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Religion

INTRODUCTION

ARGUMENT is unprofitable—worse than that, unintelligible—when opponents do not share some common ground. Between the complete skeptic who denies reason's competence and the philosopher or scientist who appeals to it, no common ground exists. Between the man who obeys the rule not to contradict himself and the man who finds nothing repugnant in answering Yes and No to the same question, there can be no argument. There is an issue between them, but the position each takes reduces the other to silence.

Lack of a common measure for judging opposed views tends to render them incommunicable to one another. For men to be in this plight is the exception in science and philosophy, but it seems to be the typical situation where the basic issues of religion are concerned. Of all subjects the most controversial, religious issues seem to be the least capable of being settled by controversy. No divisions among men—certainly not those which separate philosophers or scientists—are as unbridgeable as the chasm between the faithful and those they call infidels, between Jew and gentile, or Christian and pagan. Faith and lack of faith, or the diversity of faiths, seem to render certain questions as imponderable as they are weighty.

On the definition of religion itself, the deepest issue lies between those who conceive it as having a supernatural foundation in God's revelation and authority, and those who think of religion as having a purely natural origin in certain human tendencies, which makes it no different from philosophy and science as an element of culture.

This latter view is the basis for the field of anthropology, a science which came of age in the 20th century. "The anthropologist's task," writes Lévi-Strauss, "is to discover correlations between different types of religions and different types of social organization . . . The field of myth, ritual, and religion seems . . . to be one of the more fruitful for the study of social structure." Frazer, while admitting the difficulty of defining religion, claims that it universally includes "a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them." Both sides of this definition assume that "the course of nature is to some extent elastic or variable, and that we can persuade or induce the mighty beings who control it to deflect, for our benefit, the current of events from the channel in which they would otherwise flow." In this sense, both Frazer and Lévi-Strauss see religion closely linked to—and perhaps growing out of—magic. As scientists, they are concerned with the supernatural only insofar as it works its way into the structure of society.

Religion can be supernatural only for those whose faith declares it to be so. Those who deny that it is supernatural may offer many reasons for thinking so, and try in many ways to explain away faith. What they all come to is that it is an illusion to suppose faith is God's gift rather than man's own will to believe. To the man of faith this only means that his critic lacks the gift of faith or even the wish to have it.

Many consequences follow from this unarguable difference concerning the meaning of religion. Religion to the man of faith usually means much more than the acceptance of a creed. It means acts of piety and worship, recourse to prayer, the partaking of sacraments, the observance of certain rituals, the perfor-

mance of sacrifices and purifications. It means rendering to God what is His due, obeying His commandments, beseeching and gaining the help of His grace, whereby to lead a life which shall seem worthy to Him. "Religion and thought concerning God," Barth declares, "have never meant the same thing." He also maintains that "the so-called 'religious experience' is a wholly derived, secondary, fragmentary form of the divine. Even in its highest and purest examples, it is form and not content."

When religion is conceived as nothing more than a set of beliefs which men have adopted, it is restricted to one part of life. It may or may not involve action as well as thought, but it is not the fabric of a whole life. It does not qualify every other part of it. It does not demand that inner devotion and external conduct constitute the practice of a man's belief if he is to avoid hypocrisy.

In this set of books we find quite the opposite views of religion in the writings of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Kierkegaard, on the one hand, and in the writings of Nietzsche, Weber, and Veblen, on the other hand. The first group of authors comprises persons of intense religious faith. The second group, lacking such faith, approaches religion as outsiders, as students of its social or cultural significance.

ACCORDING TO THIS difference in the conception of religion as supernatural or natural, men seem to hold incommunicably different views of religious belief, of revelation, miracles, and prophecies. But those who agree that religion is not man-made, that it requires, in some form, divine authority and inspiration, do not all have the same faith, worship in the same way, or conform to the same rites. The issue, therefore, between men of different faiths—men who live according to the rules of different religious communities—is almost as difficult as that between the religious and the irreligious.

In the western tradition, the plurality of religions necessarily raises a question of truth and falsity for any religionist whose faith excludes the possibility of several equally true religions. "Idolatrous" and "superstitious," "heretical" and "schismatic," are epithets which draw their special significance from controversies about religion and religions. The word "pagan," as Gibbon points out, comes to mean idolatry or the worship of false gods. "The Latin Christians," he says, "bestowed it on their mortal enemies, the Mahometans." The Muhammadans, in turn, held the view, according to Gibbon, that "all except themselves deserved the reproach of idolatry and polytheism." The charges of idolatry and superstition occur also in the conflict between Jew and Christian, between Protestant and Catholic, countered often by charges of infidelity or heresy and schism.

Quite apart from the general problem of church and state, with its issues of political toleration and freedom of worship, the very meaning of religion raises the question of tolerance in its most acute form. It is not a question of political rights and liberties, but of being right or wrong in one's religious beliefs and acts. To the extent that the communicants of one religion regard themselves as believing what God has revealed to them, and to the extent that they hold their religious practices to be prescribed by divine law, they are not free in conscience, it seems, to entertain contrary beliefs and practices as conceivably true alternatives.

The conflict between men of diverse faiths, alike in their understanding of faith as divinely inspired, somehow appeals beyond any human decision to God himself for judgment. The controversy between men of any religious faith and those who treat such faith as a purely human prejudice seems to be even less susceptible of resolution by the ordinary processes of discourse.

IF THESE OBSERVATIONS are accurate and just, the materials of this chapter cannot be assembled dialectically—either as opposed views or as belonging together—simply by reference to the content of the various opinions which can be found in the great books. In this chapter, as in no other except, perhaps, those which treat of matters connected with religion—such as GOD, IMMORTALITY, SIN, and THEOLOGY—it seems necessary to pay some attention to the

opinion's author as well as to the opinion, and even in some cases to the community or culture in which the opinion arises. It is not as necessary, for example, to know whether the man who writes about virtue is himself virtuous as it is to know whether the man who writes about religion is religious and to know furthermore in what sense he conceives himself as being religious and what religion he espouses.

The distinction between sacred and profane, and between religious and secular, applies to books as well as to other things. In the tradition of the great books, only one book is set apart as sacred. None of the writers included in this set regard the Koran as sacred scripture, though Gibbon as a historian reports the Islamic belief in the Koran. Muslims believe that the Koran is the word of God revealed to His one and only prophet, as Jews believe that the Old Testament is divinely inspired writing, and Christians believe in both Testaments as Holy Writ.

But though the Bible is *the* traditionally sacred book of the west, it is not read as such by all who write about it. The historian or the philosopher who is not himself a religious Jew or Christian may acknowledge the belief of others without sharing it. He reads the Bible as a collection of human writings which have exercised an unparalleled influence upon western culture. Whatever the merit of these writings as wisdom, history, preachment, or poetry, they do not command a special kind of reading unless they are distinguished from all others by being the word of God, not man. Controversies over interpretations of the Bible may thus begin with each side begging the main question in issue. Is the Bible sacred scripture, or is it no different in kind from the poetry of Homer and the sayings of the Greek wise men?

The two ways of reading the Bible are incommensurable. If the Bible is not sacred, a critical reading may be expected to disclose inconsistencies in it, and many of the things it says may be questioned in fact or in principle. But if, though humanly recorded, it is the repository of divine revelation, then it has an authority which puts it above questioning, though not beyond the need for interpretation.

There is one sort of proposition, says Locke, which challenges "the highest degree of our assent upon bare testimony, whether the thing proposed agree or disagree with common experience, and the ordinary course of things, or no. The reason whereof is, because the testimony is of such a one as cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and that is of God himself. This carries with it an assurance beyond doubt, evidence beyond exception. This is called by a peculiar name, revelation; and our assent to it, faith: which as absolutely determines our minds, and as perfectly excludes all wavering, as our knowledge itself; and we may as well doubt of our own being, as we can whether any revelation from God be true. So that faith is a settled and sure principle of assent and assurance, and leaves no manner of room for doubt or hesitation. Only we must be sure that it be a divine revelation, and that we understand it right."

Locke seems to be putting two qualifications upon his remark that "the bare testimony of revelation is the highest certainty." The first concerns our assurance that we are not mistaken in accepting something as revealed. The second concerns the correctness of our understanding of that which we take to be God's word.

On the first point, while Hobbes says that "faith is a gift of God, which man can neither give nor take away by promises of rewards or menaces of torture," he also says that faith depends "only upon certainty or probability of arguments drawn from reason or from something men believe already." Faith does not come "by supernatural inspiration or infusion" but, according to Hobbes, "by education, discipline, correction, and other natural ways, by which God worketh them in his elect, at such time as he thinketh fit." The object of faith is not God, but the men whom God has appointed to instruct us; belief, which Hobbes distinguishes from faith, goes beyond faith to the acceptance as true of what they say. "Consequently," Hobbes writes, "when we believe that the Scriptures are the word of God, having no immediate revelation from God himself,

our belief, faith, and trust is in the Church, whose word we take, and acquiesce therein."

On this same point, Aquinas gives a different answer. He distinguishes between the material and the formal aspects of the object of faith. As in the object of science, so in the object of faith there is "that which is known . . . and is the material object, so to speak," and "that whereby it is known, which is the formal aspect of the object. Thus, in the science of geometry, the conclusions are what is known materially, while the formal aspect of the science consists in the means of demonstration, through which the conclusions are known. Accordingly, if in faith we consider the formal aspect of the object, it is nothing else than the First Truth. For the faith of which we are speaking does not assent to anything, except because it is revealed by God." The articles of religious faith may be drawn from the content of Holy Writ, but that Holy Writ is the revealed truth of God must first be accepted by an act of faith. Aquinas seems to be meeting Locke's point by saying that it is faith itself which makes us sure that the propositions to which we assent by faith are the matter of divine revelation.

According to Calvin, the creed "furnishes us with a full and every way complete summary of faith, containing nothing but what has been derived from the infallible word of God." Faith, thus understood, is, for Kierkegaard, "the highest passion in a man. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not even reach it, but no one gets further." In Shaw's *Saint Joan,* the Archbishop says that a miracle is "an event which creates faith . . . Frauds deceive. An event which weaves faith does not deceive: therefore it is not a fraud, but a miracle."

On Locke's other point concerning the rightness of our interpretation of Scripture, Locke himself remarks that "though everything said in the text be infallibly true, yet the reader may be, nay, cannot choose but be, very fallible in the understanding of it. Nor is to be wondered that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty, which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance." From which he concludes that since "the precepts of natural religion are plain, and very intelligible to all mankind, and seldom come to be controverted; and other revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages are liable to the common and natural obscurities incident to words, methinks it would become us to be more careful and diligent in observing the former, and less magisterial, positive, and imperious, in imposing our own ideas and interpretations of the latter."

That Scripture is difficult to interpret and subject to various interpretations Augustine also acknowledges, but he differs somewhat from Locke concerning the task or duty which that fact imposes upon the religious man. "Let no one irritate me further," Augustine writes, "by saying, 'Moses did not mean what you say. He meant what I say.' If anyone were to ask me, 'How do you know that Moses meant his words to be taken in the way that you explain them?' it would be my duty to listen to the question with composure . . . But when a man says 'Moses did not mean what you say, but what I say,' and yet does not deny that both his interpretation and mine are consistent with the truth, then, O Life of the poor, O my God, in whose bosom there is no contradiction, I beg you to water my heart with the rain of forbearance, so that I may bear with such people in patience. They speak as they do, not because they are men of God or because they have seen in the heart of Moses, your servant, that their explanation is the right one, but simply because they are proud. They have no knowledge of the thoughts in his mind, but they are in love with their own opinions, not because they are true, but because they are their own."

Confronted by a variety of interpretations, Augustine remarks, "When so many meanings, all of them acceptable as true, can be extracted from the words that Moses wrote, do you not see how foolish it is to make a bold assertion that one in particular is the one he had in mind? . . . If I had been Moses and you had made it my task to write the book of Genesis, I should have wished you to give me such skill in writing and such power in framing words, that not even those who as yet cannot understand

how God creates should reject my words as beyond their comprehension, and those who can should find expressed in the few words of your servant whatever true conclusions they had reached by their own reasoning." Those who thirst "not for vanity but for the truth" honor the human dispensers of God's revelation, Augustine thinks, by believing that, when under God's inspiration they wrote these words, they showed us "whichever meaning sheds the fullest light of truth and enables us to reap the greatest profit.

"For this reason, although I hear people say, 'Moses meant this' or 'Moses meant that,' " Augustine declares, "I think it more truly religious to say, 'Why should he not have had both meanings in mind, if both are true? And if others see in the same words a third, or a fourth, or any number of true meanings, why should we not believe that Moses saw them all? There is only one God, who caused Moses to write the Holy Scriptures in the way best suited to the minds of great numbers of men who would all see truths in them, though not the same truths in each case.' "

Augustine's position combines belief in the truth of Scripture, which is a consequence of the faith that it is God's word, with latitude of interpretation in determining what that truth is, appealing here to the ordinary standards of what seems to be true to the thinking mind. In the course of commenting on Augustine's own interpretation of certain passages in Genesis, Aquinas summarizes what he takes to be Augustine's two rules. "The first is, to hold the truth of Scripture without wavering. The second is that since Holy Scripture can be explained in a multiplicity of senses, one should adhere to a particular explanation only in such measure as to be ready to abandon it, if it be proved with certainty to be false; lest Holy Scripture be exposed to the ridicule of unbelievers, and obstacles be placed to their believing."

AS THE QUESTION whether the Bible is sacred writing affects the way it is to be read, so the distinction between religious and secular writing seems relevant to what the great books have to say about religion.

In the pagan tradition, for example, Herodotus in his *The History* reports and discusses a great variety of religious doctrines and practices as characteristic of the peoples he visits or inquires about. There seems to be no indication that Herodotus is judging the truth or falsity of these various religions, either by reference to their reasonableness or from convictions born of his own adherence to one of these religions as against all the rest. For the most part, he is writing *about* religion rather than *religiously*, with the possible exception of those passages in which he expresses his own views, discussed in the chapter on PROPHECY, on the oracles, omens, and portents which reveal the will of the gods.

In contrast, the tragedies of Aeschylus, especially the Oresteian trilogy, are religious poetry, comparable to Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. These are not books *about* religion, as, in a sense, the great poem of Lucretius *The Way Things Are* is about religion—a passionate attack on religion by a man who is not religious; as passionate, but more savage, is the attack on Judaism and Christianity by Nietzsche in modern times. "Wherever the religious neurosis has hitherto appeared on earth," Nietzsche declares, "we find it tied to three dangerous dietary prescriptions: solitude, fasting and sexual abstinence." Lucretius dismisses the prevalent religions of his day only because they burden mankind with fear of the gods, of death, and of the afterlife.

It may be thought that the aim of Lucretius is to purify religion when he wishes to banish "thoughts unworthy of the gods" and "alien to their serenity," so that men can "go serenely to their altars." But even a person who thinks this will still find a marked contrast between Lucretius and poets like Aeschylus or Dante who are writing from religious convictions to which they adhere as members of a religious community.

Both kinds of writing may be found in the same author. Hobbes, for example, in examining the phenomena of religious belief, seems to make public acceptance the criterion of the distinction between religion and superstition. "Fear of a power invisible, feigned by

the mind," he says, "or imagined from tales publicly allowed," is religion; when they are "not allowed, superstition." Still writing as an observer, he says that "this fear of things invisible is the natural seed of that which everyone in himself calls religion; and in them that worship or fear that power otherwise than they do, superstition." Originating from "natural seeds" which he enumerates, "religion," he says, "by reason of the different fancies, judgments, and passions of several men, has grown up into ceremonies so different, that those which are used by one man are for the most part ridiculous to another."

Yet Hobbes also writes religiously, when he treats all other religions from the standpoint of the special truth of his own. "These natural seeds of religion," he points out, "have received culture from two sorts of men. One sort have been they that have nourished and ordered them, according to their own invention. The other have done it by God's commandment and direction . . . Of the former sort were all the founders of commonwealths and the law-givers of the Gentiles. Of the latter sort were Abraham, Moses, and our Blessed Saviour, by whom have been derived unto us the laws of the Kingdom of God."

It is as a Christian that Hobbes compares the state religion of the Romans with the divine religion of the Jews. The Romans, he writes, "made no scruple of tolerating any religion whatsoever in the city of Rome itself, unless it had something in it that could not consist with their civil government; nor do we read that any religion was there forbidden, but that of the Jews, who (being the peculiar Kingdom of God) thought it unlawful to acknowledge subjection to any mortal King or State whatsoever. And thus you see how the religion of the Gentiles was a part of their policy.

"But where God himself," Hobbes continues, "by supernatural revelation, planted religion; there he also made to himself a peculiar kingdom, and gave laws, not only of behavior toward himself, but also toward one another; and thereby in the Kingdom of God, the policy, and laws civil, are a part of religion; and therefore, the distinction of temporal and spiritual domination has there no place."

Again it is as a man of Christian faith that Hobbes ascribes belief in Christian teachings to that faith. "The causes why men believe any Christian doctrine are various," he writes. "For faith is the gift of God, and he worketh it in each man by such ways as it seemeth good to him. The most ordinary immediate cause of our belief, concerning any point of Christian faith, is that we believe the Bible to be the Word of God." But when Hobbes goes on to say that the "only article of faith, which the Scripture makes necessary to salvation, is this, that Jesus is The Christ," he becomes the theologian with whom other theologians within the Christian community may disagree, on this or other points of dogma.

The disagreements we find between Augustine or Aquinas and Hobbes or Locke, or the differences in dogma which appear in a comparison of *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, represent the division between Catholic and Protestant Christians. But such theological disagreements do not obliterate certain common tenets of religious belief among all who profess Christianity. Above all, they leave untouched the belief in religion itself as transcending all merely human teaching and as providing the precepts of life through which God himself directs and helps man to his salvation.

This belief—even if no other except the belief in one God Who created the universe and made man in His image—seems to be shared by Jews and Christians. It marks the difference between the religious writings of ancient polytheism and of those which draw their inspiration from the Pentateuch and the Gospels. It makes the issue, as Pascal suggests, between those who write about a religion which they themselves either have or seek, and those who, neither having nor seeking, oppose all religions equally or treat all with the same secular detachment.

WRITING AS A CHRISTIAN apologist, Pascal says that "it is the glory of religion to have for enemies men so unreasonable; and their opposition to it is so little dangerous that it serves on the contrary to establish its truths. For the Christian faith goes mainly to estab-

lish these two facts, the corruption of nature, and redemption by Christ. Now I contend that if these men do not serve to prove the truth of the redemption by the holiness of their behavior, they at least serve admirably to show the corruption of nature by sentiments so unnatural.

"Let them at least be honest men," he adds, "if they cannot be Christians . . . Let them recognize that there are two kinds of people one can call reasonable: those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, and those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not know Him. But as for those who live without knowing Him and without seeking Him, they judge themselves so little worthy of their own care, that they are not worthy of the care of others; and it needs all the charity of the religion which they despise, not to despise them even to the point of leaving them to their folly."

The very existence of other religions, according to Pascal, helps to prove the truth of the Christian religion. "I should equally have rejected the religion of Mahomet and of China, of the ancient Romans and of the Egyptians, for the sole reason, that none having more marks of truth than another, nor anything which should necessarily persuade me, reason cannot incline to one rather than the other." As for Judaism, it seems to Pascal to be divinely intended as the historic foundation and the prophetic forerunner of Christianity.

Apart from these comparative judgments, Pascal attributes certain unique signs of truth to the Christian religion. "Every religion is false," he writes, "which as to its faith does not worship one God as the origin of everything, and which as to its morality does not love only God as the object of everything . . . The true religion must have as a characteristic the obligation to love God. This is very just, and yet no other religion has commanded this; ours has done so. It must also be aware of human lust and weakness; ours is so. It must have adduced remedies for this; one is prayer. No other religion has asked of God [the power] to love and follow him . . . That we must love one God only is a thing so evident, that it does not require miracles to prove it." Yet Pascal also interprets Christ's saying, "Though you believe not Me, believe at least the works," as meaning that miracles are the strongest proof of a religion. "Miracles," he writes, "furnish the test in matters of doubt, between Jews and heathens, Jews and Christians, Catholics and heretics, the slandered and slanderers, between the two crosses."

After criticizing the evidence for miracles on rational grounds, Hume appears to agree that "the *Christian religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one." But his meaning seems to be that belief in miracles is itself the miracle of faith. "Mere reason," he says, "is insufficient to convince us" of the veracity of the Christian religion; "and whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."

PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIANS disagree on another issue. Where Hume says that "our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason"—with the further implication that to adhere to it with faith requires the abandonment of reason—Augustine and Aquinas think that there can be no conflict between faith and reason, though faith declares the truth of more than reason can prove; and that the support which reason can give to faith in no way lessens the merit of believing.

With this Hobbes seems to agree, at least to the extent of holding that it discredits supernatural religion to make it consist in believing impossibilities or contradictions. Revelation, he says, can consist "of nothing against natural reason." But for Hume the difference between supernatural and natural religion turns on what one must believe both without and against reason as contrasted to what one believes as the result of a reasonable interpretation of the evidence. Like philosophy, natural religion, "which is nothing but a species of philosophy, will never be able to carry us beyond the usual course of experience, or give us measures of conduct and behavior different

from those which are furnished by reflections on common life."

Those who, like Marx and Freud, regard religion as a social imposture or the response to a neurotic need, not only impute falsity or worse to the traditional religions of the west; they also tend to reject natural religion. Science is enough—for truth's sake, for the conduct of life, for society's welfare. Yet in commenting on the following lines from Goethe,

He who has Science and has Art,
  Religion, too, has he;
Who has not Science, has no Art,
  Let him religious be!

Freud says that "on the one hand, these words contrast religion with the two highest achievements of man, and on the other, they declare that in respect of their value in life, they can represent or replace each other." In these terms Freud thinks the religion of the ordinary man is justified—"the only religion that ought to bear the name." If a man does not have science or art to live by, he must have religion, for "life as we find it is too hard for us" and "we cannot do without palliative remedies."

It is the religion of the philosophers and the theologians which Freud questions. He criticizes the philosophers for trying "to preserve the God of religion by substituting for him an impersonal, shadowy, abstract principle"; and he challenges the grounds on which he thinks the theologians hold it to be "an impertinence on the part of science to take religion as a subject for its investigations." They deny that science has any competence whatsoever "to sit in judgment on religion . . . If we are not deterred by this brusque dismissal," Freud declares, "but inquire on what grounds religion bases its claim to an exceptional position among human concerns, the answer we receive, if indeed we are honored with an answer at all, is that religion cannot be measured by human standards, since it is of divine origin, and has been revealed to us by a spirit which the human mind cannot grasp. It might surely be thought," he continues, "that nothing could be more easily refuted than this argument; it is an obvious *petitio principii*, a 'begging of the question.' The point which is being called in question is whether there is a divine spirit and a revelation; and it surely cannot be a conclusive reply to say that the question cannot be asked because the Deity cannot be called in question."

Marx takes a similar view of the theologians. According to him, the theologians beg the question in much the same way as do the classical economists for whom there are "only two kinds of institutions, those of art and those of nature. Feudal institutions are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie are natural institutions. In this," Marx says, "they resemble the theologians who establish two kinds of religion. Every religion but their own is an invention of men, while their own religion is an emanation from God." In Marx's view, religion plays a large part in preventing revolution, which he sees as the only escape of the workers from oppression. "Religion," according to Marx, "is the opiate of the masses."

Plato excoriates those who think that "all religion is a cooking up of words and make-believe." It is almost as if he had Marx and Freud in mind when, in the *Laws,* the Athenian Stranger carries on the discussion of religion in terms of the distinction between nature and art, and refers to those who "would say that the Gods exist not by nature, but by art, and by the laws of states, which are different in different places, according to the agreement of those who make them." They are the very same people who hold that "the honorable is one thing by nature and another by law, and that the principles of justice have no existence at all by nature."

IN PLATO'S VIEW, the justice of the state and its laws must be founded not only on nature rather than art, but also upon religion and a right belief in the gods. The Athenian Stranger answers those who think it is "dreadful that [we] should legislate on the supposition that there are Gods," by saying why "it is a matter of no small consequence . . . to prove that there are Gods, and that they are good and regard justice more than men do." The reason he gives is that "no one who in obedience to the laws believed that there were Gods, ever intentionally did any unholy act, or uttered an unlawful word, but those who did must have

supposed one of three things—either that [the Gods] did not exist, which is the first possibility, or secondly, that if they did, they took no care of man, or thirdly, that they were easily appeased and turned aside from their purpose by sacrifices and prayers." That is why the demonstration of the existence of the gods "would be the best and noblest prelude of all our laws."

Rousseau's legislator, like Plato's, is also concerned with the role which religion plays in the foundation and life of the state. But the question "Which religion?" arises at once for Rousseau, as it does not for Plato, who can treat the nature of the gods and the nature of the state as equally within the province of the political philosopher. But for Rousseau, living in a Christian civilization, the political philosopher cannot approach the subject of religion without being confronted by the theologian. He finds it necessary, therefore, to distinguish between a revealed religion like Christianity and the natural or civil religion of the citizen.

Christianity, says Rousseau, "not the Christianity of today, but that of the Gospel, which is entirely different," is the religion of man, not of the citizen. "So far from binding the hearts of the citizens to the State, it has the effect of taking them away from all earthly things. I know of nothing more contrary to the social spirit. We are told that a people of true Christians would form the most perfect society imaginable. I see in this supposition only one great difficulty: that a society of true Christians would not be a society of men . . . The country of the Christian is not of this world."

What the state needs, Rousseau goes on to say, is "a purely civil profession of faith, of which the Sovereign should fix the articles, not exactly as religious dogmas, but as social sentiments without which a man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject." He then enumerates what he calls "the dogmas of civil religion" which "ought to be few, simple, exactly worded, without explanation or commentary," such as "the existence of a mighty, intelligent, and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws."

Montesquieu takes the diametrically opposite view. "With regard to the true religion," he writes, "I have never pretended to make its interests submit to those of a political nature, but rather to unite them . . . The Christian religion, which ordains that men should love each other, would, without doubt, have every nation blessed with the best civil, the best political laws; because these, next to this religion, are the greatest good that men can give and receive." Montesquieu meets the argument that "true Christians cannot form a government of any duration," by saying that the more men "believe themselves indebted to religion, the more they would think due to their country. The principles of Christianity, deeply engraved on the heart, would be infinitely more powerful than the false honor of monarchies, than the human virtues of republics, or the servile fear of despotic states."

ANY CONSIDERATION OF the political significance of religion tends to lead into the controversy over the relation between church and state. Three main positions seem to be taken: one which calls for the integration of church and state, one which calls for a subordination of either state to church or church to state, and one which insists upon the autonomy of each as a basis for their relation to one another, or carries separation even further, to the point of complete divorce.

The theocratic state of the Old Testament represents the Jewish version of the first position, distinguished by the fact that the priesthood was in the service of the king. Hobbes defines a Christian commonwealth in almost parallel terms. It is indifferent whether it is called a "church" or a "state," because it is "a company of men professing Christian religion, united in the person of one sovereign." It follows, Hobbes argues, that "there is on earth, no such universal church as all Christians are bound to obey, because there is no power on earth, to which all other commonwealths are subject. There are Christians in the dominions of several princes and states; but every one of them is subject to that commonwealth,

whereof he is himself a member; and consequently, cannot be subject to the commands of any other person. And therefore a church, such a one as is able to command, to judge, absolve, condemn, or do any another act, is the same thing with a civil commonwealth, consisting of Christian men; and is called a *civil state,* for that the subjects of it are *men;* and a *church* for that the subjects thereof are *Christians.*"

According to Hobbes, "*temporal* and *spiritual* government are but two words brought into the world, to make men see double, and mistake their lawful *Sovereign* . . . There is therefore no other government in this life, neither of state, nor religion, but temporal." Agreeing with Hobbes on the unity of government and the integration of church and state, writers like Augustine and Roger Bacon place kings in the service of the priesthood, and make the supreme pontiff, who governs both spiritually and temporally, the only earthly sovereign. Étienne Gilson summarizes their view by saying that for them "the definition of the Church includes the State," and that the church has a universality which embraces "the temporal and the spiritual domains alike."

The position of Aquinas is indicated in the Treatise on Law, in the passage in which he declares that no civil law can be valid or binding if what it commands is contrary to divine law. It is more explicitly developed in his little tract *On Kingship.* "It is not the ultimate end," he writes, "of an assembled multitude to live virtuously, but through virtuous living to attain to the possession of God. Furthermore, if it could attain this end by the power of human nature, then the duty of a king would have to include the direction of men to this end." But, Aquinas holds, men attain this end by divine, not human, power and therefore divine, not human, government is needed to direct men to their end. "Consequently," he maintains, "in order that spiritual things might be distinguished from earthly things, the ministry of this kingdom has been entrusted not to earthly kings, but to priests, and in the highest degree to the chief priest, the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the Roman Pontiff, to whom all the kings of Christian peoples are to be subject as to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For those to whom pertains the care of intermediate ends should be subject to him to whom pertains the care of the ultimate end, and be directed by his rule."

This last statement indicates that Aquinas, unlike Augustine and Roger Bacon, assigns to the state a subsidiary dominion and to the king a subordinate jurisdiction. The opponent of Aquinas is usually thought to be Marsilius of Padua, whose *Defensor Pacis* separates church and state, but subordinates priest to king, in a manner which corresponds to the Averroistic subordination of theology to philosophy. Agreeing with both that church and state are distinct, Dante agrees with neither on the relation which should obtain between the temporal and the spiritual domains, or between civil and ecclesiastical government.

Whereas Aquinas holds that only man's spiritual end is ultimate and that all temporal ends are intermediate, Dante insists that man has two ultimate goals. "Man exists for a double purpose," he says in *De Monarchia.* "Since he alone among beings partakes of both corruptibility and incorruptibility, he alone among beings belongs in two final orders—one of which is his goal as a corruptible being, the other as incorruptible." Man has two beatitudes, or two forms of happiness—an earthly perfection which consists in the complete realization throughout time of the intellectual powers of mankind, and a heavenly perfection which consists in the vision of God. "These two states of bliss," Dante argues, "like two different goals, man must reach by different ways. For we come to the first as we follow the philosophical teachings, applying them to our moral and intellectual capacities; and we come to the second as we follow the spiritual teachings, which transcend human reason according to our theological capacities, faith, hope, and charity."

In terms of this theory of man's two ends, and of the distinct spheres of reason and faith, or philosophy and civil law on the one hand, and religion and divine law on the other, Dante formulates his doctrine of the autonomy of state and church. "The reins of man,"

he writes, "are held by a double driver according to man's two-fold end: one is the supreme pontiff, who guides mankind with revelations to life eternal, and the other is the emperor, who guides mankind with philosophical instructions to temporal happiness." Church and state may be related as sun and moon in the sense that the state receives some illumination from the church even about matters within its own jurisdiction; but, according to Dante, the state has its own source of light in reason. "Temporal power," he maintains, "receives from spiritual power neither its being, nor its power or authority, nor even its functioning, strictly speaking; but what it receives is the light of grace, which God in heaven and the pope's blessing on earth cause to shine on it in order that it may work more effectively."

All these medieval theories of what should be the relation between church and state—with the exception, perhaps, of the doctrine of Marsilius of Padua—conceive religion as having a supernatural source and the church as having a supernatural foundation, both being instituted for the sake of guiding man to his supernatural end. They differ from one another according to the view they take of man's earthly or temporal goods, the power of his reason, and the jurisdiction of his laws. Their difference, according to Gilson, verifies the principle that "the manner in which one conceives the relationship of the State to the Church, that in which one conceives the relationship of philosophy to theology, and in which one conceives the relationship of nature to grace, are necessarily correlated."

These medieval theories of church and state persist, with certain modifications, in modern times. But the characteristically modern view of the matter begins with a different view of religion itself. Its medieval prototype is to be found in the rationalism of Marsilius. Within the secular state, the church is a purely human institution, religion is defended by philosophy for the contribution it makes to the peace of the civil community—or, perhaps, condemned by the apostles of earthly progress as "the opiate of the masses." The principle of religious tolerance involves not merely tolerance of religion, but tolerance for a diversity of religions and often the complete rejection of all religion.

"I esteem it above all things necessary," writes Locke in *A Letter Concerning Toleration,* "to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other . . . The commonwealth," Locke continues, "seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving and advancing their own civil interests." A church is "a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls."

Locke's doctrine of the separation of church and state is reflected in the Constitution of the United States. In the form which Jefferson gives it, it appears in the declaration that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." J. S. Mill carries out the same principles in his attack on "Sabbatarian legislation." Such laws, he thinks, exceed the power of civil government. They represent an "illegitimate interference with the rightful liberty of the individual . . . The notion that it is one's duty that another should be religious" is, in Mill's opinion, "the foundation of all the religious persecutions ever perpetrated." Hegel, on the other hand, holds that "the state should require all citizens to belong to a church," but he points out that "*a* church is all that can be said, because since the content of a man's faith depends on his private ideas, the state cannot interfere with it."

Examining America in its youth, Tocqueville praises the separation of church and state. "When a religion seeks to found its sway only on the longing for immortality equally tormenting every human heart, it can aspire to universality; but when it comes to uniting itself with a government, it must adopt maxims which apply only to certain nations." In Europe, the union of politics and religion prevents "the human spirit from following its inclination" and drives the human spirit "beyond those limits within which it should naturally remain." In America, religion "restricts itself to

its own resources, of which no one can deprive it; it functions in one sphere only, but it pervades it and dominates there without effort."

The positions men take on the great issues of church and state thus seem to be determined in part by the diverse conceptions men have of religion. This is no less true of opposing views on religious liberty, on the treatment of heresy and schism, on religious education, the missionary calling, and the conversion of infidels. In the discussion of religion, perhaps more than anywhere else, the first Yea or Nay seems to determine all other affirmations or denials.