draw them to the lowest and most desperate part. Their habits, affections, and sympathies will go with them. The military conspiracies that are to be remedied by civic confederacies; the rebellious municipalities that are to be made obedient by furnishing them with the means of seducing the very armies of the state that are to keep them in order—all these chimeras of a monstrous and portentous policy must aggravate the confusions from which they arose. There must be blood.[60]

The want of common judgment shown in the construction of all their kinds of forces, and of all their kinds of civil and judicial authority, will

60 "Elective attraction" is a term from the chemistry of the day (elective affinity): the tendency of a substance to combine with one thing in preference to another.

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authorities, will make it flow. Disorders may be quieted in one time and in one part. [315] They will break out in others; because the evil is radical and intrinsic. All these schemes of mixing mutinous soldiers with seditious citizens, must weaken still more and more the military connection of soldiers with their officers, as well as add military and mutinous audacity to turbulent artificers and peasants. To secure a real army, the officer should be first and last in the eye of the soldier; first and last in his attention, observance, and esteem.

p. 315 Officers it seems there are to be, whose chief qualification must be temper and patience. They are to manage their troops by electioneering arts. They must bear themselves as candidates not as commanders. But as by such means power may be occasionally in their hands, the authority by which they are to be nominated becomes of high importance.

What you may do finally, does not appear; nor is it of much moment, whilst the strange and contradictory relation between your army and all the parts of your republic, as well as the puzzled relation of those parts to each other and to the whole, remain as they are. You seem to have given the provisional nomination of the officers, in the first instance,

to the king, with a reserve of approbation by the National Assembly. Men who have an interest to pursue are extremely sagacious in discovering the true seat of power. They must soon perceive that those who can negative indefinitely, in reality appoint. The officers must therefore look to their intrigues in that assembly, as the sole certain road to promotion.

Still, however, by your new constitution they must begin their solicitation [316] at court. This double negotiation for military rank seems to me a contrivance as well adapted, as if it were studied for no other end, to promote faction in the assembly itself, relative to this vast military patronage; and then to poison the corps of officers with factions of a nature still more dangerous to the safety of government, upon any bottom on which it can be placed, and destructive in the end to the efficiency of the army itself.

p. 316 Those officers, who lose the promotions intended for them by the crown, must become of a faction

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make it flow. Disorders may be quieted at one time and in one place. [315] They will break out in others, because the evil is radical and intrinsic. All these schemes of mixing mutinous soldiers with seditious citizens must weaken more and more the military bond between soldiers and their officers, as well as add military and mutinous audacity to turbulent artisans and peasants. To secure a real army, the officer should be first and last in the soldier's eye; first and last in his attention, deference, and esteem.

There are to be officers, it seems, whose chief qualification must be temper and patience. They are to manage their troops by electioneering arts. They must carry themselves as candidates, not as commanders. But since by such means power may at times fall into their hands, the authority that is to nominate them becomes highly important.

What you may finally do is not clear; nor does it matter much, so long as the strange and contradictory relation between your army and all the parts of your republic, as well as the tangled relation of those parts to each other and to the whole, remain as they are. You seem to have given the provisional nomination of officers, in the first instance,

to the king, subject to approval by the National Assembly. Men with an interest to pursue are extremely shrewd at discovering the true seat of power. They must soon see that those who can veto indefinitely in reality appoint. The officers must therefore look to intrigue in that assembly as the only sure road to promotion.

Still, under your new constitution they must begin their solicitation [316] at court. This double negotiation for military rank seems to me a contrivance as well suited, as if it had been designed for no other end, to promote faction in the assembly itself over this vast military patronage; and then to poison the corps of officers with factions of a kind still more dangerous to the safety of government, on whatever foundation it may be placed, and destructive in the end to the efficiency of the army itself.

Those officers who lose the promotions the crown intended for them must join a faction opposed to

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opposite to that of the assembly which has rejected their claims, and must nourish discontents in the heart of the army against the ruling powers. Those officers, on the other hand, who, by carrying their point through an interest in the assembly, feel themselves to be at best only second in the good-will of the crown, though first in that of the assembly, must slight an authority which would not advance, and could not retard their promotion.

If to avoid these evils you will have no other rule for command or promotion than seniority, you will have an army of formality;

at the same time it will become more independent, and more of a military republic. Not they but the king is the machine. A king is not to be deposed by halves. If he is not every thing in the command of an army, he is nothing. What is the effect of a power placed nominally at the head of the army, who to that army is no object of gratitude, or of fear? Such a cypher is not fit for the administration of an object, of all things the most delicate, the supreme command of [317] military men.

p. 317 They must be constrained (and their inclinations lead them to what their necessities require) by a real, vigorous, effective, decided, personal authority. The authority of the assembly itself suffers by passing through such a debilitating channel as they have chosen. The army will not long look to an assembly acting through the organ of false shew, and palpable imposition. They will not seriously yield obedience to a prisoner. They will either despise a pageant, or they will pity a captive king. This relation of your army to the crown will, if I am not greatly mistaken, become a serious dilemma in your politics.

It is besides to be considered, whether an assembly like yours, even supposing that it was in possession of another sort of organ through which its orders were to pass, is fit for promoting the obedience and discipline of an army. It is known, that armies have hitherto yielded a very precarious and uncertain obedience to any senate, or popular authority; and they will least of all yield it to an assembly which is to have only a continuance of two years.

The officers must totally lose the characteristic disposition of military men, if they see with

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the assembly that rejected their claims, and must nourish discontent against the ruling powers in the heart of the army. Those officers, on the other hand, who carry their point through influence in the assembly, and feel themselves at best only second in the goodwill of the crown though first in that of the assembly, must slight an authority that would not advance their promotion and could not retard it.

If, to avoid these evils, you will have no rule for command or promotion other than seniority, you will have an army of formality;

at the same time it will become more independent, and more of a military republic. Not they but the king is the machine. A king is not to be deposed by halves. If he is not everything in the command of an army, he is nothing. What is the effect of a power placed nominally at the head of the army, who is to that army an object neither of gratitude nor of fear? Such a cipher is not fit to administer the most delicate of all things, the supreme command of [317] military men.

They must be held in check (and their inclinations lead them toward what their necessities require) by a real, vigorous, effective, decided, personal authority. The authority of the assembly itself suffers by passing through so debilitating a channel as the one they have chosen. The army will not long look to an assembly acting through an organ of false show and palpable imposture. They will not seriously obey a prisoner. They will either despise a pageant or pity a captive king. This relation of your army to the crown will, if I am not greatly mistaken, become a serious dilemma in your politics.

It must also be considered whether an assembly like yours, even supposing it possessed another sort of organ through which its orders were to pass, is fit to promote obedience and discipline in an army. It is well known that armies have so far yielded a very precarious and uncertain obedience to any senate or popular authority; and they will yield it least of all to an assembly that is to last only two years.

The officers must entirely lose the characteristic temper of military men if they look on with per-

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perfect submission and due admiration, the dominion of pleaders;

especially when they find, that they have a new court to pay to an endless succession of those pleaders, whose military policy, and the genius of whose command (if they should have any) must be as uncertain as their duration is transient. In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of an army will [318] remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself.

p. 318 Armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment in which that event shall happen, the person who really commands the army is your master; the master (that is little) of your king, the master of your assembly, the master of your whole republic.

How came the assembly by their present power over the army? Chiefly, to be sure, by debauching the soldiers from their officers. They have begun by a most terrible operation. They have touched the central point, about which the particles that compose armies are at repose. They have destroyed the principle of obedience in the great essential critical link between the officer and the soldier,

just where the chain of military subordination commences, and on which the whole of that system depends. The soldier is told, he is a citizen, and has the rights of man and citizen. The right of a man, he is told, is to be his own governor, and to be ruled only by those to whom he delegates that self-government.

It is very natural he should think, that he ought most of all to have his choice where he is to yield the greatest degree of obedience. He will therefore, in all probability, systematically do, what he does at present occasionally; that is, he will exercise at least a negative in the choice of his officers. At present the [319] officers are known at best to be only permissive, and on their good behaviour. In fact, there have been many instances in which they have been cashiered by their corps. Here is a second negative on the

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fect submission and due admiration at the dominion of pleaders;

especially when they find that they must pay court anew to an endless succession of those pleaders, whose military policy and genius for command (if they should have any) must be as uncertain as their tenure is brief. With one kind of authority weak and every kind fluctuating, the officers of an army will [318] remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of winning over the soldiery and possesses the true spirit of command, draws all eyes upon himself.

Armies will obey him for his own sake. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment that happens, the man who really commands the army is your master; the master (that is a small thing) of your king, the master of your assembly, the master of your whole republic.

How did the assembly come by its present power over the army? Chiefly, of course, by debauching the soldiers from their officers. They have begun with a most terrible operation. They have touched the central point around which the particles that compose armies are at rest. They have destroyed the principle of obedience in the great, essential, critical link between officer and soldier,

just where the chain of military subordination begins, and on which that whole system depends. The soldier is told that he is a citizen and has the rights of man and citizen. The right of a man, he is told, is to be his own governor, and to be ruled only by those to whom he delegates that self-government.

It is very natural for him to think that he ought most of all to have his choice where he is to yield the greatest degree of obedience. He will therefore, in all probability, do systematically what he now does occasionally; that is, he will exercise at least a veto in the choice of his officers. At present the [319] officers are known to hold their posts at best only on sufferance and during good behavior. In fact, there have been many instances of their being cashiered by their own corps. Here is a

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choice of the king; a negative as effectual at least as the other of the assembly.	second veto on the choice of the king—at least as effectual as the assembly's.
p. 319 The soldiers know already that it has been a question, not ill received in the national assembly, whether they ought not to have the direct choice of their officers, or some proportion of them? When such matters are in deliberation, it is no extravagant supposition that they will incline to the opinion most favourable to their pretensions. They will not bear to be deemed the army of an imprisoned king,	The soldiers already know that it has been raised as a question, and not ill received in the National Assembly, whether they ought not to have the direct choice of their officers, or of some proportion of them. When such matters are under deliberation, it is no extravagant supposition that they will lean toward the opinion most favorable to their claims. They will not bear to be thought the army of an imprisoned king,
whilst another army in the same country, with whom too they are to feast and confederate, is to be considered as the free army of a free constitution. They will cast their eyes on the other and more permanent army; I mean the municipal. That corps, they well know, does actually elect its own officers.	while another army in the same country, with which they are moreover to feast and confederate, is to be regarded as the free army of a free constitution. They will cast their eyes on that other and more permanent army—I mean the municipal one. That corps, they know well, does actually elect its own officers.[61]
They may not be able to discern the grounds of distinction on which they are not to elect a Marquis de la Fayette (or what is his new name) of their own? If this election of a commander in chief be a part of the rights of men, why not of theirs? They see elective justices of peace, elective judges, elective curates, elective bishops, elective municipalities, and elective commanders of the Parisian army.—	They may well be unable to discern the grounds of distinction on which they are not to elect a Marquis de la Fayette (or whatever his new name is) of their own. If this election of a commander in chief is part of the rights of men, why not of theirs? They see elective justices of the peace, elective judges, elective curates, elective bishops, elective municipalities, and elective commanders of the Parisian army.[62]
Why should they alone be excluded? Are the brave troops of France the only men in that nation who are not the fit judges of military merit, and of the qualifications necessary for a commander in chief? Are they paid by the state, [320] and do they therefore lose the rights of men?	Why should they alone be excluded? Are the brave troops of France the only men in that nation who are not fit judges of military merit and of the qualifications needed in a commander in chief? Are they paid by the state, [320] and do they therefore lose the rights of men?
p. 320 They are a part of that nation themselves, and contribute to that pay. And is not the king, is not the national assembly, and are not all who elect the national assembly, likewise paid? Instead of seeing all these forfeit their rights by their receiving a salary, they perceive that in all these cases a salary is given for the exercise of those rights. All your resolutions, all your proceedings, all your debates, all the works of your doctors in religion and politics, have industriously been put into their hands; and you expect that they will	They are themselves a part of that nation, and contribute to that pay. And is not the king paid, is not the National Assembly, and are not all who elect the National Assembly? Instead of seeing all these forfeit their rights by receiving a salary, they perceive that in every one of these cases a salary is given for the exercise of those rights. All your resolutions, all your proceedings, all your debates, all the works of your doctors in religion and politics, have been diligently put into their hands; and you expect them to apply to their own case just as

61 The "municipal" army is the National Guard, the citizen militia formed in 1789, which elected its own officers.
62 Lafayette commanded the Paris National Guard. The Assembly abolished titles of nobility in June 1790, so the marquis was officially reduced to his family name, Motier.

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apply to their own case just as much of your doctrines and examples as suits your pleasure.

Every thing depends upon the army in such a government as yours; for you have industriously destroyed all the opinions, and prejudices, and, as far as in you lay, all the instincts which support government. Therefore the moment any difference arises between your national assembly and any part of the nation, you must have recourse to force. Nothing else is left to you; or rather you have left nothing else to yourselves. You see by the report of your war minister, that the distribution of the army is in a great measure made with a view of internal coercion[4].

You must rule by an army; and you have infused into that army by which you rule, as well as into the whole body of the nation, principles which after a time must disable you in the use you resolve to make of it. [321] The king is to call out troops to act against his people, when the world has been told, and the assertion is still ringing in our ears, that troops ought not to fire on citizens. The colonies assert to themselves an independent constitution and a free trade. They must be constrained by troops.

p. 321 In what chapter of your code of the rights of men are they able to read, that it is a part of the rights of men to have their commerce monopolized and restrained for the benefit of others. As the colonists rise on you, the *[enslaved Africans]* rise on them. Troops again—Massacre, torture, hanging! These are your rights of men! These are the fruits of metaphysic declarations wantonly made, and shamefully retracted! It was but the other day that the farmers of land in one of your provinces refused to pay some sorts of rents to the lord of the soil.

In consequence of this you decree, that the country people shall pay all rents and dues, except those which as grievances you have abolished; and if they refuse, then you order the king to march troops against them. You lay down metaphysic propositions which infer universal consequences, and then you attempt to limit logic by despotism.

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much of your doctrines and examples as suits your pleasure.

Everything depends on the army in a government such as yours; for you have diligently destroyed all the opinions and prejudices, and, as far as lay in your power, all the instincts, that support government. Therefore, the moment any difference arises between your National Assembly and any part of the nation, you must resort to force. Nothing else is left to you; or rather, you have left nothing else to yourselves. You see from the report of your war minister that the army is distributed largely with a view to internal coercion[4].

You must rule by an army; and you have instilled into that army by which you rule, as into the whole body of the nation, principles that after a time must disable you from the use you resolve to make of it. [321] The king is to call out troops to act against his people, when the world has been told—and the assertion is still ringing in our ears—that troops ought not to fire on citizens. The colonies claim for themselves an independent constitution and free trade. They must be coerced by troops.[63]

In what chapter of your code of the rights of men can they read that it is part of the rights of men to have their commerce monopolized and restricted for the benefit of others? As the colonists rise against you, the enslaved Africans rise against them. Troops again—massacre, torture, hanging! These are your rights of men! These are the fruits of metaphysical declarations wantonly made and shamefully retracted! Only the other day the farmers of land in one of your provinces refused to pay certain kinds of rent to the lord of the soil.[64]

In consequence you decree that the country people shall pay all rents and dues except those you have abolished as grievances; and if they refuse, you order the king to march troops against them. You lay down metaphysical propositions that carry universal consequences, and then you try to limit logic by despotism.

63 The French Caribbean colonies, above all Saint-Domingue (Haiti), where colonial assemblies in 1790 claimed self-government and freedom from the trade monopoly of the mother country.
64 Burke refers to the unrest in the French Caribbean in 1790; the great slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue, which began the Haitian Revolution, broke out in August 1791.

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The leaders of the present system tell them of their rights, as men, to take fortresses, to murder guards, to seize on kings without the least appearance of authority even from the assembly, whilst, as the sovereign legislative body, that assembly was sitting in the name of the nation—and yet these leaders presume to order out the troops, which have acted in these very disorders, to coerce those who shall judge on the [322] principles, and follow the examples, which have been guarantied by their own approbation.

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p. 322 The leaders teach the people to abhor and reject all feodality as the barbarism of tyranny, and they tell them afterwards how much of that barbarous tyranny they are to bear with patience. As they are prodigal of light with regard to grievances, so the people find them sparing in the extreme with regard to redress. They know that not only certain quit-rents and personal duties, which you have permitted them to redeem (but have furnished no money for the redemption) are as nothing to those burthens for which you have made no provision at all.

They know, that almost the whole system of landed property in its origin is feudal; that it is the distribution of the possessions of the original proprietors, made by a barbarous conqueror to his barbarous instruments; and that the most grievous effects of the conquest are the land rents of every kind, as without question they are.

The peasants, in all probability, are the descendants of these antient proprietors, Romans or Gauls. But if they fail, in any degree, in the titles which they make on the principles of antiquaries and lawyers, they retreat into the citadel of the rights of men. There they find that men are equal; and the earth, the kind and equal mother of all, ought not to be monopolized to

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The leaders of the present system tell them of their rights, as men, to take fortresses, to murder guards, to seize kings without the slightest appearance of authority even from the assembly, while that assembly, as the sovereign legislative body, was sitting in the name of the nation—and yet these leaders presume to order out the troops that took part in these very disorders, to coerce those who shall judge on the [322] principles, and follow the examples, that have been guaranteed by their own approval.

The leaders teach the people to abhor and reject all feudalism as the barbarism of tyranny, and then they tell them how much of that barbarous tyranny they are to bear with patience. They are lavish with light about grievances, and the people find them sparing in the extreme about redress. The people know that certain quit-rents and personal duties, which you have permitted them to redeem (but have furnished no money for the redemption), are as nothing compared with those burdens for which you have made no provision at all.[67]

They know that almost the whole system of landed property is feudal in its origin; that it is the distribution of the possessions of the original proprietors, made by a barbarous conqueror to his barbarous instruments; and that the most grievous effects of the conquest are the land rents of every kind, as without question they are.

The peasants are in all probability the descendants of those ancient proprietors, Romans or Gauls. But if they fall short at all in the titles they make out on the principles of antiquaries and lawyers, they retreat into the citadel of the rights of men. There they find that men are equal, and that the earth, the kind and equal mother of all, ought not to be monopolized to feed the pride and lux-

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[4] Courier François, 30 July, 1790. Assemblée Nationale, Numero 210.

[4] Courier François, July 30, 1790. Assemblée Nationale, No. 210.[65]

65 The Courier François was a Paris newspaper that reported the proceedings of the National Assembly.

67 Quit-rents: small fixed rents paid in place of feudal services.

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foster the pride and luxury of any men, who by nature are no better than themselves, and who, if they do not labour for their bread, are worse.

They find, that by the laws of nature the occupant and subduer of the soil is the true proprietor; that there [323] is no prescription against nature; and that the agreements (where any there are) which have been made with their landlords, during the time of slavery, are only the effect of duresse and force; and that when the people re-entered into the rights of men, those agreements were made as void as every thing else which had been settled under the prevalence of the old feudal and aristocratic tyranny. They will tell you that they see no difference between an idler with a hat and a national cockade, and an idler in a cowl or in a rochet.

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If you ground the title to rents on succession and prescription, they tell you, from the speech of Mr. *Camus,* published by the national assembly for their information, that things ill begun cannot avail themselves of prescription; that the title of these lords was vicious in its origin; and that force is at least as bad as fraud.

As to the title by succession, they will tell you, that the succession of those who have cultivated the soil is the true pedigree of property, and not rotten parchments and silly substitutions; that the lords have enjoyed their usurpation too long; and that if they allow to these lay monks any charitable pension, they ought to be thankful to the bounty of the true proprietor, who is so generous towards a false claimant to his goods.

When the peasants give you back that coin of sophistic reason, on which you have set your image and superscription, you cry it down as base money, and tell them you will pay for the future with French guards, and dragoons, and hussars. You hold up, to chastise them, the second-hand authority of a king, [324] who is only the instrument of destroying, without any power of protecting either the people or his own person. Through him it seems you will make yourselves obeyed. They answer, You have taught us that there are no gentlemen; and which of your principles teach us to bow to kings whom we have not elected?

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ury of any men who by nature are no better than themselves, and who, if they do not labor for their bread, are worse.

They find that by the laws of nature the occupier and subduer of the soil is the true proprietor; that there [323] is no prescription against nature; that the agreements (where there are any) made with their landlords during the time of slavery are only the effect of duress and force; and that when the people re-entered into the rights of men, those agreements were made as void as everything else that had been settled while the old feudal and aristocratic tyranny prevailed. They will tell you that they see no difference between an idler with a hat and a national cockade and an idler in a cowl or in a rochet.[68]

If you ground the title to rents on succession and prescription, they answer you from the speech of Mr. *Camus,* published by the National Assembly for their instruction: that things badly begun cannot claim the benefit of prescription; that the title of these lords was vicious in its origin; and that force is at least as bad as fraud.

As to title by succession, they will tell you that the succession of those who have cultivated the soil is the true pedigree of property, not rotten parchments and silly substitutions; that the lords have enjoyed their usurpation too long; and that if the peasants allow these lay monks any charitable pension, they ought to be thankful for the bounty of the true proprietor, who is so generous toward a false claimant to his goods.[69]

When the peasants hand you back that coin of sophistical reason on which you have stamped your own image and superscription, you cry it down as base money, and tell them that from now on you will pay in French guards, dragoons, and hussars. To chastise them you hold up the second-hand authority of a king [324] who is only an instrument of destruction, without any power to protect either the people or his own person. Through him, it seems, you will make yourselves obeyed. They answer: You have taught us that there are no gentlemen; and which of your principles teaches us to bow to kings whom we have not elected?[70]

68 The national cockade was the revolutionary tricolor badge; a cowl is a monk's hood, a rochet a bishop's vestment.
69 Substitutions: the French legal device for entailing an estate on a fixed line of heirs.

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p. 324 We know, without your teaching, that lands were given for the support of feudal dignities, feudal titles, and feudal offices. When you took down the cause as a grievance, why should the more grievous effect remain? As there are now no hereditary honours, and no distinguished families, why are we taxed to maintain what you tell us ought not to exist? You have sent down our old aristocratic landlords in no other character, and with no other title, but that of exactors under your authority. Have you endeavoured to make these your rent-gatherers respectable to us? No.	We know, without your teaching, that lands were given for the support of feudal dignities, feudal titles, and feudal offices. When you took away the cause as a grievance, why should the more grievous effect remain? Since there are now no hereditary honors and no distinguished families, why are we taxed to maintain what you tell us ought not to exist? You have sent our old aristocratic landlords back to us in no other character, and with no other title, than that of exactors under your authority. Have you tried to make these rent-collectors of yours respectable to us? No.
You have sent them to us with their arms reversed, their shields broken, their impresses defaced; and so displumed, degraded, and metamorphosed, such unfeathered two-legged things, that we no longer know them. They are strangers to us. They do not even go by the names of our ancient lords. Physically they may be the same men; though we are not quite sure of that, on your new philosophic doctrines of personal identity. In all other respects they are totally changed. We do not see why we have not as good a right to refuse them their rents, as you have to abrogate all their honours, titles, and distinctions.	You have sent them to us with their arms reversed, their shields broken, their devices defaced; so stripped of their plumes, so degraded and transformed, such unfeathered two-legged things, that we no longer know them. They are strangers to us. They do not even go by the names of our ancient lords. Physically they may be the same men—though on your new philosophical doctrines of personal identity we are not quite sure even of that. In every other respect they are totally changed. We do not see why we have not as good a right to refuse them their rents as you have to abolish all their honors, titles, and distinctions.[71]
This we have never commissioned you to do; and it is one instance, among many indeed, of your assumption of undelegated power. [325] We see the burghers of Paris, through their clubs, their mobs, and their national guards, directing you at their pleasure, and giving that as law to you, which, under your authority, is transmitted as law to us. Through you, these burghers dispose of the lives and fortunes of us all.	This we never commissioned you to do; and it is one instance, among many indeed, of your assumption of undelegated power. [325] We see the burghers of Paris, through their clubs, their mobs, and their national guards, directing you as they please, and giving you as law what is passed on to us as law under your authority. Through you, these burghers dispose of the lives and fortunes of us all.
p. 325 Why should not you attend as much to the desires of the laborious husbandman with regard to our rent, by which we are affected in the most serious manner, as you do to the demands of these insolent burghers, relative to distinctions and titles of honour, by which neither they nor we are affected at all? But we find you pay more regard to their fancies than to our necessities. Is it among the rights of man to pay tribute to his equals? Before this measure of yours, we might have thought we were not perfectly equal.	Why should you not attend as much to the wishes of the hardworking farmer about our rent, which affects us in the most serious way, as you do to the demands of these insolent burghers about distinctions and titles of honor, which affect neither them nor us at all? But we find you pay more regard to their fancies than to our necessities. Is it among the rights of man to pay tribute to his equals? Before this measure of yours, we might have thought we were not perfectly equal.

70 "Image and superscription": an echo of Christ's words on the tribute coin (Matthew 22:20).
71 "Unfeathered two-legged things" recalls the old definition of man, attributed to Plato, as a featherless biped.

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We might have entertained some old, habitual, unmeaning prepossession in favour of those landlords; but we cannot conceive with what other view than that of destroying all respect to them, you could have made the law that degrades them. You have forbidden us to treat them with any of the old formalities of respect, and now you send troops to sabre and to bayonet us into a submission to fear and force, which you did not suffer us to yield to the mild authority of opinion.

The ground of some of these arguments is horrid and ridiculous to all rational ears; but to the politicians of metaphysics who have opened schools for sophistry, and made establishments for anarchy, it is solid and conclusive. It is obvious, that on a mere consideration of [326] the right, the leaders in the assembly would not in the least have scrupled to abrogate the rents along with the titles and family ensigns. It would be only to follow up the principle of their reasonings, and to complete the analogy of their conduct. But they had newly possessed themselves of a great body of landed property by confiscation.

p. 326 They had this commodity at market; and the market would have been wholly destroyed, if they were to permit the husbandmen to riot in the speculations with which they so freely intoxicated themselves. The only security which property enjoys in any one of its descriptions, is from the interests of their rapacity with regard to some other. They have left nothing but their own arbitrary pleasure to determine what property is to be protected and what subverted. Neither have they left any principle by which any of their municipalities can be bound to obedience; or even conscientiously obliged not to separate from the whole, to become independent, or to connect itself with some other state.

The people of Lyons, it seems, have refused lately to pay taxes. Why should they not? What lawful authority is there left to exact them? The king imposed some of them. The old states, methodised by orders, settled the more ancient. They may say to the assembly, Who are you, that are not our kings, nor the states we have elected, nor sit on the principles on which we have elected you?

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We might have kept some old, habitual, meaningless partiality for those landlords; but we cannot imagine with what purpose, other than destroying all respect for them, you could have made the law that degrades them. You have forbidden us to treat them with any of the old forms of respect, and now you send troops to saber and bayonet us into a submission to fear and force, which you would not let us yield to the mild authority of opinion.

The ground of some of these arguments is horrid and ridiculous to all rational ears; but to the politicians of metaphysics, who have opened schools for sophistry and founded establishments for anarchy, it is solid and conclusive. It is obvious that, on a mere consideration of [326] the right, the leaders in the Assembly would not have had the slightest scruple about abolishing the rents along with the titles and family insignia. It would only be following through the principle of their reasoning and completing the analogy of their conduct. But they had just taken possession of a great body of landed property by confiscation.

They had this commodity on the market; and the market would have been wholly destroyed if they let the farmers run riot in the speculations with which they had so freely intoxicated themselves. The only security that property of any one kind enjoys comes from the interest their rapacity has in some other kind. They have left nothing but their own arbitrary pleasure to decide what property is to be protected and what overthrown. Nor have they left any principle by which any of their municipalities can be bound to obedience, or even obliged in conscience not to separate from the whole, become independent, or attach itself to some other state.

The people of Lyon, it seems, have lately refused to pay taxes. Why should they not? What lawful authority is left to exact them? The king imposed some of them. The old states, organized by orders, settled the more ancient ones. They may say to the Assembly: Who are you, who are not our kings, nor the states we elected, nor sitting on the principles on which we elected you?

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And who are we, that when we see the gabelles which you have ordered to be paid, wholly shaken off, when we see the act of disobedience afterwards ratified by yourselves, who are we, that we are [327] not to judge what taxes we ought or ought not to pay, and who are not to avail ourselves of the same powers, the validity of which you have approved in others? To this the answer is, We will send troops. The last reason of kings, is always the first with your assembly. This military aid may serve for a time, whilst the impression of the increase of pay remains, and the vanity of being umpires in all disputes is flattered.

p. 327 But this weapon will snap short, unfaithful to the hand that employs it. The assembly keep a school where, systematically, and with unremitting perseverance, they teach principles, and form regulations destructive to all spirit of subordination, civil and military — and then they expect that they shall hold in obedience an anarchic people by an anarchic army.

The municipal army, which, according to their new policy, is to balance this national army, if considered in itself only, is of a constitution much more simple, and in every respect less exceptionable. It is a mere democratic body, unconnected with the crown or the kingdom; armed, and trained, and officered at the pleasure of the districts to which the corps severally belong; and the personal service of the individuals, who compose, or the fine in lieu of personal service, are directed by the same authority[5]. Nothing is more uniform.

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And who are we, that when we see the gabelles you ordered to be paid wholly thrown off, and that act of disobedience afterward ratified by yourselves—who are we, that we are [327] not to judge what taxes we ought or ought not to pay, and are not to make use of the same powers whose validity you have approved in others? To this the answer is: We will send troops. The last argument of kings is always the first with your Assembly. This military aid may serve for a time, while the impression of their raise in pay lasts and their vanity at being umpires in every dispute is flattered.[72]

But this weapon will snap short, faithless to the hand that wields it. The Assembly keeps a school where, systematically and with unremitting perseverance, they teach principles and frame regulations destructive of all spirit of subordination, civil and military—and then they expect to hold an anarchic people in obedience by an anarchic army.

The municipal army, which under their new policy is to balance this national army, is, considered in itself alone, of a much simpler constitution and in every respect less objectionable. It is a purely democratic body, unconnected with the crown or the kingdom; armed, trained, and officered at the pleasure of the districts to which its several corps belong; and the personal service of the individuals who compose it, or the fine paid in lieu of personal service, is directed by the same authority[5]. Nothing is more uniform.

72 The gabelle was the hated salt tax. “The last argument of kings” translates *ultima ratio regum*, the motto Louis XIV had cast on his cannon.

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If, however, considered in any relation to the crown, to [328] the national assembly, to the public tribunals, or to the other army, or considered in a view to any coherence or connection between its parts, it seems a monster, and can hardly fail to terminate its perplexed movements in some great national calamity. It is a worse preservative of a general constitution, than the systasis of Crete, or the confederation of Poland, or any other ill-devised corrective which has yet been imagined, in the necessities produced by an ill-constructed system of government. 74	If, however, it is considered in any relation to the crown, to [328] the National Assembly, to the public courts, or to the other army, or with a view to any coherence or connection among its parts, it looks like a monster, and can hardly fail to end its confused movements in some great national calamity. It is a worse safeguard of a general constitution than the systasis of Crete, or the confederation of Poland, or any other ill-devised corrective yet imagined in the necessities produced by a badly constructed system of government.[73]

THE FINANCES

The Assembly has lost a third of the revenue and relies on gifts, confiscation, and ever more assignats.

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p. 328 Having concluded my few remarks on the constitution of the supreme power, the executive, the judicature, the military, and on the reciprocal relation of all these establishments, I shall say something of the ability shewed by your legislators with regard to the revenue.	Having concluded my few remarks on the constitution of the supreme power, the executive, the judiciary, and the military, and on the mutual relation of all these establishments, I shall say something about the ability your legislators have shown with regard to the revenue.
In their proceedings relative to this object, if possible, still fewer traces appear of political judgment or financial resource. When the states met, it seemed to be the great object to improve the system of revenue, to enlarge its collection, to cleanse it of oppression and vexation, and to establish it on the most solid footing. Great were the expectations entertained on that head throughout Europe. It was by this grand arrangement that France was to stand or fall; and this became, in my opinion, very properly, the test by which the skill and patriotism of those who ruled in that assembly would be tried. The revenue of the state is the state.	In their proceedings on this subject, still fewer traces, if possible, appear of political judgment or financial resource. When the states met, the great object seemed to be to improve the system of revenue, to widen its collection, to cleanse it of oppression and vexation, and to set it on the most solid footing. Great were the expectations on that score throughout Europe. It was by this grand arrangement that France was to stand or fall; and this became, very properly in my opinion, the test by which the skill and patriotism of those who ruled in that assembly would be tried. The revenue of the state is the state.
p. 329 In effect all depends upon it, whether for support or for reformation. The dignity of every	In effect everything depends on it, whether for support or for reform. The dignity of every occu-

73 Aristotle (*Politics* II) describes the Cretan *systasis*, factions combining to depose the magistrates; Polish "confederations" were armed leagues of nobles lawfully formed to resist the king.
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[5] I see by Mr. Necker's account, that the national guards of Paris have received, over and above the money levied within their own city, about 145,000 *l.* sterling out of the public treasure. Whether this be an actual payment for the nine months of their existence, or an estimate of their yearly charge, I do not clearly perceive. It is of no great importance, as certainly they may take whatever they please.	[5] I see from Mr. Necker's account that the national guards of Paris have received, over and above the money raised within their own city, about £145,000 sterling from the public treasury. Whether this is an actual payment for the nine months of their existence, or an estimate of their yearly cost, I cannot clearly make out. It is of no great importance, since they can certainly take whatever they please.

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occupation wholly depends upon the quantity and the kind of virtue that may be exerted in it. As all great qualities of the mind which operate in public, and are not merely suffering and passive, require force for their display, I had almost said for their unequivocal existence, the revenue, which is the spring of all power, becomes in its administration the sphere of every active virtue. Public virtue, being of a nature magnificent and splendid, instituted for great things, and conversant about great concerns, requires abundant scope and room, and cannot spread and grow under confinement, and in circumstances straitened, narrow, and sordid.

Through the revenue alone the body politic can act in its true genius and character, and therefore it will display just as much of its collective virtue, and as much of that virtue which may characterise those who move it, and are, as it were, its life and guiding principle, as it is possessed of a just revenue.

For from hence, not only magnanimity, and liberality, and beneficence, and fortitude, and providence, and the tutelary protection of all good arts, derive their food, and the growth of their organs, but continence, and self-denial, and labour, and vigilance, and frugality, and whatever else there is in which the mind shews itself above the appetite, are no where more in their proper element than in the provision and distribution of the public wealth.

It is therefore not without reason that the science of speculative and practical finance, which must take to its aid so many auxiliary branches of knowledge, stands high in the estimation not only of [330] the ordinary sort, but of the wisest and best men; and as this science has grown with the progress of its object, the prosperity and improvement of nations has generally encreased with the encrease of their revenues;

and they will both continue to grow and flourish, as long as the balance between what is left to strengthen the efforts of individuals, and what is collected for the common efforts of the state, bear to each other a due reciprocal proportion, and are kept in a close correspondence and communication.

p. 330 And perhaps it may be owing to the greatness of revenues, and to the urgency of state necessities, that old abuses in the constitution of finances are

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pation depends wholly on the quantity and the kind of virtue that can be exercised in it. All the great qualities of mind that operate in public, and are not merely suffering and passive, require force for their display—I had almost said for their unequivocal existence; and so the revenue, which is the spring of all power, becomes in its administration the sphere of every active virtue. Public virtue, being by nature magnificent and splendid, instituted for great things and occupied with great concerns, needs abundant scope and room; it cannot spread and grow under confinement, in circumstances straitened, narrow, and sordid.

Only through the revenue can the body politic act in its true genius and character; and so it will display just as much of its collective virtue, and as much of the virtue that may characterize those who move it and are, as it were, its life and guiding principle, as it possesses of a just revenue.

For from this source not only magnanimity, liberality, beneficence, fortitude, foresight, and the guardian protection of all the good arts draw their food and the growth of their organs; but continence, self-denial, labor, vigilance, frugality, and whatever else shows the mind rising above the appetite, are nowhere more in their proper element than in the raising and distribution of the public wealth.

It is not without reason, then, that the science of finance, speculative and practical, which must call to its aid so many auxiliary branches of knowledge, stands high in the esteem not only of [330] ordinary people but of the wisest and best men; and as this science has grown with the progress of its object, the prosperity and improvement of nations have generally increased with the increase of their revenues;

and both will continue to grow and flourish as long as what is left to strengthen the efforts of individuals and what is collected for the common efforts of the state stand in a due proportion to each other, and are kept in close correspondence and communication.

And perhaps it is owing to the greatness of revenues, and to the urgency of the state's necessities,

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discovered, and their true nature and rational theory comes to be more perfectly understood; insomuch, that a smaller revenue might have been more distressing in one period than a far greater is found to be in another; the proportionate wealth even remaining the same. In this state of things, the French assembly found something in their revenues to preserve, to secure, and wisely to administer, as well as to abrogate and alter.

Though their proud assumption might justify the severest tests, yet in trying their abilities on their financial proceedings, I would only consider what is the plain obvious duty of a common finance minister, and try them upon that, and not upon models of ideal perfection.

The objects of a financier are, then, to secure an ample revenue; to impose it with judgment and equality; to employ it oeconomically; and when necessity obliges him to make use of credit, to secure its foundations in that instance, and for ever, [331] by the clearness and candour of his proceedings, the exactness of his calculations, and the solidity of his funds. On these heads we may take a short and distinct view of the merits and abilities of those in the national assembly, who have taken to themselves the management of this arduous concern. Far from any encrease of revenue in their hands, I find, by a report of M.

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Vernier, from the committee of finances, of the second of August last, that the amount of the national revenue, as compared with its produce before the revolution, was diminished by the sum of two hundred millions, or *eight millions sterling* of the annual income, considerably more than one third of the whole!

If this be the result of great ability, never surely was ability displayed in a more distinguished manner, or with so powerful an effect. No common folly, no vulgar incapacity, no ordinary official negligence, even no official crime, no corruption, no peculation, hardly any direct hostility which we have seen in the modern world, could in so short a time have made so complete an overthrow of the finances, and with

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that old abuses in the constitution of finances are discovered, and that their true nature and rational theory come to be more perfectly understood; so much so that a smaller revenue might have been more distressing in one period than a far greater one proves to be in another, even with proportionate wealth remaining the same. In this state of things, the French Assembly found something in their revenues to preserve, to secure, and to administer wisely, as well as something to abolish and alter.

Though their proud pretensions might justify the severest tests, in judging their abilities by their financial proceedings I would consider only the plain, obvious duty of an ordinary finance minister, and test them by that, not by models of ideal perfection.

A financier's objects, then, are these: to secure an ample revenue; to impose it with judgment and equality; to spend it economically; and, when necessity forces him to use credit, to secure its foundations in that instance and forever, [331] by the clearness and candor of his proceedings, the exactness of his calculations, and the solidity of his funds. Under these heads we may take a short and distinct look at the merits and abilities of those in the National Assembly who have taken on themselves the management of this arduous business. Far from any increase of revenue in their hands, I find, from a report by M.

Vernier of the finance committee, dated the second of August last, that the national revenue, compared with what it yielded before the revolution, had fallen by two hundred million, or *eight million sterling*, of annual income: considerably more than a third of the whole![75]

If this is the result of great ability, surely ability was never displayed in a more distinguished manner, or with so powerful an effect. No common folly, no vulgar incapacity, no ordinary official negligence, not even official crime, no corruption, no embezzlement, hardly any open hostility we have seen in the modern world, could in so short a time have so completely overthrown the finances, and with them the strength, of a great kingdom.—

75 Théodore Vernier, a deputy to the National Assembly who reported on the state of the finances in August 1790.

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them, of the strength of a great kingdom.—*Cedò quî vestram rempublicam tantem amisistis tam cito?*

The sophisters and declaimers, as soon as the assembly met, began with decrying the ancient constitution of the revenue in many of its most essential branches, such as the public monopoly of salt. They charged it, as truly as unwisely, with being ill-contrived, oppressive, and partial. This representation they were not satisfied to make use of in speeches preliminary to some [332] plan of reform;

they declared it in a solemn resolution or public sentence, as it were judicially, passed upon it; and this they dispersed throughout the nation. At the time they passed the decree, with the same gravity they ordered this same absurd, oppressive, and partial tax to be paid, until they could find a revenue to replace it. The consequence was inevitable.

p. 332 The provinces which had been always exempted from this salt monopoly, some of whom were charged with other contributions, perhaps equivalent, were totally disinclined to bear any part of the burthen, which by an equal distribution was to redeem the others. As to the assembly, occupied as it was with the declaration and violation of the rights of men, and with their arrangements for general confusion, it had neither leisure nor capacity to contrive, nor authority to enforce any plan of any kind relative to the replacing the tax or equalizing it, or compensating the provinces, or for conducting their minds to any scheme of accommodation with the other districts which were to be relieved.

The people of the salt provinces, impatient under taxes damned by the authority which had directed their payment, very soon found their patience exhausted. They thought themselves as skilful in demolishing as the assembly could be. They relieved themselves by throwing off the whole burthen. Animated by this example, each district, or part of a district, judging of its own grievance by its own feeling, and of its remedy by its own opinion, did as it pleased with other taxes.

p. 333 We are next to see how they have conducted themselves in contriving equal impositions,

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Tell me, how did you lose so great a state of yours so quickly?[76]

As soon as the assembly met, the sophists and declaimers began by decrying the ancient constitution of the revenue in many of its most essential branches, such as the public monopoly of salt. They charged it, truly but unwisely, with being ill-contrived, oppressive, and partial. They were not content to use this charge in speeches leading up to some [332] plan of reform;

they declared it in a solemn resolution, a public sentence passed on the tax as if by a court, and they circulated it throughout the nation. In the same decree, and with the same gravity, they ordered this very absurd, oppressive, and partial tax to be paid until they could find a revenue to replace it. The consequence was inevitable.

The provinces that had always been exempt from the salt monopoly, some of which paid other contributions, perhaps equivalent, were wholly unwilling to bear any part of the burden that an equal distribution would lift from the others. As for the assembly, busy as it was with declaring and violating the rights of men, and with its arrangements for general confusion, it had neither the leisure nor the capacity to devise, nor the authority to enforce, any plan of any kind for replacing the tax or equalizing it, or compensating the provinces, or bringing them round to some accommodation with the other districts that were to be relieved.

The people of the salt provinces, chafing under taxes condemned by the very authority that ordered them paid, soon found their patience exhausted. They thought themselves as skillful at demolishing as the assembly could be. They relieved themselves by throwing off the whole burden. Encouraged by this example, each district, or part of a district, judging its own grievance by its own feeling and its remedy by its own opinion, did as it pleased with the other taxes.

We are next to see how they have managed in devising equal taxes, proportioned to the means of

76 A line of the Roman poet Naevius, quoted in Cicero, *On Old Age* 20.

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proportioned to the means of the citizens, and the least likely to lean heavy on the active capital employed in the generation of that private wealth, from whence the public fortune must be derived. By suffering the several districts, and several of the individuals in each district,

to judge of what part of the old revenue they might withhold, instead of better principles of equality, a new inequality was introduced of the most oppressive kind. Payments were regulated by dispositions. The parts of the kingdom which were the most submissive, the most orderly, or the most affectionate to the commonwealth, bore the whole burthen of the state.

Nothing turns out to be so oppressive and unjust as a feeble government. To fill up all the deficiencies in the old impositions, and the new deficiencies of every kind which were to be expected, what remained to a state without authority? The national assembly called for a voluntary benevolence; for a fourth part of the income of all the citizens, to be estimated on the honour of those who were to pay. They obtained something more than could be rationally calculated, but what was, far indeed, from answerable to their real necessities, and much less to their fond expectations.

Rational people could have hoped for little from this their tax in the disguise of a benevolence; a tax, weak, ineffective, and unequal; a tax by which luxury, avarice, and selfishness were screened, and the load thrown upon productive capital, upon integrity, generosity, and public spirit—a tax [334] of regulation upon virtue. At length the mask is thrown off, and they are now trying means (with little success) of exacting their benevolence by force.

p. 334 This benevolence, the ricketty offspring of weakness, was to be supported by another resource, the twin brother of the same prolific imbecility. The patriotic donations were to make good the failure of the patriotic contribution. John Doe was to become security for Richard Roe. By this scheme they took things of much price from the giver, comparatively of small value to the receiver; they ruined several trades; they pillaged the crown of its ornaments, the churches

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the citizens and least likely to weigh heavily on the active capital employed in generating the private wealth from which the public fortune must be drawn. By allowing the several districts, and several individuals in each district,

to decide which part of the old revenue they might withhold, they introduced, in place of better principles of equality, a new inequality of the most oppressive kind. Payment depended on inclination. The parts of the kingdom that were most submissive, most orderly, or most attached to the commonwealth bore the whole burden of the state.

Nothing turns out to be so oppressive and unjust as a feeble government. To make up all the shortfalls in the old taxes, and the new shortfalls of every kind that were to be expected, what was left to a state without authority? The National Assembly called for a voluntary benevolence: a fourth part of every citizen's income, to be assessed on the honor of those who were to pay. They got something more than could rationally have been reckoned on, but what was very far indeed from meeting their real needs, and still further from their fond expectations.[77]

Rational people could have hoped for little from this tax of theirs disguised as a benevolence: a tax weak, ineffective, and unequal; a tax that screened luxury, avarice, and selfishness, and threw the load on productive capital, on integrity, generosity, and public spirit—a tax [334] levied by rule upon virtue. At last the mask is thrown off, and they are now trying (with little success) to exact their benevolence by force.

This benevolence, the rickety offspring of weakness, was to be propped up by another resource, the twin brother of the same prolific imbecility. The patriotic donations were to make good the failure of the patriotic contribution. John Doe was to stand surety for Richard Roe. By this scheme they took things of great price from the giver that were of comparatively little value to the receiver; they ruined several trades; they stripped the

77 A "benevolence" was a supposedly voluntary gift to the sovereign, in practice a disguised tax. This was the *contribution patriotique* of October 1789.

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of their plate, and the people of their personal decorations. The invention of these juvenile pretenders to liberty, was in reality nothing more than a servile imitation of one of the poorest resources of doting despotism.

They took an old huge full-bottomed perriwig out of the wardrobe of the antiquated frippery of Louis XIV. to cover the premature baldness of the national assembly. They produced this old-fashioned formal folly, though it had been so abundantly exposed in the Memoirs of the Duke de St. Simon, if to reasonable men it had wanted any arguments to display its mischief and insufficiency. A device of the same kind was tried in my memory by Louis XV. but it answered at no time. However, the necessities of ruinous wars were some excuse for desperate projects. The deliberations of calamity are rarely wise. But here was a season for disposition and providence.

It was in a time of profound [335] peace, then enjoyed for five years, and promising a much longer continuance, that they had recourse to this desperate trifling. They were sure to lose more reputation by sporting, in their serious situation, with these toys and playthings of finance, which have filled half their journals,

than could possibly be compensated by the poor temporary supply which they afforded. It seemed as if those who adopted such projects were wholly ignorant of their circumstances, or wholly unequal to their necessities. Whatever virtue may be in these devices, it is obvious that neither the patriotic gifts, nor the patriotic contribution, can ever be resorted to again. The resources of public folly are soon exhausted.

p. 335 The whole indeed of their scheme of revenue is to make, by any artifice, an appearance of a full reservoir for the hour, whilst at the same time they cut off the springs and living fountains of perennial supply. The account not long since furnished by Mr. Necker was meant, without question, to be favourable. He gives a flattering view of the means of getting through the year;

but he expresses, as it is natural he should, some apprehension for that which was to succeed. On

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crown of its ornaments, the churches of their plate, and the people of their personal jewelry. The invention of these juvenile pretenders to liberty was in reality nothing more than a servile imitation of one of the poorest resources of doting despotism.[78]

They took a huge old full-bottomed wig out of the wardrobe of Louis XIV's antiquated cast-offs to cover the premature baldness of the National Assembly. They brought out this old-fashioned formal folly although it had been so amply exposed in the Memoirs of the Duke de Saint-Simon, if reasonable men had needed any arguments to show its mischief and insufficiency. A device of the same kind was tried within my memory by Louis XV, but it never answered. Still, the necessities of ruinous wars were some excuse for desperate projects. The deliberations of calamity are rarely wise. But here was a season for orderly planning and foresight.[79]

It was in a time of profound [335] peace, already enjoyed for five years and promising to last much longer, that they resorted to this desperate trifling. They were sure to lose more reputation by playing, in their serious situation, with these toys and playthings of finance, which have filled half their journals,

than could possibly be made up by the poor temporary supply they yielded. It seemed as if those who adopted such projects were wholly ignorant of their circumstances, or wholly unequal to their needs. Whatever virtue there may be in these devices, it is obvious that neither the patriotic gifts nor the patriotic contribution can ever be resorted to again. The resources of public folly are soon exhausted.

Indeed, their whole scheme of revenue is to make, by any artifice, a show of a full reservoir for the hour, while at the same time they cut off the springs and living fountains of perennial supply. The account recently given by Mr. Necker was meant, no doubt, to be favorable. He gives a flattering view of the means of getting through the year;

but he expresses, as is natural, some apprehension about the year to follow. On this last forecast, in-

78 John Doe and Richard Roe were fictitious names used in English legal proceedings: one nobody vouching for another.
79 Saint-Simon's memoirs of Louis XIV's court describe the king's melting down of plate and appeals for gifts during his wars.

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this last prognostic, instead of entering into the grounds of this apprehension, in order, by a proper foresight, to prevent the prognosticated evil, Mr. Necker receives a sort of friendly reprimand from the president of the assembly.

As to their other schemes of taxation, it is impossible to say any thing of them with certainty; because they have not yet had their operation; but nobody [336] is so sanguine as to imagine they will fill up any perceptible part of the wide gaping breach which their incapacity has made in their revenues. At present the state of their treasury sinks every day more and more in cash, and swells more and more in fictitious representation.

p. 336 When so little within or without is now found but paper, the representative not of opulence but of want, the creature not of credit but of power, they imagine that our flourishing state in England is owing to that bank-paper, and not the bank-paper to the flourishing condition of our commerce, to the solidity of our credit, and to the total exclusion of all idea of power from any part of the transaction. They forget that, in England, not one shilling of paper-money of any description is received but of choice; that the whole has had its origin in cash actually deposited; and that it is convertible, at pleasure, in an instant, and without the smallest loss, into cash again.

Our paper is of value in commerce, because in law it is of none. It is powerful on Change, because in Westminster-hall it is impotent. In payment of a debt of twenty shillings, a creditor may refuse all the paper of the bank of England. Nor is there amongst us a single public security, of any quality or nature whatsoever, that is enforced by authority. In fact it might be easily shewn, that our paper wealth, instead of lessening the real coin, has a tendency to increase it; instead of being a substitute for money, it only facilitates its entry, its exit, and its circulation; that it is the symbol of prosperity, and not the badge of distress.

Never was a scarcity of cash, and an exuberance of paper, a subject of complaint in this nation.

p. 337 Well! but a lessening of prodigal expences, and the oeconomy which has been introduced by the

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stead of going into the grounds of his apprehension, so as to prevent the forecast evil by proper foresight, Mr. Necker receives a sort of friendly reprimand from the president of the assembly.

As for their other schemes of taxation, nothing can be said of them with certainty, because they have not yet come into operation; but nobody [336] is so sanguine as to imagine they will fill any perceptible part of the wide gaping breach their incapacity has made in their revenues. At present their treasury sinks every day further in cash and swells every day further in fictitious representations of it.

When so little is now found within or without but paper—the representative not of wealth but of want, the creature not of credit but of power—they imagine that our flourishing state in England is owing to our bank paper, and not the bank paper to the flourishing condition of our commerce, to the solidity of our credit, and to the total exclusion of any idea of power from every part of the transaction. They forget that in England not one shilling of paper money of any kind is accepted except by choice; that the whole of it originated in cash actually deposited; and that it can be turned back into cash at will, in an instant, and without the smallest loss.

Our paper has value in commerce because in law it has none. It is powerful on the Exchange because in Westminster Hall it is impotent. In payment of a debt of twenty shillings a creditor may refuse all the paper of the Bank of England. Nor is there among us a single public security, of any quality or nature whatsoever, that is enforced by authority. In fact it could easily be shown that our paper wealth, instead of lessening the real coin, tends to increase it; that instead of being a substitute for money, it only eases its entry, its exit, and its circulation; that it is the symbol of prosperity, not the badge of distress.[80]

Never in this nation has there been complaint of a scarcity of cash and a glut of paper.

Well! but the cutting of prodigal expenses, and the economy introduced by the virtuous and sapient

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virtuous and sapient assembly, makes amends for the losses sustained in the receipt of revenue. In this at least they have fulfilled the duty of a financier. Have those, who say so, looked at the expences of the national assembly itself, of the municipalities, of the city of Paris, of the increased pay of the two armies, of the new police, of the new judicatures? Have they even carefully compared the present pension-list with the former? These politicians have been cruel, not oeconomical.	assembly, make up for the losses in revenue. In this at least they have done a financier's duty. Have those who say so looked at the expenses of the National Assembly itself, of the municipalities, of the city of Paris, of the increased pay of the two armies, of the new civil administration, of the new courts? Have they even carefully compared the present pension list with the former one? These politicians have been cruel, not economical.[81]
Comparing the expences of the former prodigal government and its relation to the then revenues with the expences of this new system as opposed to the state of its new treasury, I believe the present will be found beyond all comparison more chargeable.	Comparing the expenses of the former prodigal government, in relation to its revenues at the time, with the expenses of this new system set against the state of its new treasury, I believe the present will be found beyond all comparison more costly.
It remains only to consider the proofs of financial ability, furnished by the present French managers when they are to raise supplies on credit. Here I am a little at a stand; for credit, properly speaking, they have none. The credit of the antient government was not indeed the best: but they could always, on some terms, command money, not only at home, but from most of the countries of Europe where a surplus capital was accumulated; and the credit of that government improving daily. The establishment of a system of liberty would of course be supposed to give it new strength; and so it would actually have done, if a system of liberty had been established.	It remains only to consider the proofs of financial ability furnished by the present French managers when they have to raise supplies on credit. Here I am somewhat at a loss; for credit, properly speaking, they have none. The credit of the ancient government was not, indeed, the best; but it could always command money on some terms, not only at home but from most of the countries of Europe where surplus capital had accumulated; and the credit of that government was improving daily. The establishment of a system of liberty would naturally be supposed to give it new strength; and so it actually would have done, if a system of liberty had been established.
What offers has their government of pretended liberty had from Holland, from Hamburgh, from Switzerland, from [338] Genoa, from England, for a dealing in their paper? Why should these nations of commerce and oeconomy enter into any pecuniary dealings with a people who attempt to reverse the very nature of things; amongst whom they see the debtor prescribing, at the point of the bayonet, the medium of his solvency to the creditor; discharging one of his engagements with another; turning his very penury into his resource; and paying his interest with his rags?	What offers has their government of pretended liberty had from Holland, from Hamburg, from Switzerland, from [338] Genoa, from England, to deal in their paper? Why should these nations of commerce and economy enter into any money dealings with a people who try to reverse the very nature of things; among whom they see the debtor prescribing to the creditor, at bayonet point, the medium in which he will pay; discharging one of his obligations with another; turning his very poverty into his resource; and paying his interest with his rags?
p. 338 Their fanatical confidence in the omnipotence of church plunder, has induced these philosophers to overlook all care of the public estate, just as the	Their fanatical confidence in the omnipotence of church plunder has led these philosophers to neglect all care of the public estate, just as the dream

80 Westminster Hall housed the chief English law courts. Bank of England notes were not legal tender in 1790.
81 The "two armies" are the regular army and the new National Guard.

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dream of the philosopher's stone induces dupes, under the more plausible delusion of the hermetic art, to neglect all rational means of improving their fortunes. With these philosophic financiers, this universal medicine made of church mummy is to cure all the evils of the state. These gentlemen perhaps do not believe a great deal in the miracles of piety; but it cannot be questioned, that they have an undoubting faith in the prodigies of sacrilege.

Is there a debt which presses them—Issue *assignats.*—Are compensations to be made, or a maintenance decreed to those whom they have robbed of their freehold in their office, or expelled from their profession—*Assignats.* Is a fleet to be fitted out—*Assignats.* If sixteen millions sterling of these *assignats,* forced on the people, leave the wants of the state as urgent as ever—issue, says one, thirty millions sterling of *assignats*— says another, issue fourscore millions more of *assignats.* The only difference among their financial factions is on the greater or the lesser quantity of *assignats* to be imposed on the publick sufferance.

p. 339 They are all professors of *assignats.* Even those, whose natural good sense and knowledge of commerce, not obliterated by philosophy, furnish decisive arguments against this delusion, conclude their arguments, by proposing the emission of *assignats.* I suppose they must talk of *assignats,* as no other language would be understood. All experience of their inefficacy does not in the least discourage them. Are the old *assignats* depreciated at market? What is the remedy? Issue new *assignats.—Mais si maladia, opiniatria, non vult se garire, quid illi facere? assignare—postea assignare;*

ensuita assignare. The word is a trifle altered. The Latin of your present doctors may be better than that of your old comedy; their wisdom, and the variety of their resources, are the same.

They have not more notes in their song than the cuckow; though, far from the softness of that harbinger of summer and plenty, their voice is as harsh and as ominous as that of the raven.

Who but the most desperate adventurers in philosophy and finance could at all have thought

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of the philosopher's stone leads dupes, under the more plausible delusion of the hermetic art, to neglect every rational means of improving their fortunes. With these philosophic financiers, this universal medicine made of church mummy is to cure all the ills of the state. These gentlemen perhaps do not believe much in the miracles of piety; but there is no question that they have an unwavering faith in the prodigies of sacrilege.[82]

Is there a debt pressing on them?—Issue *assignats.* —Are compensations to be paid, or a maintenance decreed, to those they have robbed of their freehold in their offices or expelled from their professions?—*Assignats.* Is a fleet to be fitted out?—*Assignats.* If sixteen million sterling of these *assignats,* forced on the people, leave the wants of the state as urgent as ever—issue, says one, thirty million sterling in *assignats*—says another, issue eighty million more in *assignats.* The only difference among their financial factions is over the greater or lesser quantity of *assignats* to be imposed on the public's endurance.

They are all professors of *assignats.* Even those whose natural good sense and knowledge of commerce, not yet erased by philosophy, supply decisive arguments against this delusion end their arguments by proposing an issue of *assignats.* I suppose they must talk of *assignats,* since no other language would be understood. No amount of experience of their failure discourages them in the least. Are the old *assignats* depreciated on the market? What is the remedy? Issue new *assignats.—But if the malady, obstinate, will not get itself cured, what to do for it? Assignare—then assignare;*[83]

and after that assignare. The word is slightly altered. The Latin of your present doctors may be better than that of your old comedy; their wisdom and the variety of their resources are the same.

They have no more notes in their song than the cuckoo; though, far from the softness of that harbinger of summer and plenty, their voice is as harsh and as ominous as the raven's.

Who but the most desperate adventurers in philosophy and finance could ever have thought of des-

82 The hermetic art is alchemy. Powdered "mummy" from embalmed bodies was long sold as a drug.

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of destroying the settled revenue of the state, the sole security for the public credit, in the hope of rebuilding it with the materials of confiscated property? If, however, an excessive zeal for the state should have led a pious and venerable prelate (by anticipation a father of the church[6]) to pillage his own order, and, for the good of the church and people, to take upon himself the place of grand financier of confiscation, and comptroller general of sacrilege, he and his coadjutors were, in my opinion, bound to shew, [340] by their subsequent conduct, that they knew something of the office they assumed.

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When they had resolved to appropriate to the *Fisc,* a certain portion of the landed property of their conquered country, it was their business to render their bank a real fund of credit; as far as such a bank was capable of becoming so.

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To establish a current circulating credit upon any *Land-bank,* under any circumstances whatsoever, has hitherto proved difficult at the very least. The attempt has commonly ended in bankruptcy. But when the assembly were led, through a contempt of moral, to a defiance of oeconomical principles, it might at least have been expected, that nothing would be omitted on their part to lessen this difficulty, to prevent any aggravation of this bankruptcy. It might be expected that to render your *Land-bank* tolerable, every means would be adopted that could display openness and candour in the statement of the security; every thing which could aid the recovery of the demand.

To take things in their most favourable point of view, your condition was that of a man of a large landed estate, which he wished to dispose of for the discharge of a debt, and the supply of certain

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troying the settled revenue of the state, the sole security for public credit, in the hope of rebuilding it out of the materials of confiscated property? If, however, an excessive zeal for the state should have led a pious and venerable prelate (by anticipation a father of the church[6]) to pillage his own order, and, for the good of the church and the people, to take on himself the post of grand financier of confiscation and controller general of sacrilege, then he and his coadjutors were, in my opinion, bound to show, [340] by their later conduct, that they knew something of the office they had assumed.

Once they had resolved to appropriate to the *Fisc* a certain portion of the landed property of their conquered country, it was their business to make their bank a real fund of credit, so far as such a bank was capable of becoming one.[84]

To establish a current circulating credit on any *Land-bank,* under any circumstances whatever, has so far proved difficult at the very least. The attempt has usually ended in bankruptcy. But when the assembly had been led, through contempt of moral principles, into defiance of economic ones, one might at least have expected them to leave nothing undone to lessen this difficulty and to prevent any aggravation of this bankruptcy. One might have expected that, to make your *Land-bank* tolerable, every means would be adopted that could display openness and candor in the statement of the security—everything that could aid the recovery of the claim.[87]

To take things in their most favorable light, your condition was that of a man with a large landed estate, which he wished to sell off to discharge a debt and to provide for certain services. Not being able

83 Burke parodies the mock-Latin degree ceremony in Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673), where the candidate answers every case with "Clysterium donare, postea seignare, ensuitta purgare" ("give an enema, then bleed, then purge").
84 *Fisc*: the public treasury.
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[6] La Bruyere of Bossuet. | [6] La Bruyère of Bossuet.[85]

85 Jean de La Bruyère said of the great preacher Bishop Bossuet that posterity would count him a Father of the Church. Burke turns the compliment ironically on Talleyrand.
87 A land bank issued paper money secured on land. The English Land Bank of 1696 was a notorious failure.

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services. Not being able instantly to sell, you wished to mortgage. What would a man of fair intentions, and a commonly clear understanding, do in such circumstances? Ought he not first to ascertain the gross value of the estate; the charges of its management and disposition; the encumbrances perpetual and temporary of all kinds that affect it; then, striking a net surplus, to calculate the just value of the security?

When that surplus (the only security to [341] the creditor) had been clearly ascertained, and properly vested in the hands of trustees; then he would indicate the parcels to be sold, and the time, and conditions of sale; after this, he would admit the public creditor, if he chose it, to subscribe his stock into this new fund; or he might receive proposals for an *assignat* from those who would advance money to purchase this species of security.

p. 341 This would be to proceed like men of business, methodically and rationally; and on the only principles of public and private credit that have an existence. The dealer would then know exactly what he purchased; and the only doubt which could hang upon his mind would be, the dread of the resumption of the spoil, which one day might be made (perhaps with an addition of punishment) from the sacrilegious gripe of those execrable wretches who could become purchasers at the auction of their innocent fellow-citizens.

An open and exact statement of the clear value of the property, and of the time, the circumstances, and the place of sale, were all necessary, to efface as much as possible the stigma that has hitherto been branded on every kind of Land-bank. It became necessary on another principle, that is, on account of a pledge of saith previously given on that subject, that their future fidelity in a slippery concern might be established by their adherence to their first engagement.

When they had finally determined on a state resource from church booty, they came, on the 14th of April 1790, to a solemn resolution on the subject; and pledged themselves to their country, "that in the statement of the public charges for each year there should be brought to [342] account a sum sufficient for defraying the expences of the R. C. A.

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to sell at once, you wished to mortgage. What would a man of fair intentions and ordinarily clear understanding do in such circumstances? Ought he not first to ascertain the gross value of the estate; the costs of its management and disposal; the encumbrances of every kind, permanent and temporary, that affect it; and then, striking a net surplus, to calculate the true value of the security?

When that surplus (the only security to [341] the creditor) had been clearly ascertained and properly vested in the hands of trustees, he would then indicate the parcels to be sold, and the time and conditions of sale. After this he would allow the public creditor, if he chose, to subscribe his stock into this new fund; or he might receive proposals for an *assignat* from those who would advance money to buy this kind of security.

This would be to proceed like men of business, methodically and rationally, and on the only principles of public and private credit that exist. The dealer would then know exactly what he was buying. The only doubt that could hang over his mind would be the dread that the spoil might one day be taken back (perhaps with punishment added) from the sacrilegious grip of those execrable wretches who could bring themselves to buy at the auction of their innocent fellow citizens.

An open and exact statement of the clear value of the property, and of the time, the circumstances, and the place of sale, was necessary on every count, to efface as far as possible the stigma that has so far been branded on every kind of Land-bank. It became necessary on another principle too: a pledge of faith had already been given on that subject, and their future fidelity in a slippery business could be established only by their keeping to their first engagement.

When they had finally settled on a state resource drawn from church booty, they came, on April 14, 1790, to a solemn resolution on the subject. They pledged themselves to their country "that in the statement of the public charges for each year there should be brought to [342] account a sum sufficient

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	to defray the expenses of the Roman Catholic Apostolic[88]
p. 342 religion, the support of the ministers at the altars, the relief of the poor, the pensions to the ecclesiastics, secular as well as regular, of the one and of the other sex, *in order that the estates and goods which are at the disposal of the nation may be disengaged of all charges, and employed by the representatives, or the legislative body, to the great and most pressing exigencies of the state.*" They further engaged, on the same day, that the sum necessary for the year 1791 should be forthwith determined.	religion, the support of the ministers at the altars, the relief of the poor, and the pensions to the clergy, secular as well as regular, of either sex, *in order that the estates and goods which are at the disposal of the nation may be freed of all charges, and employed by the representatives, or the legislative body, for the great and most pressing needs of the state.*" On the same day they further undertook that the sum needed for the year 1791 should be determined at once.
In this resolution they admit it their duty to show distinctly the expence of the above objects, which, by other resolutions, they had before engaged should be first in the order of provision. They admit that they ought to shew the estate clear and disengaged of all charges, and that they should shew it immediately. Have they done this immediately, or at any time? Have they ever furnished a rent-roll of the immoveable estates, or given in an inventory of the moveable effects which they confiscate to their assignats?	In this resolution they admit that it is their duty to show distinctly the cost of the objects above, which by earlier resolutions they had already undertaken should come first in the order of provision. They admit that they ought to show the estate clear and freed of all charges, and that they should show it immediately. Have they done this immediately, or at any time? Have they ever furnished a rent roll of the immovable estates, or handed in an inventory of the movable effects, which they confiscate to back their assignats?
In what manner they can fulfil their engagements of holding out to public service "an estate disengaged of all charges," without authenticating the value of the estate, or the quantum of the charges, I leave it to their English admirers to explain. Instantly upon this assurance, and previously to any one step towards making it good, they issue, on the credit of so handsome a declaration, sixteen millions sterling of their paper. This was manly. Who, after this masterly stroke, can doubt of their abilities in finance? But then, before any other emission of [343] these financial *indulgences,* they took care at least to make good their original promise.	How they can fulfill their engagement to hold out for public service "an estate disengaged of all charges" without verifying the value of the estate or the amount of the charges, I leave it to their English admirers to explain. Immediately upon this assurance, and before taking a single step toward making it good, they issue sixteen million sterling of their paper on the credit of so handsome a declaration. This was manly. Who, after this masterly stroke, can doubt their abilities in finance? But then, before any further issue of [343] these financial *indulgences,* they at least took care to make good their original promise.
p. 343 If such estimate, either of the value of the estate or the amount of the incumbrances, has been made, it has escaped me. I never heard of it. They have however done one thing, which in the gross is clear, obscure, as usual, in the detail. They have thrown upon this fund, which was to shew a surplus, disengaged of all charges, a new charge; namely, the compensation to the whole body of the disbanded judicature; and of all suppressed	If any such estimate, either of the value of the estate or of the amount of the encumbrances, has been made, it has escaped me. I never heard of it. They have, however, done one thing, which is clear in the gross and, as usual, obscure in the detail. On this fund, which was to show a surplus freed of all charges, they have thrown a new charge: the compensation to the whole body of the disbanded judiciary, and for all suppressed offices

88 Burke abbreviates "R. C. A.," for the Assembly's "religion catholique, apostolique et romaine."

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offices and estates; a charge which I cannot ascertain, but which unquestionably amounts to many French millions.

Another of the new charges, is an annuity of four hundred and eighty thousand pounds sterling, to be paid (if they choose to keep faith) by daily payments, for the interest of the first assignats. Have they ever given themselves the trouble to state fairly the expence of the management of the church lands in the hands of the municipalities, to whose care, skill, and diligence, and that of their legion of unknown under agents, they have chosen to commit the charge of the forfeited estates, and the consequence of which had been so ably pointed out by the bishop of Nancy?

But it is unnecessary to dwell on these obvious heads of incumbrance. Have they made out any clear state of the grand incumbrance of all, I mean the whole of the general and municipal establishments of all sorts, and compared it with the regular income by revenue? Every deficiency in these becomes a charge on the confiscated estate, before the creditor can plant his cabbages on an acre of church property. There is [344] no other prop than this confiscation to keep the whole state from tumbling to the ground.

p. 344 In this situation they have purposely covered all that they ought industriously to have cleared, with a thick fog; and then, blindfold themelves, like bulls that shut their eyes when they push, they drive, by the point of the bayonets, their slaves, blindfolded indeed no worse than their lords, to take their fictions for currencies, and to swallow down paper pills by thirty-four millions sterling at a dose.

Then they proudly lay in their claim to a future credit, on failure of all their past engagements, and at a time when (if in such a matter any thing can be clear) it is clear that the surplus estates will never answer even the first of their mortgages, I mean that of the four hundred million (or sixteen millions sterling) of *assignats.* In all this procedure I can discern neither the solid sense of plain-dealing, nor the subtle dexterity of ingenious fraud. The objection within

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and estates. I cannot ascertain this charge, but it unquestionably amounts to many French millions.[89]

Another of the new charges is an annuity of four hundred and eighty thousand pounds sterling, to be paid in daily payments (if they choose to keep faith) as interest on the first assignats. Have they ever taken the trouble to state fairly the cost of managing the church lands in the hands of the municipalities? They have chosen to commit the charge of the forfeited estates to the care, skill, and diligence of those bodies and of their legion of unknown under-agents, and the bishop of Nancy had so ably pointed out the consequences.[90]

But there is no need to dwell on these obvious heads of encumbrance. Have they drawn up any clear statement of the grand encumbrance of all, I mean the whole of the general and municipal establishments of every sort, and compared it with the regular income from revenue? Every shortfall there becomes a charge on the confiscated estate before the creditor can plant his cabbages on a single acre of church property. There is [344] no other prop than this confiscation to keep the whole state from tumbling to the ground.

In this situation they have deliberately covered with a thick fog everything they ought to have worked hard to clear. Then, blindfolded themselves, like bulls that shut their eyes when they charge, they drive their slaves at the point of the bayonet to take their fictions for currency, and to swallow paper pills at thirty-four million sterling a dose. Those slaves, indeed, are blindfolded no worse than their lords.

Then they proudly lay claim to future credit, after the failure of all their past engagements. And they do so at a time when (if anything in such a matter can be clear) it is clear that the surplus estates will never answer even the first of their mortgages, I mean that of the four hundred million (or sixteen million sterling) of *assignats.* In this whole procedure I can discern neither the solid sense of plain dealing nor the subtle dexterity of ingenious fraud. The objections raised within the assembly

89 Judicial and many other offices under the old regime were bought and owned as property, so abolishing them required compensating their holders.

90 Anne-Louis-Henri de La Fare, bishop of Nancy, a clerical deputy who opposed the sale of church lands.

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the assembly to pulling up the flood-gates for this inundation of fraud, are unanswered;

but they are thoroughly refuted by an hundred thousand financiers in the street. These are the numbers by which the metaphysic arithmeticians compute.

These are the grand calculations on which a philosophical public credit is founded in France. They cannot raise supplies; but they can raise mobs. Let them rejoice in the applauses of the club at Dundee, for their wisdom and patriotism in having thus applied the plunder of the citizens to the service of the state. I hear of no address upon this subject from the directors of the Bank of England; though their approbation would be of a *little* more weight in the scale of credit than that of the club at Dundee.

But, to do justice to [345] the club, I believe the gentlemen who compose it to be wiser than they appear; that they will be less liberal of their money than of their addresses; and that they would not give a dog's-ear of their most rumpled and ragged Scotch paper for twenty of your fairest assignats.

p. 345 Early in this year the assembly issued paper to the amount of sixteen millions sterling: What must have been the state into which the assembly has brought your affairs, that the relief afforded by so vast a supply has been hardly perceptible? This paper also felt an almost immediate depreciation of five per cent. which in little time came to about seven. The effect of these assignats on the receipt of the revenue is remarkable. Mr. Necker found that the collectors of the revenue,

who received in coin, paid the treasury in *assignats.* The collectors made seven per cent. by thus receiving in money, and accounting in depreciated paper. It was not very difficult to foresee, that this must be inevitable.

It was, however, not the less embarrassing. Mr. Necker was obliged (I believe, for a considerable part, in the market of London) to buy gold and silver for the mint, which amounted to about twelve thousand pounds above the value of the commodity gained. That minister was of opinion,

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to pulling up the floodgates for this inundation of fraud are unanswered;

but they are thoroughly refuted by a hundred thousand financiers in the street. These are the numbers by which the metaphysical arithmeticians compute.

These are the grand calculations on which a philosophical public credit is founded in France. They cannot raise supplies; but they can raise mobs. Let them rejoice in the applause of the club at Dundee for their wisdom and patriotism in having thus applied the plunder of the citizens to the service of the state. I hear of no address on this subject from the directors of the Bank of England. Yet their approval would carry a *little* more weight in the scale of credit than that of the club at Dundee.[91]

But, to do justice to [345] the club, I believe the gentlemen who compose it to be wiser than they appear. I believe they will be less liberal with their money than with their addresses, and that they would not give a dog-ear of their most rumpled and ragged Scotch paper for twenty of your finest assignats.[92]

Early this year the assembly issued paper to the amount of sixteen million sterling. What must be the state to which the assembly has brought your affairs, that the relief afforded by so vast a supply has been barely perceptible? This paper also suffered an almost immediate depreciation of five percent, which in a short time came to about seven. The effect of these assignats on the collection of the revenue is remarkable. Mr. Necker found that the collectors of the revenue,

who received in coin, paid the treasury in *assignats.* The collectors made seven percent by thus receiving in money and accounting in depreciated paper. It was not very difficult to foresee that this was inevitable.

It was, however, no less embarrassing for that. Mr. Necker was obliged (largely, I believe, in the London market) to buy gold and silver for the mint, at a cost of about twelve thousand pounds above the value of the commodity gained. That minister was of the opinion that, whatever their secret nourish-

91 The Dundee Whig Club sent an address of congratulation to the National Assembly in 1790.
92 Scottish banks issued their own banknotes, including notes of small value.

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that whatever their secret nutritive virtue might be, the state could not live upon *assignats* alone;

that some real silver was necessary, particularly for the satisfaction of those, who having iron in their hands, were not likely to distinguish themselves for patience, when they should perceive that whilst an encrease of pay was held out to them in real money, it was again to be fraudulently [346] drawn back by depreciated paper.

p. 346 The minister, in this very natural distress, applied to the assembly, that they should order the collectors to pay in specie what in specie they had received. It could not escape him, that if the treasury paid 3 per cent. for the use of a currency, which should be returned seven per cent. worse than the minister issued it, such a dealing could not very greatly tend to enrich the public. The assembly took no notice of his recommendation. They were in this dilemma—If they continued to receive the assignats, cash must become an alien to their treasury:

If the treasury should refuse those paper *amulets,* or should discountenance them in any degree, they must destroy the credit of their sole resource.

They seem then to have made their option; and to have given some sort of credit to their paper by taking it themselves; at the same time in their speeches they made a sort of swaggering declaration, something, I rather think, above legislative competence; that is, that there is no difference in value between metallic money and their assignats. This was a good stout proof article of faith, pronounced under an anathema, by the venerable fathers of this philosophic synod. *Credat* who will—certainly not *Judaeus Apella.*

A noble indignation rises in the minds of your popular leaders, on hearing the magic lanthorn in their shew of finance compared to the fraudulent exhibitions of Mr. Law. They cannot bear to hear the sands of his Mississippi compared with the rock of the church, on which they build their system. Pray let them suppress this glorious spirit, until they shew to the world what piece of solid [347] ground there is for their assignats, which they have not pre-occupied by other charges.

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ing virtue might be, the state could not live on *assignats* alone;

that some real silver was necessary, particularly to satisfy those who had iron in their hands. They were not likely to distinguish themselves by patience once they perceived that an increase of pay held out to them in real money was to be fraudulently [346] drawn back again through depreciated paper.

The minister, in this very natural distress, asked the assembly to order the collectors to pay in specie what they had received in specie. It could not escape him that if the treasury paid 3 percent for the use of a currency that came back seven percent worse than when the minister issued it, such a dealing could not very greatly tend to enrich the public. The assembly took no notice of his recommendation. They were in this dilemma. If they continued to receive the assignats, cash must become an alien to their treasury;

if the treasury refused those paper *amulets,* or discouraged them in any degree, they must destroy the credit of their sole resource.

They seem, then, to have made their choice, and to have given their paper a sort of credit by taking it themselves. At the same time, in their speeches, they made a sort of swaggering declaration that there is no difference in value between metallic money and their assignats. That was something, I rather think, beyond legislative competence. This was a good, stout, high-proof article of faith, pronounced under an anathema by the venerable fathers of this philosophic synod. Let him *believe it* who will—certainly not *the Jew Apella.*[93]

A noble indignation rises in the minds of your popular leaders when they hear the magic lantern of their financial show compared to the fraudulent exhibitions of Mr. Law. They cannot bear to hear the sands of his Mississippi compared with the rock of the church, on which they build their system. Pray let them suppress this glorious spirit until they show the world what piece of solid [347] ground there is for their assignats that they have not already taken up with other charges. They do

93 Burke quotes Horace, *Satires* 1.5.100, "Credat Iudaeus Apella, non ego" ("Let Apella the Jew believe it, not I"), a proverbial Roman jibe at credulity.

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They do injustice to that great, mother fraud, to compare it with their degenerate imitation. It is not true, that Law built solely on a speculation concerning the Mississippi.	injustice to that great mother fraud by comparing it with their degenerate imitation. It is not true that Law built solely on a speculation concerning the Mississippi.
p. 347 He added the East India trade; he added the African trade; he added the farms of all the farmed revenue of France. All these together unquestionably could not support the structure which the public enthusiasm, not he, chose to build upon these bases. But these were, however, in comparison, generous delusions. They supposed, and they aimed at an increase of the commerce of France. They opened to it the whole range of the two hemispheres. They did not think of feeding France from its own substance. A grand imagination found in this flight of commerce something to captivate. It was wherewithal to dazzle the eye of an eagle.	He added the East India trade; he added the African trade; he added the farms of all the farmed revenue of France. All these together unquestionably could not support the structure that the public enthusiasm, not he, chose to build on these foundations. But these were, nonetheless, generous delusions by comparison. They supposed, and they aimed at, an increase in the commerce of France. They opened to it the whole range of the two hemispheres. They did not think of feeding France on its own substance. A grand imagination found something to captivate it in this flight of commerce. It was the stuff to dazzle the eye of an eagle.[94]
It was not made to entice the smell of a mole, nuzzling and burying himself in his mother earth, as yours is. Men were not then quite shrunk from their natural dimensions by a degrading and sordid philosophy, and fitted for low and vulgar deceptions. Above all remember, that in imposing on the imagination, the then managers of the system made a compliment to the freedom of men. In their fraud there was no mixture of force. This was reserved to our time, to quench the little glimmerings of reason which might break in upon the solid darkness of this enlightened age.	It was not made to entice the nose of a mole, nuzzling and burying himself in his mother earth, as yours is. Men had not yet been quite shrunk from their natural dimensions by a degrading and sordid philosophy, and fitted for low and vulgar deceptions. Above all, remember that in imposing on the imagination, the managers of the system in those days paid a compliment to the freedom of men. In their fraud there was no mixture of force. That was reserved for our time, to quench the little glimmerings of reason that might break in upon the solid darkness of this enlightened age.
On recollection, I have said nothing of a scheme of finance which may be urged in favour of the abilities of these gentlemen, and which has been introduced with great pomp, though not yet finally [348] adopted in the national assembly. It comes with something solid in aid of the credit of the paper circulation; and much has been said of its utility and its elegance. I mean the project for coining into money the bells of the suppressed churches. This is their alchymy. There are some follies which baffle argument; which go beyond ridicule; and which excite no feeling in us but disgust; and therefore I say no more upon it.	Now that I think of it, I have said nothing of a scheme of finance that may be urged in favor of these gentlemen's abilities. It has been introduced in the National Assembly with great pomp, though not yet finally [348] adopted. It comes with something solid in support of the credit of the paper circulation, and much has been said of its utility and its elegance. I mean the project for coining the bells of the suppressed churches into money. This is their alchemy. There are some follies that baffle argument, that go beyond ridicule, and that excite no feeling in us but disgust; and so I say no more about it.
p. 348 It is as little worth remarking any farther upon all their drawing and re-drawing, on their	It is just as little worth commenting further on all their drawing and redrawing, on their circulation

94 Tax farms: the right to collect taxes was leased to private financiers, the "farmers general."

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circulation for putting off the evil day, on the play between the treasury and the *Caisse d'Escompte,* and on all these old exploded contrivances of mercantile fraud, now exalted into policy of state. The revenue will not be trifled with. The prattling about the rights of men will not be accepted in payment for a biscuit or a pound of gunpowder. Here then the metaphysicians descend from their airy speculations, and faithfully follow examples. What examples? the examples of bankrupts. But, defeated, baffled, disgraced, when their breath, their strength, their inventions, their fancies desert them, their confidence still maintains its ground.

In the manifest failure of their abilities they take credit for their benevolence. When the revenue disappears in their hands, they have the presumption, in some of their late proceedings, to value *themselves* on the relief given to the people. They did not relieve the people. If they entertained such intentions, why did they order the obnoxious taxes to be paid? The people relieved themselves in spite of the assembly.

But waving all discussion on the parties, who may claim the merit of this fallacious relief, has [349] there been, in effect, any relief to the people in any form? Mr. Bailly, one of the grand agents of paper circulation, lets you into the nature of this relief. His speech to the National Assembly contained an high and laboured panegyric on the inhabitants of Paris for the constancy and unbroken resolution with which they have borne their distress and misery. A fine picture of public felicity! What! great courage and unconquerable firmness of mind to endure benefits, and sustain redress!

p. 349 One would think from the speech of this learned Lord Mayor, that the Parisians, for this twelvemonth past, had been suffering the straits of some dreadful blockade; that Henry the Fourth had been stopping up the avenues to their supply, and Sully thundering with his ordnance at the gates of Paris; when in reality they are besieged by no other enemies than their own madness and folly, their own credulity and perverseness. But Mr. Bailly will sooner thaw the eternal ice of his atlantic regions, than restore the central heat to

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for putting off the evil day, on the game played between the treasury and the *Caisse d'Escompte*, and on all these old, discredited devices of mercantile fraud, now raised into state policy. The revenue will not be trifled with. Prattle about the rights of men will not be accepted in payment for a biscuit or a pound of gunpowder. Here, then, the metaphysicians come down from their airy speculations and faithfully follow examples. What examples? The examples of bankrupts. But defeated, baffled, disgraced, when their breath, their strength, their inventions and their fancies desert them, their confidence still holds its ground.[95]

In the plain failure of their abilities, they take credit for their benevolence. When the revenue vanishes in their hands, they have the presumption, in some of their recent proceedings, to pride *themselves* on the relief given to the people. They did not relieve the people. If they had any such intention, why did they order the hated taxes to be paid? The people relieved themselves in spite of the Assembly.

But setting aside all argument over which party may claim the merit of this illusory relief, has [349] there in fact been any relief to the people in any form? Mr. Bailly, one of the chief agents of the paper circulation, lets you in on the nature of this relief. His speech to the National Assembly contained a lofty and labored panegyric on the inhabitants of Paris for the constancy and unbroken resolution with which they have borne their distress and misery. A fine picture of public happiness! What! Great courage and unconquerable firmness of mind to endure benefits and sustain redress![96]

One would think from the speech of this learned Lord Mayor that for the past twelve months the Parisians had been suffering the hardships of some dreadful blockade, that Henry IV had been cutting off their supply routes and Sully thundering with his artillery at the gates of Paris. In reality they are besieged by no enemies but their own madness and folly, their own credulity and perverseness. But Mr. Bailly will sooner thaw the eternal ice of his Atlantic regions than restore the

95 "Drawing and redrawing": drawing bills of exchange back and forth to raise credit.
96 Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736–1793), astronomer, first president of the Third Estate and mayor of Paris from July 1789.

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Paris, whilst it remains "smitten with the cold, dry, petrisick mace" of a false and unfeeling philosophy.	central heat to Paris, while it remains "smitten with the cold, dry, petrific mace" of a false and unfeeling philosophy.[97]
Some time after this speech, that is, on the thirteenth of last August, the same magistrate, giving an account of his government at the bar of the same assembly, expresses himself as follows: "In the month of July 1789," [the period of everlasting commemoration] "the finances of the city of Paris were *yet* in good order;	Some time after this speech, on the thirteenth of last August, the same magistrate gave an account of his administration at the bar of the same Assembly and expressed himself as follows: "In the month of July 1789," [the period of everlasting commemoration] "the finances of the city of Paris were *still* in good order;
the expenditure was counterbalanced by the receipt, and she had at that time a million [forty thousand pounds sterling] in bank. The expences which she has been [350] constrained to incur, *subsequent to the revolution,* amount to 2,500,000 livres. From these expences, and the great falling off in the product of the *free gifts,* not only a momentary but a *total* want of money has taken place."	the expenditure was balanced by the receipts, and she had at that time a million [forty thousand pounds sterling] in the bank. The expenses she has been [350] compelled to incur *since the revolution* amount to 2,500,000 livres. Because of these expenses, and the great falling off in the yield of the *free gifts*, not merely a temporary but a *total* lack of money has set in."[98]
p. 350 This is the Paris upon whose nourishment, in the course of the last year, such immense sums, drawn from the vitals of all France, has been expended. As long as Paris stands in the place of antient Rome, so long she will be maintained by the subject provinces. It is an evil inevitably attendant on the dominion of sovereign democratic republics. As it happened in Rome, it may survive that republican domination which gave rise to it. In that case despotism itself must submit to the vices of popularity. Rome, under her emperors, united the evils of both systems; and this unnatural combination was one great cause of her ruin.	This is the Paris on whose nourishment such immense sums, drawn from the vitals of all France, have been spent over the past year. As long as Paris stands in the place of ancient Rome, she will be maintained by the subject provinces. It is an evil that inevitably attends the dominion of sovereign democratic republics. As happened in Rome, it may outlive the republican rule that gave rise to it. In that case despotism itself must submit to the vices of popularity. Rome under her emperors united the evils of both systems, and this unnatural combination was one great cause of her ruin.
To tell the people that they are relieved by the dilapidation of their public estate, is a cruel and insolent imposition. Statesmen, before they valued themselves on the relief given to the people, by the destruction of their revenue, ought first to have carefully attended to the solution of this problem:— Whether it be more advantageous to the people to pay considerably, and to gain in proportion; or to gain little or nothing, and to be disburthened of all contribution? My mind is made up to decide in favour of the first proposition. Experience is with me, and, I believe, the best opinions also.	To tell the people that they are relieved by the wasting of their public estate is a cruel and insolent deception. Before statesmen prided themselves on the relief given to the people by the destruction of their revenue, they should first have carefully worked out the solution to this problem: is it more advantageous to the people to pay considerably and to gain in proportion, or to gain little or nothing and be freed of all contribution? My mind is made up in favor of the first proposition. Experience is with me, and, I believe, the best opinions also.

97 Henry IV besieged Paris in 1590, with his minister Sully. Bailly had written on Atlantis, on a lost northern civilization, and on the earth's central heat. The quotation adapts Milton, *Paradise Lost* X.293–94 ("with his mace petrific, cold and dry").
98 The "free gifts" were the voluntary patriotic contributions (*dons patriotiques*) solicited in 1789–90.

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To keep a balance between the power of acquisition on the part of the subject, and the demands he is to answer on the part of the state, is a fundamental part of the skill of a true politician. [351] The means of acquisition are prior in time and in arrangement. Good order is the foundation of all good things. To be enabled to acquire, the people, without being servile, must be tractable and obedient. The magistrate must have his reverence, the laws their authority. The body of the people must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds. They must respect that property of which they cannot partake.

p. 351 They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavour, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. Of this consolation, whoever deprives them, deadens their industry, and strikes at the root of all acquisition as of all conservation. He that does this is the cruel oppressor, the merciless enemy of the poor and wretched; at the same time that by his wicked speculations he exposes the fruits of successful industry, and the accumulations of fortune, to the plunder of the negligent, the disappointed, and the unprosperous.

Too many of the financiers by profession are apt to see nothing in revenue, but banks, and circulations, and annuities on lives, and tontines, and perpetual rents, and all the small wares of the shop. In a settled order of the state, these things are not to be slighted, nor is the skill in them to be held of trivial estimation. They are good, but then only good, when they assume the effects of that settled order, and are built upon it.

But when men think that these beggarly contrivances may supply a resource for the evils which result from breaking up the [352] foundations of public order, and from causing or suffering the principles of property to be subverted, they will, in the ruin of their country, leave a melancholy and lasting monument of the effect of preposterous politics, and presumptuous, short-sighted, narrow-minded wisdom.

p. 352 The effects of the incapacity shewn by the popular in all the great members of the

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To keep a balance between the subject's power of acquisition and the demands the state makes on him is a fundamental part of the skill of a true statesman. [351] The means of acquisition come first, both in time and in order. Good order is the foundation of all good things. To be able to acquire, the people must be tractable and obedient, without being servile. The magistrate must have his reverence, the laws their authority. The body of the people must not find the principles of natural subordination rooted out of their minds by art. They must respect that property of which they cannot partake.

They must labor to obtain what can be obtained by labor. When they find, as they commonly do, that success is out of proportion to effort, they must be taught to seek their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. Whoever deprives them of this consolation deadens their industry and strikes at the root of all acquisition, as of all conservation. He who does this is the cruel oppressor, the merciless enemy of the poor and wretched. At the same time, by his wicked speculations, he exposes the fruits of successful industry and the accumulations of fortune to the plunder of the negligent, the disappointed, and the unprosperous.

Too many professional financiers are apt to see nothing in revenue but banks, and circulations, and life annuities, and tontines, and perpetual rents, and all the small wares of the shop. In a settled order of the state, these things are not to be slighted, nor is skill in them to be held of trivial account. They are good, but good only when they presuppose the effects of that settled order and are built upon it.

But some men think that these beggarly devices can supply a remedy for the evils that come from breaking up the [352] foundations of public order, and from causing or allowing the principles of property to be subverted. In the ruin of their country, such men will leave a melancholy and lasting monument to the effect of preposterous politics and presumptuous, short-sighted, narrow-minded wisdom.

The effects of the incapacity shown by the popular leaders in all the great branches of the common-

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commonwealth are to be covered with the "all-atoning name" of liberty. In some people I see great liberty indeed; in many, if not in the most, an oppressive degrading servitude. But what is liberty without wisdom, and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint. Those who know what virtuous liberty is, cannot bear to see it disgraced by incapable heads, on account of their having high-sounding words in their mouths. Grand, swelling sentiments of liberty, I am sure I do not despise.

They warm the heart; they enlarge and liberalise our minds; they animate our courage in a time of conflict. Old as I am, I read the fine raptures of Lucan and Corneille with pleasure. Neither do I wholly condemn the little arts and devices of popularity. They facilitate the carrying of many points of moment; they keep the people together; they refresh the mind in its exertions; and they diffuse occasional gaiety over the severe brow of moral freedom. Every politician ought to sacrifice to the graces; and to join compliance with reason. But in such an undertaking as that in France, all these subsidiary sentiments and artifices are of little avail. To make a government requires no great prudence.

Settle the seat of power; teach obedience: and the work is done. [353] To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide; it only requires to let go the rein. But to form a *free government*; that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind. This I do not find in those who take the lead in the national assembly. Perhaps they are not so miserably deficient as they appear. I rather believe it. It would put them below the common level of human understanding.

p. 353 But when the leaders choose to make themselves bidders at an auction of popularity, their talents, in the construction of the state, will be of no service. They will become flatterers instead of legislators; the instruments, not the guides of the people. If any of them should happen to propose a

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Settle the seat of power; teach obedience; and the work is done. [353] To give freedom is easier still. There is no need to guide; one need only let go the rein. But to form a *free government*—that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work—requires much thought, deep reflection, and a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind. This I do not find in those who take the lead in the National Assembly. Perhaps they are not as miserably deficient as they appear. I rather believe so. To be so would put them below the common level of human understanding.

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99 Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Corneille's tragedies were famous for their republican and heroic declamation. "Sacrifice to the Graces" was proverbial, from Plato's advice to the austere Xenocrates.

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scheme of liberty, soberly limited, and defined with proper qualifications, he will be immediately outbid by his competitors, who will produce something more splendidly popular. Suspicions will be raised of his fidelity to his cause.

Moderation will be stigmatized as the virtue of cowards; and compromise as the prudence of traitors; until, in hopes of preserving the credit which may enable him to temper and moderate on some occasions, the popular leader is obliged to become active in propagating doctrines, and establishing powers, that will afterwards defeat any sober purpose at which he ultimately might have aimed.

But am I so unreasonable as to see nothing at all that deserves commendation in the indefatigable labours of this assembly? I do not deny that among an infinite number of acts of violence and [354] folly, some good may have been done. They who destroy every thing certainly will remove some grievance. They who make every thing new, have a chance that they may establish something beneficial. To give them credit for what they have done in virtue of the authority they have usurped, or which can excuse them in the crimes by which that authority has been acquired, it must appear, that the same things could not have been accomplished without producing such a revolution.

p. 354 Most assuredly they might; because almost every one of the regulations made by them, which is not very equivocal, was either in the cession of the king, voluntarily made at the meeting of the states, or in the concurrent instructions to the orders. Some usages have been abolished on just grounds; but they were such that if they had stood as they were to all eternity, they would little detract from the happiness and prosperity of any state. The improvements of the national assembly are superficial, their errors fundamental.

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scheme of liberty soberly limited and defined with proper qualifications, he will at once be outbid by his competitors, who will produce something more splendidly popular. Suspicions will be raised about his fidelity to his cause.

Moderation will be stigmatized as the virtue of cowards, and compromise as the prudence of traitors. At last the popular leader, hoping to preserve the credit that may let him temper and moderate on some occasions, is obliged to become active in spreading doctrines and establishing powers that will afterwards defeat any sober purpose he might ultimately have aimed at.

But am I so unreasonable as to see nothing at all that deserves praise in the tireless labors of this Assembly? I do not deny that among an infinite number of acts of violence and [354] folly, some good may have been done. Those who destroy everything will certainly remove some grievance. Those who make everything new have a chance of establishing something beneficial. But to give them credit for what they have done by virtue of the authority they have usurped, or to let it excuse them for the crimes by which that authority was acquired, it would have to be shown that the same things could not have been accomplished without producing such a revolution.

Most assuredly they could have been. Almost every one of their regulations that is not highly doubtful was either in the king's concession, voluntarily made at the meeting of the states general, or in the concurring instructions given to the orders. Some usages have been abolished on just grounds. But they were such that if they had stood as they were to all eternity, they would have taken little from the happiness and prosperity of any state. The improvements of the National Assembly are superficial; their errors are fundamental.[100]

A LAST WORD

Burke urges Britain to preserve its constitution and explains the spirit in which he writes.

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Whatever they are, I wish my countrymen rather to recommend to our neighbours the example of

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Whatever their improvements are, I would rather my countrymen recommended the example of the

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the British constitution, than to take models from them for the improvement of our own. In the former they have got an invaluable treasure. They are not, I think, without some causes of apprehension and complaint; but these they do not owe to their constitution, but to their own conduct. I think our happy situation owing to our constitution; but owing to the whole of it; and not to any part singly; owing in a great measure to what we have left standing in our several reviews and reformations, as well as to what we have altered or superadded.

Our [355] people will find employment enough for a truly patriotic, free, and independent spirit, in guarding what they possess, from violation. I would not exclude alteration neither; but even when I changed, it should be to preserve. I should be led to my remedy by a great grievance. In what I did, I should follow the example of our ancestors. I would make the reparation as nearly as possible in the style of the building. A politic caution, a guarded circumspection, a moral rather than a complexional timidity were among the ruling principles of our forefathers in their most decided conduct.

p. 355 Not being illuminated with the light of which the gentlemen of France tell us they have got so abundant a share, they acted under a strong impression of the ignorance and fallibility of mankind. He that had made them thus fallible, rewarded them for having in their conduct attended to their nature. Let us imitate their caution, if we wish to deserve their fortune, or to retain their bequests. Let us add, if we please, but let us preserve what they have left; and, standing on the firm ground of the British constitution, let us be satisfied to admire rather than attempt to follow in their desperate flights the aëronauts of France.

I have told you candidly my sentiments. I think they are not likely to alter yours. I do not know that they ought. You are young; you cannot guide, but must follow the fortune of your country. But hereafter they may be of some use to you, in some future form which your commonwealth may take. In the present it can hardly remain; but before its

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British constitution to our neighbors than took models from them for the improvement of our own. In that constitution they have an invaluable treasure. They are not, I think, without some causes of apprehension and complaint; but these they owe not to their constitution but to their own conduct. I think our happy situation is owing to our constitution—but to the whole of it, and not to any part singly. It is owing in great measure to what we have left standing in our several reviews and reformations, as well as to what we have altered or added.

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They were not illuminated with the light of which the gentlemen of France tell us they have so abundant a share, and so they acted under a strong impression of the ignorance and fallibility of mankind. He who had made them thus fallible rewarded them for having attended to their nature in their conduct. Let us imitate their caution if we wish to deserve their fortune or to keep their bequests. Let us add, if we please; but let us preserve what they have left. Standing on the firm ground of the British constitution, let us be content to admire the aeronauts of France, rather than attempt to follow them in their desperate flights.[101]

I have told you my sentiments candidly. I do not think they are likely to change yours. I do not know that they ought to. You are young; you cannot guide, but must follow the fortune of your country. But hereafter they may be of some use to you, in some future form your commonwealth may take. In its present form it can hardly remain.

100 The king's concessions were set out in the royal declaration of June 23, 1789.
101 Balloon flight was a French sensation after the Montgolfier brothers' ascents of 1783.

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final settlement it may be obliged to pass, as one of our poets says, "through [356] great varieties of untried being," and in all its transmigrations to be purified by fire and blood.

p. 356 I have little to recommend my opinions, but long observation and much impartiality. They come from one who has been no tool of power, no flatterer of greatness; and who in his last acts does not wish to belye the tenour of his life.

They come from one, almost the whole of whose public exertion has been a struggle for the liberty of others; from one in whose breast no anger durable or vehement has ever been kindled, but by what he considered as tyranny; and who snatches from his share in the endeavours which are used by good men to discredit opulent oppression, the hours he has employed on your affairs; and who in so doing persuades himself he has not departed from his usual office: they come from one who desires honours, distinctions, and emoluments, but little;

and who expects them not at all; who has no contempt for fame, and no fear of obloquy; who shuns contention, though he will hazard an opinion: from one who wishes to preserve consistency; but who would preserve consistency by varying his means to secure the unity of his end; and, when the equipoise of the vessel in which he sails, may be endangered by overloading it upon one side, is desirous of carrying the small weight of his reasons to that which may preserve its equipoise.

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Before its final settlement, though, it may be obliged to pass, as one of our poets says, "through [356] great varieties of untried being," and in all its transmigrations to be purified by fire and blood.[102]

I have little to recommend my opinions but long observation and much impartiality. They come from one who has been no tool of power and no flatterer of greatness, and who does not wish to belie the tenor of his life in his last acts.

They come from one almost the whole of whose public exertion has been a struggle for the liberty of others; from one in whose breast no lasting or vehement anger has ever been kindled except by what he considered tyranny. He has snatched the hours he has spent on your affairs from his share in the efforts that good men are making to discredit opulent oppression, and in doing so he persuades himself that he has not departed from his usual office. They come from one who desires honors, distinctions, and emoluments but little;[103]

and who expects them not at all; who has no contempt for fame and no fear of obloquy; who shuns contention, though he will hazard an opinion. They come from one who wishes to preserve consistency, but who would preserve it by varying his means to secure the unity of his end. When the balance of the vessel in which he sails may be endangered by overloading it on one side, he wishes to carry the small weight of his reasons to the side that may preserve its balance.

102 The poet is Addison, *Cato* V.i: "Through what variety of untried being, / Through what new scenes and changes must we pass!"
103 Burke was then leading the impeachment of Warren Hastings, former governor-general of Bengal.