

The history of the origin of the noble science of astronomy, and of its progress in early times, is involved in no small obscurity, and has occasioned a great variety of speculations and conjectures ; the canvassing of which could not afford either much information or amusement. The antiquity, as well as the utility of it, the Deity has been understood to intimate, when, concerning the heavenly luminaries, he spake thus : *Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.* Adam, in his state of innocence, we are informed by the Jewish Rabbins, had an extensive knowledge of astronomy. The inhabitants of the Antediluvian world, particularly Seth and his posterity, Josephus tells us, were acquainted with this science. The longevity of the patriarchs afforded them singular advantages and opportunities for making astronomical observations. At the dispersion occasioned by the confusion of languages, at the building of the Tower of Babel, Noah, we are told, retired with the children, who were born to him after the flood, into the north-eastern parts of Asia, and introduced the knowledge of astronomy into those countries. In this manner writers account for the early cultivation of the sciences in China, Siam, Japan, the dominions of the great Mogul, and other parts of the east. In the western world, as well as the eastern, among the Americans, as well as the Asiatics, particularly the natives of Mexico, writers have found sufficient proofs of an acquaintance with astronomy. But, there are especially two countries, which, in ancient times, were distinguished and famous for the cultivation of this sublime science ; Chaldea and Egypt. Both these countries, it has been observed, were exceedingly proper for making astronomical observations, on account of the purity and serenity of their air. The temple of Belus, which was of an extraordinary height, it is said, was used as an astronomical observatory ; and the lofty pyramids of Egypt, whatever may have been the original design of them, might answer the same purpose. For a proof
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