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**XXIV.3 That moderate  
government is more  
compatible with the Christian  
religion, and despotic  
government with the  
Mohammedan religion**

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- 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 Christian religion is inimical to pure despotism because, kindness being so often counseled in the Gospel, it opposes the despotic wrath with which the prince would impose his own way and practice his cruelties.

As this religion forbids a plurality of wives, its princes are less enclosed, less separated from their subjects, and consequently more human ; they are more disposed to discipline themselves, and more capable of realizing that they cannot do everything.

While Mohammedan princes are constantly imposing or suffering death, the religion of the Christians makes princes less tentative, and therefore less cruel. The prince relies on his subjects, and the subjects on the prince. How marvelous it is that the Christian religion, which seems to have no other end than felicity in the afterlife, also provides for our happiness in this one.

It is the Christian religion that, despite the greatness of the empire and the vice of the climate, has prevented despotism from establishing itself in Ethiopia, and brought the ways of Europe and her laws to the middle of Africa.

The hereditary prince of Ethiopia enjoys a principality and gives to other subjects the example of love and obedience. Not far away we see Mohammedanism having the children of the king of Sennar locked up [1] : at his death the council sends them to be slaughtered in favor of the one who mounts the throne.

Let us think of the continual massacres of Greek and Roman kings and leaders, and on the other hand the destruction of peoples and cities by Timor Beg and Genghis Khan, those same leaders who ravaged Asia ; and we shall see that we owe to Christianity both a certain political law in government and a certain law of nations in war, for which humankind cannot be too grateful.

It is thanks to this law of nations that, among us, victory leaves these important things to vanquished peoples : life, liberty, laws, possessions, and always religion, when they are not being willfully blind.

We can say that the peoples of Europe are not today more disunited than the peoples and armies were in the Roman empire when it had become despotic and military, or within the armies themselves ; on the one hand, the armies were at war with one other, and on the other they were allowed to pillage the cities and divide up or confiscate the lands.

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[1] Relation on Ethiopia by Mr. Ponce, physician, in 4th volume of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*.