

<http://montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article3014>



XXIV.16 How the laws of religion correct the problems of the political constitution

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

Date de mise en ligne : vendredi 7 septembre 2018

Copyright © Montesquieu - Tous droits réservés

XXIV.16 How the laws of religion correct the problems of the political constitution

On the other hand, religion can uphold the political state when the laws prove powerless.

Thus, when the state is often shaken by civil wars, religion will do a great deal if it establishes some part of that state that will always remain at peace. The Eleians, among the Greeks, as priests of Apollo, enjoyed perpetual peace. In Japan, the city of Meaco, which is a holy city, is always left in peace [1] ; the religion maintains this rule, and this empire which seems to be the only one on earth which has and wishes to have no need of outsiders, always has an internal commerce which war does not ruin.

In states where wars are not waged by common deliberation, and where the laws have left themselves no means of ending or preventing them, religion establishes times of peace or of truces so that the people may do the things without which the state could not subsist, such as sowing and similar labors.

For four months every year, all hostility ceased between Arab tribes [2] ; the slightest disturbance would have been an impiety. When each lord in France made war or peace, religion provided truces, which were to occur in certain seasons.

[1] *Recueil des voyages qui ont servi à l'établissement de la Compagnie des Indes*, vol. IV, part I, p. 127.

[2] See Prideaux, *Life of Mohammed*, p. 64.