

frequented route of commerce, in vast plains, which they had been obliged to intersect with numerous canals; instructed, like them, by hereditary priests, the pretended depositaries of secret books, the privileged possessors of the sciences, astrologers, builders of pyramids, and other great monuments *; should they not also resemble them in other essential points? Should not their history be equally a mere collection of legendary tales? I venture almost to assert, that not only is this probable, but that it is actually demonstrated.

Up to this period neither Moses nor Homer speak of any great empire in Upper Asia. Herodotus † gives to the supremacy of the Assyrians a duration of only 520 years, and does not attribute to their origin a greater antiquity than about eight centuries before his own time. After having been at Babylon, where he consulted the priests, he had not even learnt the name of Ninus as king of the Assyrians, and does not mention him otherwise than as the father of Agro ‡, the first

relation to the plains or the course of the Ganges, where their first establishments were evidently formed.

* The descriptions of the ancient Chaldean monuments have a strong resemblance to what we see of those of the Indians and Egyptians; but these monuments are not equally well preserved, because they were only built of bricks dried in the sun.

† Clio, cap. xciv.

‡ Clio, cap. vii.