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XIX.18 Consequences of the preceding chapter

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIX. On the laws in the relation they have to the principles that constitute the general spirit, the ethos, and the manners of a nation -

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It results from this that China does not lose its laws by conquest. Manners, ethos, laws, and religion being the same thing, all that cannot be changed at once ; and as either the victor or the vanquished must change, in China it has always had to be the victor. For his ethos not being his manners, his manners his laws, and his laws his religion, it has been simpler for him to adapt little by little to the vanquished people, than the vanquished people to him.

It further follows from this something very regrettable, which is that it is almost impossible for Christianity ever to become established in China. [1] The vow of virginity, assemblies of women in the churches, their necessary communication with the ministers of religion, their participation in the sacraments, aural confession, extreme unction, marriage to a single woman : all these upset the ethos and manners of the country, and further strike at religion and the laws at the same time.

The Christian religion, with the establishment of charity, public worship, and participation in the same sacraments, seems to require that all everything be done together ; the Chinese rites seem to command that all be separated.

[1] See the reasons given by Chinese magistrates in the decrees by which they forbid the Christian religion (*Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, 17th volume).