

### Chapter III: The Constitution In The Age Of The Antonines.--Part I.

#### Of The Constitution Of The Roman Empire, In The Age Of The Antonines.

The obvious definition of a monarchy seems to be that of a state, in which a single person, by whatsoever name he may be distinguished, is intrusted with the execution of the laws, the management of the revenue, and the command of the army. But, unless public liberty is protected by intrepid and vigilant guardians, the authority of so formidable a magistrate will soon degenerate into despotism. The influence of the clergy, in an age of superstition, might be usefully employed to assert the rights of mankind; but so intimate is the connection between the throne and the altar, that the banner of the church has very seldom been seen on the side of the people. [101] A martial nobility and stubborn commons, possessed of arms, tenacious of property, and collected into constitutional assemblies, form the only balance capable of preserving a free constitution against enterprises of an aspiring prince.

[Footnote 101: Often enough in the ages of superstition, but not in the interest of the people or the state, but in that of the church to which all others were subordinate. Yet the power of the pope has often been of great service in repressing the excesses of sovereigns, and in softening manners.--W. The history of the Italian republics proves the error of Gibbon, and the justice of his German translator's comment.--M.]

Every barrier of the Roman constitution had been levelled by the vast ambition of the dictator; every fence had been extirpated by the cruel hand of the triumvir. After the victory of Actium, the fate of the Roman world depended on the will of Octavianus, surnamed Caesar, by his uncle's adoption, and afterwards Augustus, by the flattery of the senate. The conqueror was at the head of forty-four veteran legions, [1] conscious of their own strength, and of the weakness of the constitution, habituated, during twenty years' civil war, to every act of blood and violence, and passionately devoted to the house of Caesar, from whence alone they had received, and expected the most lavish rewards. The provinces, long oppressed by the ministers of the republic, sighed for the government of a single person, who would be the master, not the accomplice, of those petty tyrants. The people of Rome, viewing, with a secret pleasure, the humiliation of the aristocracy, demanded only bread and public shows; and were supplied with both by the liberal hand of Augustus. The rich and polite Italians, who had almost universally embraced the philosophy of Epicurus, enjoyed the present blessings of ease and tranquillity, and suffered not the pleasing dream to be interrupted by the memory of their old tumultuous freedom. With its power, the senate had lost its dignity; many of the most noble families were extinct. The republicans of spirit and ability had perished in the field of battle, or in the proscription. The door of the assembly had been designedly left open, for a mixed multitude of more than a thousand persons, who reflected disgrace upon their rank, instead of deriving honor from it. [2]

[Footnote 1: Orosius, vi. 18. \* Note: Dion says twenty-five, (or three,) (lv. 23.) The united triumvirs had but forty-three. (Appian. Bell. Civ. iv. 3.) The testimony of Orosius is of little value when more certain may be had.--W. But all the legions, doubtless, submitted to Augustus after the battle of Actium.--M.]

[Footnote 2: Julius Caesar introduced soldiers, strangers, and half-barbarians into the senate (Sueton. in Caesar. c. 77, 80.) The abuse became still more scandalous after his death.]

The reformation of the senate was one of the first steps in which Augustus laid aside the tyrant, and professed himself the father of his country. He was elected censor; and, in concert with his faithful Agrippa, he examined the list of the senators, expelled a few members, [201] whose vices or whose obstinacy required a public example, persuaded near two hundred to prevent the shame of an expulsion by a voluntary retreat, raised the qualification of a senator to about ten thousand pounds, created a sufficient number of patrician families, and accepted for himself the honorable title of Prince of the Senate, [202] which had always been bestowed, by the censors, on the citizen the most eminent for his honors and services. [3] But whilst he thus restored the dignity, he destroyed the independence, of the senate. The principles of a free constitution are irrecoverably lost, when the legislative power is nominated by the executive.

[Footnote 201: Of these Dion and Suetonius knew nothing.--W. Dion says the contrary.--M.]

[Footnote 202: But Augustus, then Octavius, was censor, and in virtue of that office, even according to the constitution of the free republic, could reform the senate, expel unworthy members, name the Princeps Senatus, &c. That was called, as is well known, Senatum legere. It was customary, during the free republic, for the censor to be named Princeps Senatus, (S. Liv. l. xxvii. c. 11, l. xl. c. 51;) and Dion expressly says, that this was done according to ancient usage. He was empowered by a decree of the senate to admit a number of families among the patricians. Finally, the senate was not the legislative power.--W]

[Footnote 3: Dion Cassius, l. liii. p. 693. Suetonius in August. c. 35.]

Before an assembly thus modelled and prepared, Augustus pronounced a studied oration, which displayed his patriotism, and disguised his ambition. "He lamented, yet excused, his past conduct. Filial piety had required at his hands the revenge of his father's murder; the humanity of his own nature had sometimes given way to the stern laws of necessity, and to a forced connection with two unworthy colleagues: as long as Antony lived, the republic forbade him to abandon her to a degenerate Roman, and a barbarian queen. He was now at liberty to satisfy his duty and his inclination. He solemnly restored the senate and people to all their ancient rights; and wished only to mingle with the crowd of his fellow-citizens, and to share the blessings which he

had obtained for his country." [4]

[Footnote 4: Dion (l. liii. p. 698) gives us a prolix and bombast speech on this great occasion. I have borrowed from Suetonius and Tacitus the general language of Augustus.]

It would require the pen of Tacitus (if Tacitus had assisted at this assembly) to describe the various emotions of the senate, those that were suppressed, and those that were affected. It was dangerous to trust the sincerity of Augustus; to seem to distrust it was still more dangerous. The respective advantages of monarchy and a republic have often divided speculative inquirers; the present greatness of the Roman state, the corruption of manners, and the license of the soldiers, supplied new arguments to the advocates of monarchy; and these general views of government were again warped by the hopes and fears of each individual. Amidst this confusion of sentiments, the answer of the senate was unanimous and decisive. They refused to accept the resignation of Augustus; they conjured him not to desert the republic, which he had saved. After a decent resistance, the crafty tyrant submitted to the orders of the senate; and consented to receive the government of the provinces, and the general command of the Roman armies, under the well-known names of Proconsul and Imperator. [5] But he would receive them only for ten years. Even before the expiration of that period, he hope that the wounds of civil discord would be completely healed, and that the republic, restored to its pristine health and vigor, would no longer require the dangerous interposition

of so extraordinary a magistrate. The memory of this comedy, repeated several times during the life of Augustus, was preserved to the last ages of the empire, by the peculiar pomp with which the perpetual monarchs of Rome always solemnized the tenth years of their reign. [6]

[Footnote 5: Imperator (from which we have derived Emperor) signified under her republic no more than general, and was emphatically bestowed by the soldiers, when on the field of battle they proclaimed their victorious leader worthy of that title. When the Roman emperors assumed it in that sense, they placed it after their name, and marked how often they had taken it.]

[Footnote 6: Dion. l. liii. p. 703, &c.]

Without any violation of the principles of the constitution, the general of the Roman armies might receive and exercise an authority almost despotic over the soldiers, the enemies, and the subjects of the republic. With regard to the soldiers, the jealousy of freedom had, even from the earliest ages of Rome, given way to the hopes of conquest, and a just sense of military discipline. The dictator, or consul, had a right to command the service of the Roman youth; and to punish an obstinate or cowardly disobedience by the most severe and ignominious penalties, by striking the offender out of the list of citizens, by confiscating his property, and by selling his person into slavery.

[7] The most sacred rights of freedom, confirmed by the Porcian and Sempronian laws, were suspended by the military engagement. In his

camp the general exercise an absolute power of life and death; his jurisdiction was not confined by any forms of trial, or rules of proceeding, and the execution of the sentence was immediate and without appeal. [8] The choice of the enemies of Rome was regularly decided by the legislative authority. The most important resolutions of peace and war were seriously debated in the senate, and solemnly ratified by the people. But when the arms of the legions were carried to a great distance from Italy, the general assumed the liberty of directing them against whatever people, and in whatever manner, they judged most advantageous for the public service. It was from the success, not from the justice, of their enterprises, that they expected the honors of a triumph. In the use of victory, especially after they were no longer controlled by the commissioners of the senate, they exercised the most unbounded despotism. When Pompey commanded in the East, he rewarded his soldiers and allies, dethroned princes, divided kingdoms, founded colonies, and distributed the treasures of Mithridates. On his return to Rome, he obtained, by a single act of the senate and people, the universal ratification of all his proceedings. [9] Such was the power over the soldiers, and over the enemies of Rome, which was either granted to, or assumed by, the generals of the republic. They were, at the same time, the governors, or rather monarchs, of the conquered provinces, united the civil with the military character, administered justice as well as the finances, and exercised both the executive and legislative power of the state.

[Footnote 7: Livy Epitom. 1. xiv. [c. 27.] Valer. Maxim. vi. 3.]

[Footnote 8: See, in the viiiith book of Livy, the conduct of Manlius Torquatus and Papirius Cursor. They violated the laws of nature and humanity, but they asserted those of military discipline; and the people, who abhorred the action, was obliged to respect the principle.]

[Footnote 9: By the lavish but unconstrained suffrages of the people, Pompey had obtained a military command scarcely inferior to that of Augustus. Among the extraordinary acts of power executed by the former we may remark the foundation of twenty-nine cities, and the distribution of three or four millions sterling to his troops. The ratification of his acts met with some opposition and delays in the senate See Plutarch, Appian, Dion Cassius, and the first book of the epistles to Atticus.]

From what has already been observed in the first chapter of this work, some notion may be formed of the armies and provinces thus intrusted to the ruling hand of Augustus. But as it was impossible that he could personally command the regions of so many distant frontiers, he was indulged by the senate, as Pompey had already been, in the permission of devolving the execution of his great office on a sufficient number of lieutenants. In rank and authority these officers seemed not inferior to the ancient proconsuls; but their station was dependent and precarious. They received and held their commissions at the will of a superior, to whose auspicious influence the merit of their action was legally attributed. [10] They were the representatives of the emperor. The emperor alone was the general of the republic, and his jurisdiction,

civil as well as military, extended over all the conquests of Rome. It was some satisfaction, however, to the senate, that he always delegated his power to the members of their body. The imperial lieutenants were of consular or praetorian dignity; the legions were commanded by senators, and the praefecture of Egypt was the only important trust committed to a Roman knight.

[Footnote 10: Under the commonwealth, a triumph could only be claimed by the general, who was authorized to take the Auspices in the name of the people. By an exact consequence, drawn from this principle of policy and religion, the triumph was reserved to the emperor; and his most successful lieutenants were satisfied with some marks of distinction, which, under the name of triumphal honors, were invented in their favor.]

Within six days after Augustus had been compelled to accept so very liberal a grant, he resolved to gratify the pride of the senate by an easy sacrifice. He represented to them, that they had enlarged his powers, even beyond that degree which might be required by the melancholy condition of the times. They had not permitted him to refuse the laborious command of the armies and the frontiers; but he must insist on being allowed to restore the more peaceful and secure provinces to the mild administration of the civil magistrate. In the division of the provinces, Augustus provided for his own power and for the dignity of the republic. The proconsuls of the senate, particularly those of Asia, Greece, and Africa, enjoyed a more honorable character

than the lieutenants of the emperor, who commanded in Gaul or Syria. The former were attended by lictors, the latter by soldiers. [105] A law was passed, that wherever the emperor was present, his extraordinary commission should supersede the ordinary jurisdiction of the governor; a custom was introduced, that the new conquests belonged to the imperial portion; and it was soon discovered that the authority of the Prince, the favorite epithet of Augustus, was the same in every part of the empire.

[Footnote 105: This distinction is without foundation. The lieutenants of the emperor, who were called Proprætors, whether they had been prætors or consuls, were attended by six lictors; those who had the right of the sword, (of life and death over the soldiers.--M.) bore the military habit (paludamentum) and the sword. The provincial governors commissioned by the senate, who, whether they had been consuls or not, were called Proconsuls, had twelve lictors when they had been consuls, and six only when they had but been prætors. The provinces of Africa and Asia were only given to ex-consuls. See, on the Organization of the Provinces, Dion, liii. 12, 16 Strabo, xvii 840.--W]

In return for this imaginary concession, Augustus obtained an important privilege, which rendered him master of Rome and Italy. By a dangerous exception to the ancient maxims, he was authorized to preserve his military command, supported by a numerous body of guards, even in time of peace, and in the heart of the capital. His command, indeed, was confined to those citizens who were engaged in the service by the

military oath; but such was the propensity of the Romans to servitude, that the oath was voluntarily taken by the magistrates, the senators, and the equestrian order, till the homage of flattery was insensibly converted into an annual and solemn protestation of fidelity.

Although Augustus considered a military force as the firmest foundation, he wisely rejected it, as a very odious instrument of government. It was more agreeable to his temper, as well as to his policy, to reign under the venerable names of ancient magistracy, and artfully to collect, in his own person, all the scattered rays of civil jurisdiction. With this view, he permitted the senate to confer upon him, for his life, the powers of the consular [11] and tribunitian offices, [12] which were, in the same manner, continued to all his successors. The consuls had succeeded to the kings of Rome, and represented the dignity of the state. They superintended the ceremonies of religion, levied and commanded the legions, gave audience to foreign ambassadors, and presided in the assemblies both of the senate and people. The general control of the finances was intrusted to their care; and though they seldom had leisure to administer justice in person, they were considered as the supreme guardians of law, equity, and the public peace. Such was their ordinary jurisdiction; but whenever the senate empowered the first magistrate to consult the safety of the commonwealth, he was raised by that decree above the laws, and exercised, in the defence of liberty, a temporary despotism. [13] The character of the tribunes was, in every respect, different from that of the consuls. The appearance of the former was modest and humble; but their persons were sacred and

inviolable. Their force was suited rather for opposition than for action. They were instituted to defend the oppressed, to pardon offences, to arraign the enemies of the people, and, when they judged it necessary, to stop, by a single word, the whole machine of government. As long as the republic subsisted, the dangerous influence, which either the consul or the tribune might derive from their respective jurisdiction, was diminished by several important restrictions. Their authority expired with the year in which they were elected; the former office was divided between two, the latter among ten persons; and, as both in their private and public interest they were averse to each other, their mutual conflicts contributed, for the most part, to strengthen rather than to destroy the balance of the constitution. [131] But when the consular and tribunitian powers were united, when they were vested for life in a single person, when the general of the army was, at the same time, the minister of the senate and the representative of the Roman people, it was impossible to resist the exercise, nor was it easy to define the limits, of his imperial prerogative.

[Footnote 11: Cicero (*de Legibus*, iii. 3) gives the consular office the name of *egia potestas*; and Polybius (l. vi. c. 3) observes three powers in the Roman constitution. The monarchical was represented and exercised by the consuls.]

[Footnote 12: As the tribunitian power (distinct from the annual office) was first invented by the dictator Caesar, (*Dion*, l. xlv. p. 384,) we may easily conceive, that it was given as a reward for having so nobly

asserted, by arms, the sacred rights of the tribunes and people. See his own Commentaries, de Bell. Civil. 1. i.]

[Footnote 13: Augustus exercised nine annual consulships without interruption. He then most artfully refused the magistracy, as well as the dictatorship, absented himself from Rome, and waited till the fatal effects of tumult and faction forced the senate to invest him with a perpetual consulship. Augustus, as well as his successors, affected, however, to conceal so invidious a title.]

[Footnote 131: The note of M. Guizot on the tribunitian power applies to the French translation rather than to the original. The former has, *maintenir la balance toujours egale*, which implies much more than Gibbon's general expression. The note belongs rather to the history of the Republic than that of the Empire.--M]

To these accumulated honors, the policy of Augustus soon added the splendid as well as important dignities of supreme pontiff, and of censor. By the former he acquired the management of the religion, and by the latter a legal inspection over the manners and fortunes, of the Roman people. If so many distinct and independent powers did not exactly unite with each other, the complaisance of the senate was prepared to supply every deficiency by the most ample and extraordinary concessions. The emperors, as the first ministers of the republic, were exempted from the obligation and penalty of many inconvenient laws: they were authorized to convoke the senate, to make several motions in the same

day, to recommend candidates for the honors of the state, to enlarge the bounds of the city, to employ the revenue at their discretion, to declare peace and war, to ratify treaties; and by a most comprehensive clause, they were empowered to execute whatsoever they should judge advantageous to the empire, and agreeable to the majesty of things private or public, human or divine. [14]

[Footnote 14: See a fragment of a Decree of the Senate, conferring on the emperor Vespasian all the powers granted to his predecessors, Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius. This curious and important monument is published in Gruter's Inscriptions, No. ccxlii. \* Note: It is also in the editions of Tacitus by Ryck, (Annal. p. 420, 421,) and Ernesti, (Excurs. ad lib. iv. 6;) but this fragment contains so many inconsistencies, both in matter and form, that its authenticity may be doubted--W.]

When all the various powers of executive government were committed to the Imperial magistrate, the ordinary magistrates of the commonwealth languished in obscurity, without vigor, and almost without business. The names and forms of the ancient administration were preserved by Augustus with the most anxious care. The usual number of consuls, praetors, and tribunes, [15] were annually invested with their respective ensigns of office, and continued to discharge some of their least important functions. Those honors still attracted the vain ambition of the Romans; and the emperors themselves, though invested for life with the powers of the consulship, frequently aspired to the title of that annual dignity,

which they condescended to share with the most illustrious of their fellow-citizens. [16] In the election of these magistrates, the people, during the reign of Augustus, were permitted to expose all the inconveniences of a wild democracy. That artful prince, instead of discovering the least symptom of impatience, humbly solicited their suffrages for himself or his friends, and scrupulously practised all the duties of an ordinary candidate. [17] But we may venture to ascribe to his councils the first measure of the succeeding reign, by which the elections were transferred to the senate. [18] The assemblies of the people were forever abolished, and the emperors were delivered from a dangerous multitude, who, without restoring liberty, might have disturbed, and perhaps endangered, the established government.

[Footnote 15: Two consuls were created on the Calends of January; but in the course of the year others were substituted in their places, till the annual number seems to have amounted to no less than twelve. The praetors were usually sixteen or eighteen, (Lipsius in Excurs. D. ad Tacit. Annal. l. i.) I have not mentioned the Aediles or Quaestors Officers of the police or revenue easily adapt themselves to any form of government. In the time of Nero, the tribunes legally possessed the right of intercession, though it might be dangerous to exercise it (Tacit. Annal. xvi. 26.) In the time of Trajan, it was doubtful whether the tribuneship was an office or a name, (Plin. Epist. i. 23.)]

[Footnote 16: The tyrants themselves were ambitious of the consulship. The virtuous princes were moderate in the pursuit, and exact in the

discharge of it. Trajan revived the ancient oath, and swore before the consul's tribunal that he would observe the laws, (Plin. Panegyric c. 64.)]

[Footnote 17: Quoties Magistratum Comitibus interesset. Tribus cum candidatis suis circumbat: supplicabatque more solemniori. Ferebat et ipse suffragium in tribubus, ut unus e populo. Suetonius in Augustus c. 56.]

[Footnote 18: Tum primum Comitia e campo ad patres translata sunt. Tacit. Annal. i. 15. The word primum seems to allude to some faint and unsuccessful efforts which were made towards restoring them to the people. Note: The emperor Caligula made the attempt: he restored the Comitia to the people, but, in a short time, took them away again. Suet. in Caio. c. 16. Dion. lix. 9, 20. Nevertheless, at the time of Dion, they preserved still the form of the Comitia. Dion. lvi. 20.--W.]

By declaring themselves the protectors of the people, Marius and Caesar had subverted the constitution of their country. But as soon as the senate had been humbled and disarmed, such an assembly, consisting of five or six hundred persons, was found a much more tractable and useful instrument of dominion. It was on the dignity of the senate that Augustus and his successors founded their new empire; and they affected, on every occasion, to adopt the language and principles of Patricians. In the administration of their own powers, they frequently consulted the great national council, and seemed to refer to its decision the most important concerns of peace and war. Rome, Italy, and the internal

provinces, were subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the senate. With regard to civil objects, it was the supreme court of appeal; with regard to criminal matters, a tribunal, constituted for the trial of all offences that were committed by men in any public station, or that affected the peace and majesty of the Roman people. The exercise of the judicial power became the most frequent and serious occupation of the senate; and the important causes that were pleaded before them afforded a last refuge to the spirit of ancient eloquence. As a council of state, and as a court of justice, the senate possessed very considerable prerogatives; but in its legislative capacity, in which it was supposed virtually to represent the people, the rights of sovereignty were acknowledged to reside in that assembly. Every power was derived from their authority, every law was ratified by their sanction. Their regular meetings were held on three stated days in every month, the Calends, the Nones, and the Ides. The debates were conducted with decent freedom; and the emperors themselves, who gloried in the name of senators, sat, voted, and divided with their equals. To resume, in a few words, the system of the Imperial government; as it was instituted by Augustus, and maintained by those princes who understood their own interest and that of the people, it may be defined an absolute monarchy disguised by the forms of a commonwealth. The masters of the Roman world surrounded their throne with darkness, concealed their irresistible strength, and humbly professed themselves the accountable ministers of the senate, whose supreme decrees they dictated and obeyed. [19]

[Footnote 19: Dion Cassius (l. liii. p. 703--714) has given a very loose

and partial sketch of the Imperial system. To illustrate and often to correct him, I have meditated Tacitus, examined Suetonius, and consulted the following moderns: the Abbe de la Bleterie, in the Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xix. xxi. xxiv. xxv. xxvii. Beaufort Republique Romaine, tom. i. p. 255--275. The Dissertations of Noodt and Gronovius de lege Regia, printed at Leyden, in the year 1731 Gravina de Imperio Romano, p. 479--544 of his Opuscula. Maffei, Verona Illustrata, p. i. p. 245, &c.] The face of the court corresponded with the forms of the administration. The emperors, if we except those tyrants whose capricious folly violated every law of nature and decency, disdained that pomp and ceremony which might offend their countrymen, but could add nothing to their real power. In all the offices of life, they affected to confound themselves with their subjects, and maintained with them an equal intercourse of visits and entertainments. Their habit, their palace, their table, were suited only to the rank of an opulent senator. Their family, however numerous or splendid, was composed entirely of their domestic slaves and freedmen. [20] Augustus or Trajan would have blushed at employing the meanest of the Romans in those menial offices, which, in the household and bedchamber of a limited monarch, are so eagerly solicited by the proudest nobles of Britain.]

[Footnote 20: A weak prince will always be governed by his domestics. The power of slaves aggravated the shame of the Romans; and the senate paid court to a Pallas or a Narcissus. There is a chance that a modern favorite may be a gentleman.]

The deification of the emperors [21] is the only instance in which they departed from their accustomed prudence and modesty. The Asiatic Greeks were the first inventors, the successors of Alexander the first objects, of this servile and impious mode of adulation. [211] It was easily transferred from the kings to the governors of Asia; and the Roman magistrates very frequently were adored as provincial deities, with the pomp of altars and temples, of festivals and sacrifices. [22] It was natural that the emperors should not refuse what the proconsuls had accepted; and the divine honors which both the one and the other received from the provinces, attested rather the despotism than the servitude of Rome. But the conquerors soon imitated the vanquished nations in the arts of flattery; and the imperious spirit of the first Caesar too easily consented to assume, during his lifetime, a place among the tutelar deities of Rome. The milder temper of his successor declined so dangerous an ambition, which was never afterwards revived, except by the madness of Caligula and Domitian. Augustus permitted indeed some of the provincial cities to erect temples to his honor, on condition that they should associate the worship of Rome with that of the sovereign; he tolerated private superstition, of which he might be the object; [23] but he contented himself with being revered by the senate and the people in his human character, and wisely left to his successor the care of his public deification. A regular custom was introduced, that on the decease of every emperor who had neither lived nor died like a tyrant, the senate by a solemn decree should place him in the number of the gods: and the ceremonies of his apotheosis were blended with those of his funeral. [231] This legal, and, as it should

seem, injudicious profanation, so abhorrent to our stricter principles, was received with a very faint murmur, [24] by the easy nature of Polytheism; but it was received as an institution, not of religion, but of policy. We should disgrace the virtues of the Antonines by comparing them with the vices of Hercules or Jupiter. Even the characters of Caesar or Augustus were far superior to those of the popular deities. But it was the misfortune of the former to live in an enlightened age, and their actions were too faithfully recorded to admit of such a mixture of fable and mystery, as the devotion of the vulgar requires. As soon as their divinity was established by law, it sunk into oblivion, without contributing either to their own fame, or to the dignity of succeeding princes.

[Footnote 21: See a treatise of Vandale de Consecratione Principium.

It would be easier for me to copy, than it has been to verify, the quotations of that learned Dutchman.]

[Footnote 211: This is inaccurate. The successors of Alexander were not the first deified sovereigns; the Egyptians had deified and worshipped many of their kings; the Olympus of the Greeks was peopled with divinities who had reigned on earth; finally, Romulus himself had received the honors of an apotheosis (Tit. Liv. i. 16) a long time before Alexander and his successors. It is also an inaccuracy to confound the honors offered in the provinces to the Roman governors, by temples and altars, with the true apotheosis of the emperors; it was not a religious worship, for it had neither priests nor sacrifices. Augustus

was severely blamed for having permitted himself to be worshipped as a god in the provinces, (Tac. Ann. i. 10: ) he would not have incurred that blame if he had only done what the governors were accustomed to do.--G. from W. M. Guizot has been guilty of a still greater inaccuracy in confounding the deification of the living with the apotheosis of the dead emperors. The nature of the king-worship of Egypt is still very obscure; the hero-worship of the Greeks very different from the adoration of the "praesens numen" in the reigning sovereign.--M.]

[Footnote 22: See a dissertation of the Abbe Mongault in the first volume of the Academy of Inscriptions.]

[Footnote 23: Jurandasque tuum per nomen ponimus aras, says Horace to the emperor himself, and Horace was well acquainted with the court of Augustus. Note: The good princes were not those who alone obtained the honors of an apotheosis: it was conferred on many tyrants. See an excellent treatise of Schaefflin, de Consecratione Imperatorum Romanorum, in his Commentationes historicae et criticae. Bale, 1741, p. 184.--W.]

[Footnote 231: The curious satire in the works of Seneca, is the strongest remonstrance of profaned religion.--M.]

[Footnote 24: See Cicero in Philippic. i. 6. Julian in Caesaribus. Inque Deum templis jurabit Roma per umbras, is the indignant expression of Lucan; but it is a patriotic rather than a devout indignation.]

In the consideration of the Imperial government, we have frequently mentioned the artful founder, under his well-known title of Augustus, which was not, however, conferred upon him till the edifice was almost completed. The obscure name of Octavianus he derived from a mean family, in the little town of Aricia. [241] It was stained with the blood of the proscription; and he was desirous, had it been possible, to erase all memory of his former life. The illustrious surname of Caesar he had assumed, as the adopted son of the dictator: but he had too much good sense, either to hope to be confounded, or to wish to be compared with that extraordinary man. It was proposed in the senate to dignify their minister with a new appellation; and after a serious discussion, that of Augustus was chosen, among several others, as being the most expressive of the character of peace and sanctity, which he uniformly affected. [25] Augustus was therefore a personal, Caesar a family distinction. The former should naturally have expired with the prince on whom it was bestowed; and however the latter was diffused by adoption and female alliance, Nero was the last prince who could allege any hereditary claim to the honors of the Julian line. But, at the time of his death, the practice of a century had inseparably connected those appellations with the Imperial dignity, and they have been preserved by a long succession of emperors, Romans, Greeks, Franks, and Germans, from the fall of the republic to the present time. A distinction was, however, soon introduced. The sacred title of Augustus was always reserved for the monarch, whilst the name of Caesar was more freely communicated to his relations; and, from the reign of Hadrian, at least, was appropriated

to the second person in the state, who was considered as the presumptive heir of the empire. [251]

[Footnote 241: Octavius was not of an obscure family, but of a considerable one of the equestrian order. His father, C. Octavius, who possessed great property, had been praetor, governor of Macedonia, adorned with the title of Imperator, and was on the point of becoming consul when he died. His mother Attia, was daughter of M. Attius Balbus, who had also been praetor. M. Anthony reproached Octavius with having been born in Aricia, which, nevertheless, was a considerable municipal city: he was vigorously refuted by Cicero. Philip. iii. c. 6.--W. Gibbon probably meant that the family had but recently emerged into notice.--M.]

[Footnote 25: Dion. Cassius, l. liii. p. 710, with the curious Annotations of Reimar.]

[Footnote 251: The princes who by their birth or their adoption belonged to the family of the Caesars, took the name of Caesar. After the death of Nero, this name designated the Imperial dignity itself, and afterwards the appointed successor. The time at which it was employed in the latter sense, cannot be fixed with certainty. Bach (Hist. Jurisprud. Rom. 304) affirms from Tacitus, H. i. 15, and Suetonius, Galba, 17, that Galba conferred on Piso Lucinianus the title of Caesar, and from that time the term had this meaning: but these two historians simply say that he appointed Piso his successor, and do not mention the word Caesar. Aurelius Victor (in Traj. 348, ed. Artzen) says that Hadrian first

received this title on his adoption; but as the adoption of Hadrian is still doubtful, and besides this, as Trajan, on his death-bed, was not likely to have created a new title for his successor, it is more probable that Aelius Verus was the first who was called Caesar when adopted by Hadrian. Spart. in Aelio Vero, 102.--W.]