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XXVI.1 The argument of this book

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXVI. On laws in the relation they must have with the order of things on which they bear -

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Men are governed by various sorts of laws : by natural law ; by divine law, which is that of religion ; by ecclesiastical law, otherwise known as canon law, which is that of religious order ; by the law of nations, which can be thought of as global civil law, in the sense that each people is a citizen of it ; by general political law, of which the objective is the human wisdom that has founded all societies ; by the particular political law, which pertains to each society ; by the law of conquest, [1] based on the fact that one people has willed, has been able to, or has had to do violence to another ; by the civil law of each society, by which a citizen may defend his property and his life against any other citizen ; and finally by domestic law, owing to the fact that a society is divided into various families, which need their own government.

There are therefore different orders of laws ; and the sublimity of human reason consists in properly discerning to which of these orders the things that must be decided principally relate, and in not introducing confusion in the principles that must govern men.

[1] [*Droit de conquête*, in other contexts translated as "right of conquest."]