

# Spirit of the Laws

The Baron de Montesquieu  
1748

*Religion is necessary to government. Even a false religion is preferable to none at all. Christianity is suited to a moderate form of government; Islam to the despotic form. Catholicism is suited to monarchy; Protestantism to a republic. Among philosophies, Stoicism imparts the most useful religious ideas. Religious faiths may either support or conflict with the ordinances of the state. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, if not properly understood, produces dangerous consequences for society. Climate often influences local religious practices.*

## Book XXIV Of Laws in Relation to Religion Considered in Itself and in its Doctrines

1. Of Religion in General. As amidst several degrees of darkness we may form a judgment of those which are the least thick, and among precipices which are the least deep, so we may search among false religions for those that are most conformable to the wel-

## Readings in American Deism

---

fare of society; for those which, though they have not the effect of leading men to the felicity of another life, may contribute most to their happiness in this.

I shall examine, therefore, the several religions of the world, in relation only to the good they produce in civil society, whether I speak of that which has its root in heaven, or of those which spring from the earth.

As in this work I am not a divine but a political writer, I may here advance things which are not otherwise true than as they correspond with a worldly manner of thinking, not as considered in their relation to truths of a more sublime nature.

With regard to the true religion, a person of the least degree of impartiality must see that I have never pretended to make its interests submit to those of a political nature, but rather to unite them; now, in order to unite, it is necessary that we should know them.

The Christian religion, which ordains that men should love each other, would, without doubt, have every nation blest with the best civil, the best political laws; because these, next to this religion, are the greatest good that men can give and receive.

2. A Paradox of M. Bayle's. M. Bayle has pretended to prove that it is better to be an Atheist than an Idolater; that is, in other words, that it is less dangerous to have no religion at all than a bad one. "I had rather," said he, "it should be said of me that I had

## Selections by the American Deist

---

no existence than that I am a villain." This is only a sophism founded on this, that it is of no importance to the human race to believe that a certain man exists, whereas it is extremely useful for them to believe the existence of a God. From the idea of his non-existence immediately follows that of our independence; or, if we cannot conceive this idea, that of disobedience. To say that religion is not a restraining motive, because it does not always restrain, is equally absurd as to say that the civil laws are not a restraining motive. It is a false way of reasoning against religion to collect, in a large work, a long detail of the evils it has produced if we do not give at the same time an enumeration of the advantages which have flowed from it. Were I to relate all the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws, from monarchy, and from republican government, I might tell of frightful things. Were it of no advantage for subjects to have religion, it would still be of some, if princes had it, and if they whitened with foam the only rein which can restrain those who fear not human laws.

A prince who loves and fears religion is a lion, who stoops to the hand that strokes, or to the voice that appeases him. He who fears and hates religion is like the savage beast that growls and bites the chain which prevents his flying on the passenger. He who has no religion at all is that terrible animal who perceives his liberty only when he tears in pieces and when he devours.

The question is not to know whether it would be better that a certain man or a certain people had no

## Readings in American Deism

---

religion than to abuse what they have, but to know what is the least evil, that religion be sometimes abused, or that there be no such restraint as religion on mankind.

To diminish the horror of Atheism, they lay too much to the charge of idolatry. It is far from being true that when the ancients raised altars to a particular vice, they intended to show that they loved the vice; this signified, on the contrary, that they hated it. When the Lacedæmonians erected a temple to Fear, it was not to show that this warlike nation desired that he would in the midst of battle possess the hearts of the Lacedæmonians. They had deities to whom they prayed not to inspire them with guilt; and others whom they besought to shield them from it.

3. That a moderate Government is most agreeable to the Christian Religion, and a despotic Government to the Mahometan. The Christian religion is a stranger to mere despotic power. The mildness so frequently recommended in the Gospel is incompatible with the despotic rage with which a prince punishes his subjects, and exercises himself in cruelty.

As this religion forbids the plurality of wives, its princes are less confined, less concealed from their subjects, and consequently have more humanity: they are more disposed to be directed by laws, and more capable of perceiving that they cannot do whatever they please.

While the Mahometan princes incessantly give or receive death, the religion of the Christians renders

## Selections by the American Deist

---

their princes less timid, and consequently less cruel. The prince confides in his subjects, and the subjects in the prince. How admirable the religion which, while it only seems to have in view the felicity of the other life, continues the happiness of this!

It is the Christian religion that, in spite of the extent of the empire and the influence of the climate, has hindered despotic power from being established in Ethiopia, and has carried into the heart of Africa the manners and laws of Europe.

The heir to the empire of Ethiopia enjoys a principality and gives to other subjects an example of love and obedience. Not far thence may we see the Mahometan shutting up the children of the King of Sennar, at whose death the council sends to murder them, in favour of the prince who mounts the throne.

Let us set before our eyes, on the one hand, the continual massacres of the kings and generals of the Greeks and Romans, and, on the other, the destruction of people and cities by those famous conquerors Timur Beg and Jenghiz Khan, who ravaged Asia, and we shall see that we owe to Christianity, in government, a certain political law; and in war, a certain law of nations — benefits which human nature can never sufficiently acknowledge.

It is owing to this law of nations that among us victory leaves these great advantages to the conquered, life, liberty, laws, wealth, and always religion, when the conqueror is not blind to his own interest.

## Readings in American Deism

---

We may truly say that the people of Europe are not at present more disunited than the people and the armies, or even the armies among themselves were, under the Roman empire when it had become a despotic and military government. On the one hand, the armies engaged in war against each other, and, on the other, they pillaged the cities, and divided or confiscated the lands.

4. Consequences from the Character of the Christian Religion, and that of the Mahometan. From the characters of the Christian and Mahometan religions, we ought, without any further examination, to embrace the one and reject the other: for it is much easier to prove that religion ought to humanise the manners of men than that any particular religion is true.

It is a misfortune to human nature when religion is given by a conqueror. The Mahometan religion, which speaks only by the sword, acts still upon men with that destructive spirit with which it was founded.

The history of Sabbaco, one of the pastoral kings of Egypt, is very extraordinary. The tutelar god of Thebes, appearing to him in a dream, ordered him to put to death all the priests of Egypt. He judged that the gods were displeased at his being on the throne, since they commanded him to commit an action contrary to their ordinary pleasure; and therefore he retired into Ethiopia.

5. That the Catholic Religion is most agreeable to a Monarchy, and the Protestant to a Republic. When

## Selections by the American Deist

---

a religion is introduced and fixed in a state, it is commonly such as is most suitable to the plan of government there established; for those who receive it, and those who are the cause of its being received, have scarcely any other idea of policy than that of the state in which they were born.

When the Christian religion, two centuries ago, became unhappily divided into Catholic and Protestant, the people of the north embraced the Protestant, and those of the south adhered still to the Catholic.

The reason is plain: the people of the north have, and will for ever have, a spirit of liberty and independence, which the people of the south have not; and therefore a religion which has no visible head is more agreeable to the independence of the climate than that which has one.

In the countries themselves where the Protestant religion became established, the revolutions were made pursuant to the several plans of political government. Luther having great princes on his side would never have been able to make them relish an ecclesiastical authority that had no exterior pre-eminence; while Calvin, having to do with people who lived under republican governments, or with obscure citizens in monarchies, might very well avoid establishing dignities and preferments.

Each of these two religions was believed to be perfect; the Calvinist judging his most conformable to what Christ had said, and the Lutheran to what the Apostles had practised.

## Readings in American Deism

---

6. Another of M. Bayle's Paradoxes. M. Bayle, after having abused all religions, endeavours to sully Christianity: he boldly asserts that true Christians cannot form a government of any duration. Why not? Citizens of this profession being infinitely enlightened with respect to the various duties of life, and having the warmest zeal to fulfil them, must be perfectly sensible of the rights of natural defence. The more they believe themselves indebted to religion, the more they would think due to their country. The principles of Christianity, deeply engraved on the heart, would be infinitely more powerful than the false honour of monarchies, than the humane virtues of republics, or the servile fear of despotic states.

It is astonishing that this great man should not be able to distinguish between the orders for the establishment of Christianity and Christianity itself; and that he should be liable to be charged with not knowing the spirit of his own religion. When the legislator, instead of laws, has given counsels, this is because he knew that if these counsels were ordained as laws they would be contrary to the spirit of the laws themselves.

7. Of the Laws of Perfection in Religion. Human laws, made to direct the will, ought to give precepts, and not counsels; religion, made to influence the heart, should give many counsels, and few precepts.

When, for instance, it gives rules, not for what is good, but for what is better; not to direct to what is right, but to what is perfect, it is expedient that these should be counsels, and not laws: for perfection can

## Selections by the American Deist

---

have no relation to the universality of men or things. Besides, if these were laws, there would be a necessity for an infinite number of others, to make people observe the first. Celibacy was advised by Christianity; when they made it a law in respect to a certain order of men, it became necessary to make new ones every day, in order to oblige those men to observe it. The legislator wearied himself, and he wearied society, to make men execute by precept what those who love perfection would have executed as counsel.

8. Of the Connection between the moral Laws and those of Religion. In a country so unfortunate as to have a religion that God has not revealed, it is necessary for it to be agreeable to morality; because even a false religion is the best security we can have of the probity of men.

The principal points of religion of the inhabitants of Pegu are, not to commit murder, not to steal, to avoid uncleanness, not to give the least uneasiness to their neighbour, but to do him, on the contrary, all the good in their power. With these rules they think they should be saved in any religion whatsoever. Hence it proceeds that those people, though poor and proud, behave with gentleness and compassion to the unhappy.

9. Of the Essenes. The Essenes made a vow to observe justice to mankind, to do no ill to any person, upon whatsoever account, to keep faith with all the world, to hate injustice, to command with modesty, always to side with truth, and to fly from all unlawful gain.

## Readings in American Deism

---

10. Of the Sect of Stoics. The several sects of philosophy among the ancients were a species of religion. Never were any principles more worthy of human nature, and more proper to form the good man, than those of the Stoics; and if I could for a moment cease to think that I am a Christian, I should not be able to hinder myself from ranking the destruction of the sect of Zeno among the misfortunes that have befallen the human race.

It carried to excess only those things in which there is true greatness — the contempt of pleasure and of pain.

It was this sect alone that made citizens; this alone that made great men; this alone great emperors.

Laying aside for a moment revealed truths, let us search through all nature, and we shall not find a nobler object than the Antoninuses; even Julian himself — Julian (a commendation thus wrested from me will not render me an accomplice of his apostasy) — no, there has not been a prince since his reign more worthy to govern mankind.

While the Stoics looked upon riches, human grandeur, grief, disquietudes, and pleasures as vanity, they were entirely employed in labouring for the happiness of mankind, and in exercising the duties of society. It seems as if they regarded that sacred spirit, which they believed to dwell within them, as a kind of favourable providence watchful over the human race.

## Selections by the American Deist

---

Born for society, they all believed that it was their destiny to labour for it; with so much the less fatigue, their rewards were all within themselves. Happy by their philosophy alone, it seemed as if only the happiness of others could increase theirs.

11. Of Contemplation. Men being made to preserve, to nourish, to clothe themselves, and do all the actions of society, religion ought not to give them too contemplative a life.

The Mahometans become speculative by habit; they pray five times a day, and each time they are obliged to cast behind them everything which has any concern with this world: this forms them for speculation. Add to this that indifference for all things which is inspired by the doctrine of unalterable fate.

If other causes besides these concur to disengage their affections; for instance, if the severity of the government, if the laws concerning the property of land, give them a precarious spirit — all is lost.

The religion of the Gaurs formerly rendered Persia a flourishing kingdom; it corrected the bad effects of despotic power. The same empire is now destroyed by the Mahometan religion.

12. Of Penances. Penances ought to be joined with the idea of labour, not with that of idleness; with the idea of good, not with that of supereminence; with the idea of frugality, not with that of avarice.

13. Of inexpiable Crimes. It appears from a passage of the books of the pontiffs, quoted by Cicero,

## Readings in American Deism

---

that they had among the Romans inexpressible crimes: and it is on this that Zozyms founds the narration so proper to blacken the motives of Constantine's conversion; and Julian, that bitter raillery on this conversion in his Cæsars.

The Pagan religion indeed, which prohibited only some of the grosser crimes, and which stopped the hand but meddled not with the heart, might have crimes that were inexpressible; but a religion which bridles all the passions; which is not more jealous of actions than of thoughts and desires; which holds us not by a few chains but by an infinite number of threads; which, leaving human justice aside, establishes another kind of justice; which is so ordered as to lead us continually from repentance to love, and from love to repentance; which puts between the judge and the criminal a greater mediator, between the just and the mediator a great judge — a religion like this ought not to have inexpressible crimes. But while it gives fear and hope to all, it makes us sufficiently sensible that though there is no crime in its own nature inexpressible, yet a whole criminal life may be so; that it is extremely dangerous to affront mercy by new crimes and new expiations; that an uneasiness on account of ancient debts, from which we are never entirely free, ought to make us afraid of contracting new ones, of filling up the measure, and going even to that point where paternal goodness is limited.

14. In what Manner Religion has an Influence on Civil Laws. As both religion and the civil laws ought to have a peculiar tendency to render men good citi-

## Selections by the American Deist

---

zens, it is evident that when one of these deviates from this end, the tendency of the other ought to be strengthened. The less severity there is in religion, the more there ought to be in the civil laws.

Thus the reigning religion of Japan having few doctrines, and proposing neither future rewards nor punishments, the laws to supply these defects have been made with the spirit of severity, and are executed with an extraordinary punctuality.

When the doctrine of necessity is established by religion, the penalties of the laws ought to be more severe, and the magistrate more vigilant; to the end that men who would otherwise become abandoned might be determined by these motives; but it is quite otherwise where religion has established the doctrine of liberty.

From the inactivity of the soul springs the Mahometan doctrine of predestination, and from this doctrine of predestination springs the inactivity of the soul. This, they say, is in the decrees of God; they must therefore indulge their repose. In a case like this, the magistrate ought to waken by the laws those who are lulled asleep by religion.

When religion condemns things which the civil laws ought to permit, there is danger lest the civil laws, on the other hand, should permit what religion ought to condemn. Either of these is a constant proof of a want of true ideas of that harmony and proportion which ought to subsist between both.

## Readings in American Deism

---

Thus the Tartars under Jenghiz Khan, among whom it was a sin and even a capital crime to put a knife in the fire, to lean against a whip, to strike a horse with his bridle, to break one bone with another, did not believe it to be any sin to break their word, to seize upon another man's goods, to do an injury to a person, or to commit murder. In a word, laws which render that necessary which is only indifferent have this inconvenience, that they make those things indifferent which are absolutely necessary.

The people of Formosa believe that there is a kind of hell, but it is to punish those who at certain seasons have not gone naked, who have dressed in calico and not in silk, who have presumed to look for oysters, or who have undertaken any business without consulting the song of birds; while drunkenness and debauchery are not regarded as crimes. They believe even that the debauches of their children are agreeable to their gods.

When religion absolves the mind by a thing merely accidental, it loses its greatest influence on mankind. The people of India believe that the waters of the Ganges have a sanctifying virtue. Those who die on its banks are imagined to be exempted from the torments of the other life, and to be entitled to dwell in a region full of delights; and for this reason the ashes of the dead are sent from the most distant places to be thrown into this river. Little then does it signify whether they had lived virtuously or not, so they be but thrown into the Ganges.

The idea of a place of rewards has a necessary connection with the idea of the abodes of misery;

## Selections by the American Deist

---

and when they hope for the former without fearing the latter, the civil laws have no longer any influence. Men who think themselves sure of the rewards of the other life are above the power of the legislator; they look upon death with too much contempt. How shall the man be restrained by laws who believes that the greatest pain the magistrate can inflict will end in a moment to begin his happiness?

15. How false Religions are sometimes corrected by the Civil Laws. Simplicity, superstition, or a respect for antiquity have sometimes established mysteries or ceremonies shocking to modesty: of this the world has furnished numerous examples. Aristotle says that in this case the law permits the fathers of families to repair to the temple to celebrate these mysteries for their wives and children. How admirable the civil law which in spite of religion preserves the manners untainted!

Augustus excluded the youth of either sex from assisting at any nocturnal ceremony, unless accompanied by a more aged relative; and when he revived the Lupercalia, he would not allow the young men to run naked.

16. How the Laws of Religion correct the Inconveniences of a political Constitution. On the other hand, religion may support a state when the laws themselves are incapable of doing it.

Thus when a kingdom is frequently agitated by civil wars, religion may do much by obliging one part of the state to remain always quiet. Among the

## Readings in American Deism

---

Greeks, the Eleans, as priests of Apollo, lived always in peace. In Japan, the city of Meaco enjoys a constant peace, as being a holy city. Religion supports this regulation, and that empire, which seems to be alone upon earth, and which neither has nor will have any dependence on foreigners, has always in its own bosom a trade which war cannot ruin.

In kingdoms where wars are not entered upon by a general consent, and where the laws have not pointed out any means either of terminating or preventing them, religion establishes times of peace, or cessation from hostilities, that the people may be able to sow their corn and perform those other labours which are absolutely necessary for the subsistence of the state.

Every year all hostility ceases between the Arabian tribes for four months: the least disturbance would then be an impiety. In former times, when every lord in France declared war or peace, religion granted a truce, which was to take place at certain seasons.

17. The same Subject continued. When a state has many causes for hatred, religion ought to produce many ways of reconciliation. The Arabs, a people addicted to robbery, are frequently guilty of doing injury and injustice. Mahomet enacted this law: "If any one forgives the blood of his brother, he may pursue the malefactor for damages and interest; but he who shall injure the wicked, after having received satisfaction, shall, in the day of judgment, suffer the most grievous torments."

The Germans inherited the hatred and enmity of their near relatives: but these were not eternal. Ho-

## Selections by the American Deist

---

micide was expiated by giving a certain number of cattle, and all the family received satisfaction: a thing extremely useful, says Tacitus, because enmities are most dangerous among a free people. I believe, indeed, that their ministers of religion, who were held by them in so much credit, were concerned in these reconciliations.

Among the inhabitants of Malacca, where no form of reconciliation is established, he who has committed murder, certain of being assassinated by the relatives or friends of the deceased, abandons himself to fury, and wounds or kills all he meets.

18. How the Laws of Religion have the Effect of Civil Laws. The first Greeks were small nations, frequently dispersed, pirates at sea, unjust on land, without government and without laws. The mighty actions of Hercules and Theseus let us see the state of that rising people. What could religion do more to inspire them with horror against murder? It declared that the man who had been murdered was enraged against the assassin, that he would possess his mind with terror and trouble, and oblige him to yield to him the places he had frequented when alive. They could not touch the criminal, nor converse with him, without being defiled: the murderer was to be expelled from the city, and an expiation made for the crime.

19. That it is not so much the Truth or Falsity of a Doctrine which renders it useful or pernicious to Men in civil Government, as the Use or Abuse of it. The most true and holy doctrines may be attended

## Readings in American Deism

---

with the very worst consequences when they are not connected with the principles of society: and on the contrary, doctrines the most false may be attended with excellent consequences when contrived so as to be connected with these principles.

The religion of Confucius disowns the immortality of the soul: and the sect of Zeno did not believe it. These two sects have drawn from their bad principles consequences, not just indeed, but most admirable as to their influence on society. Those of the religion of Tao, and of Foe, believe the immortality of the soul; but from this sacred doctrine they draw the most frightful consequences.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul falsely understood has, almost in every part of the globe and in every age, engaged women, slaves, subjects, friends, to murder themselves, that they might go and serve in the other world the object of their respect or love in this. Thus it was in the West Indies; thus it was among the Danes; thus it is at present in Japan, in Macassar, and many other places.

These customs do not so directly proceed from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as from that of the resurrection of the body, whence they have drawn this consequence, that after death the same individual will have the same wants, the same sentiments, the same passions. In this point of view, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has a prodigious effect on mankind; because the idea of only a simple change of habitation is more within the reach

## Selections by the American Deist

---

of the human understanding, and more adapted to flatter the heart, than the idea of a new modification.

It is not enough for religion to establish a doctrine; it must also direct its influence. This the Christian religion performs in the most admirable manner, particularly with regard to the doctrines of which we have been speaking. It makes us hope for a state which is the object of our belief; not for a state which we have already experienced or known: thus every article, even the resurrection of the body, leads us to spiritual ideas.

20. The same Subject continued. The sacred books of the ancient Persians say, "If you would be holy instruct your children, because all the good actions which they perform will be imputed to you." They advise them to marry betimes, because children at the day of judgment will be as a bridge, over which those who have none cannot pass. These doctrines were false, but extremely useful.

21. Of the Metempsychosis. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is divided into three branches — that of pure immortality, that of a simple change of habitation, and that of a metempsychosis, that is, the system of the Christians, that of the Scythians, and that of the Indians. We have just been speaking of the first two, and I shall say of the last that as it has been well or ill explained, it has had good or bad effects. As it inspires men with a certain horror against bloodshed, very few murders are committed in the Indies; and though they seldom punish with death, yet they enjoy a perfect tranquillity.

## Readings in American Deism

---

On the other hand, women burn themselves at the death of their husbands; thus it is only the innocent who suffer a violent death.

22. That it is dangerous for Religion to inspire an Aversion for Things in themselves indifferent. A kind of honour established in the Indies by the prejudices of religion has made the several tribes conceive an aversion against each other. This honour is founded entirely on religion; these family distinctions form no civil distinctions; there are Indians who would think themselves dishonoured by eating with their king.

These sorts of distinctions are connected with a certain aversion for other men, very different from those sentiments which naturally arise from difference of rank; which among us comprehends a love for inferiors.

The laws of religion should never inspire an aversion to anything but vice, and above all they should never estrange man from a love and tenderness for his own species.

The Mahometan and Indian religions embrace an infinite number of people; the Indians hate the Mahometans, because they eat cows; the Mahometans detest the Indians because they eat hogs.

23. Of Festivals. When religion appoints a cessation from labour it ought to have a greater regard to the necessities of mankind than to the grandeur of the being it designs to honour.

Athens was subject to great inconveniences from the excessive number of its festivals. These power-

## Selections by the American Deist

---

ful people, to whose decision all the cities of Greece came to submit their quarrels, could not have time to despatch such a multiplicity of affairs.

When Constantine ordained that the people should rest on the Sabbath, he made this decree for the cities, and not for the inhabitants of the open country; he was sensible that labour in the cities was useful, but in the fields necessary.

For the same reason, in a country supported by commerce, the number of festivals ought to be relative to this very commerce. Protestant and Catholic countries are situated in such a manner that there is more need of labour in the former than in the latter; the suppression of festivals is therefore more suitable to Protestant than to Catholic countries.

Dampier observes that the diversions of different nations vary greatly, according to the climate. As hot climates produce a quantity of delicate fruits, the barbarians easily find necessaries, and therefore spend much time in diversions. The Indians of colder countries have not so much leisure, being obliged to fish and hunt continually; hence they have less music, dancing and festivals. If a new religion should be established among these people, it ought to have regard to this in the institution of festivals.

24. Of the local Laws of Religion. There are many local laws in various religions; and when Montezuma with so much obstinacy insisted that the religion of the Spaniards was good for their country, and his for Mexico, he did not assert an absurdity; because, in

## Readings in American Deism

---

fact, legislators could never help having a regard to what nature had established before them.

The opinion of the metempsychosis is adapted to the climate of the Indies. An excessive heat burns up all the country: they can breed but very few cattle; they are always in danger of wanting them for tillage; their black cattle multiply but indifferently; and they are subject to many distempers. A law of religion which preserves them is therefore more suitable to the policy of the country.

While the meadows are scorched, rice and pulse, by the assistance of water, are brought to perfection; a law of religion which permits only this kind of nourishment must therefore be extremely useful to men in those climates.

The flesh of cattle in that country is insipid but the milk and butter which they receive from them serve for a part of their subsistence; therefore the law which prohibits the eating and killing of cows is in the Indies not unreasonable.

Athens contained a prodigious multitude of people, but its territory was barren. It was therefore a religious maxim with this people that those who offered some small presents to the gods honoured them more than those who sacrificed an ox.

25. The Inconvenience of transplanting a Religion from one Country to another. It follows hence that there are frequently many inconveniences attending the transplanting a religion from one country to any other.

## Selections by the American Deist

---

“The hog,” says M. de Boulainvilliers, “must be very scarce in Arabia, where there are almost no woods, and hardly anything fit for the nourishment of these animals; besides, the saltness of the water and food renders the people most susceptible of cutaneous disorders.” This local law could not be good in other countries, where the hog is almost a universal, and in some sort a necessary, nourishment.

I shall here make a reflection. Sanctorius has observed that pork transpires but little, and that this kind of meat greatly binds the transpiration of other food; he has found that this diminution amounts to a third. Besides, it is known that the want of transpiration forms or increases the disorders of the skin. The feeding on pork ought rather to be prohibited in climates where the people are subject to these disorders, as in Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and Libya.

26. The same Subject continued. Sir John Chardin says that there is not a navigable river in Persia, except the Kur, which is at the extremity of the empire. The ancient law of the Gaur which prohibited sailing on rivers was not therefore attended with any inconvenience in this country, though it would have ruined the trade of another.

Frequent bathings are extremely useful in hot climates. On this account they are ordained in the Mahometan law and in the Indian religion. In the Indies it is a most meritorious act to pray to God in the running stream; but how could these things be performed in other climates?

## Readings in American Deism

---

When a religion adapted to the climate of one country clashes too much with the climate of another it cannot be there established; and whenever it has been introduced it has been afterwards discarded, it seems to all human appearance as if the climate had prescribed the bounds of the Christian and the Mahometan religions.

It follows hence, that it is almost always proper for a religion to have particular doctrines, and a general worship. In laws concerning the practice of religious worship there ought to be but few particulars; for instance, they should command mortification in general and not a certain kind of mortification. Christianity is full of good sense; abstinence is of divine institution; but a particular kind of abstinence is ordained by human authority and therefore may be changed.

[Translated by Thomas Nugent and revised by J. V. Prichard (notes omitted)]