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XXV.11 On change of religion

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

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A prince who undertakes to destroy or change the dominant religion in his state is taking a considerable risk. If his government is despotic, he runs a greater risk of seeing a revolution than through any kind of tyranny, which in these sorts of states is never anything new. The revolution occurs because a state does not change religion, morals, and manners in a moment, and as quickly as the prince publishes the decree establishing a new religion.

Besides, the former religion is tied in with the constitution of the state, and the new one is not ; the former is compatible with the climate, as often the new one cannot be. To make it worse, the citizens turn away from their laws ; they begin to disdain the government already established ; doubts about both religions take the place of a firm belief in one ; in a word, it is to give the state, at least for a time, both poor citizens and poor believers.