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XXIV.21 On metempsychosis

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXIV. On laws in their relation with religion, considered in its doctrines and in itself -

Date de mise en ligne : vendredi 7 septembre 2018

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XXIV.21 On metempsychosis

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul divides into three branches : the pure immortality branch, the simple change of habitation branch, and the metempsychosis branch : in other words, the system of the Christians, the system of the Scythians, and the system of the Indians. We have just discussed the first two, and I will say of the third that, as it has been well and ill directed, in the Indies it has good and bad effects ; as it gives men a certain horror for the shedding of blood, there are very few murders in the Indies ; and although they rarely if at all punish by death, everyone there is tranquil.

On the other hand, women burn themselves upon the death of their husbands ; only innocents there suffer a violent death.