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XXIV.18 How the laws of religion have the effect of civil laws

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

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The early Greeks were small and often dispersed peoples, pirates on the sea, unjust on land, ungoverned and lawless. The great feats of Hercules and Theseus manifest the state of this rising people. What more could religion do, other than what it did, to create horror for murder ? It established that one man killed by violence had first been angry at the murderer, that he provoked anxiety and terror in him, and tried to make him yield to him the places he had frequented [1] ; no one could touch the criminal or converse with him without being tainted or legally disqualified [2] ; the city had to be spared the murderer's presence, and had to be cleansed. [3]

[1] Plato, *Laws*, book IX.

[2] See the tragedie of *Rdipus at Colonus*.

[3] Plato, *Laws*, book IX.