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# XXV.8 On the pontificate

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXV. On laws in their relation with the establishment of religion and its external policy -

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When religion has many ministers, it is natural that they should have a head, and that the pontificate be established. In the monarchy, where the orders of the state cannot be too separate, and where all forms of authority ought not to be lodged in the same person, it is a good thing for the pontificate to be separate from the empire. The same necessity is not encountered in despotic government, the nature of which is to concentrate all powers in the same person. But in that case, it could happen that the prince would regard religion as his own laws, and as effects of his will. To obviate this problem, there need to be witnesses to the religion, for example sacred books that fix and establish it. The king of Persia is the head of the religion, but the Coran determines the religion ; the emperor of China is the supreme pontiff, but there are books which are in everyone's hands to which he must himself conform. In vain did an emperor attempt to abolish them ; they triumphed over his tyranny.