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XXIV.6 Another paradox of Bayle's

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

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Mr. Bayle, after insulting all religions, stigmatizes the Christian religion : he dares to suggest that true Christians would not form a state capable of lasting. Why not ? They would be citizens infinitely enlightened about their duties, and would have very great zeal for fulfilling them ; they would be quite conscious of the rights of natural defense ; the more they believed they owed to religion, the more they would think they owed to their homeland. The principles of Christianity, deeply engraved in the heart, would be infinitely more powerful than the false honor of monarchies, the human virtues of republics, and the servile fear of despotic states.

It is surprising that it is possible to accuse this great man of misjudging the spirit of his own religion, of being unable to distinguish the orders for the establishment of Christianity from Christianity itself, or the precepts of the Gospel from its guidance : when the legislator, instead of giving laws, has given guidance, it is because he has seen that his guidance, were it commanded like laws, would be contrary to the spirit of his laws.