

barbarity, which became every day more fatal. The first religious errors, which peopled the earth with false divinities, and created a world of invifible beings to govern the vifible creation, were of the utmoft service to mankind. The greateft benefactors to humanity were thofe who dared to deceive, and lead pliant ignorance to the foot of the altar. By prefenting to the minds of the vulgar, things out of the reach of their fenfes, which fled as they purfued, and always eluded their grasp; which, as they never comprehended, they never defpifed, their different paffions were united, and attached to a fingle object. This was the firft tranfition of all nations from their favage ftate. Such was the neceffary, and perhaps the only bond of all focieties at their firft formation. I fpeak not of the chofen people of God, to whom the moft extraordinary miracles, and the moft fignal favours, fupplied the place of human policy. But as it is the nature of error to fubdivide itfelf *ad infinitum*, fo the pretended knowledge, which fprung from it, transformed