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# XIX.21 How the laws should be relative to morals and manners

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

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Only singular institutions thus conflate things that are naturally separated : laws, morals, and manners ; but even separated, they nevertheless have considerable relationships between them.

Solon was asked whether the laws he had given to the Athenians were the best. "I have given them," he replied, "the best of those they could tolerate" : an excellent reply that should be heard by all legislators. When divine wisdom says to the Jewish people : "I have given you precepts which are not good," [\[1\]](#) that means that their goodness was only relative, which erases all the difficulties that can be raised about the laws of Moses.

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[\[1\]](#) [Ezekiel 20:25.]