The Utility of Faith Reconsidered

Louis Midgley

> Still others argue that religions, though illusory and false, are yet fruitful; and that the results that follow depend not on their being true, but only on their being firmly believed. Truman G. Madsen[1]

When I began my undergraduate work at the University of Utah in 1948, I met a remarkable group of impressive, somewhat older students, one of whom was Truman G. Madsen. We became friends. At about the time I met Madsen, Sterling McMurrin (1914–99),[2] a fashionable, genteel, cultural-Mormon teacher, was introducing him to various strands of contemporary Protestant theology; I underwent the same indoctrination by McMurrin in 1953. Madsen and I were singularly intrigued by what we found in the writings of Paul Tillich (1886–1965), then a celebrated Protestant theologian. Madsen eventually wrote his dissertation on Tillich at Harvard University. Later, when Madsen returned to Cambridge, Massachusetts, as president of the New England Mission, I was finishing my own dissertation on Tillich at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

Quite unlike McMurrin, who was fond of some features of Tillich's theology, both Madsen and I rejected his system, which we saw as the latest in a long line of efforts to substitute Being-Itself for the living God revealed in the scriptures. Tillich carried to their logical conclusion the most radical implications inherent in the decisions that theologians of the third or fourth centuries a.d. (if not earlier) had made to employ categories borrowed from pagan Greek philosophy in an effort to explicate their understanding of divine things. For our rejection of Tillich's theology and for other reasons, we probably both disappointed McMurrin—at least, I am confident that I did. Yet I learned much from him. In his elegantly delivered lectures, he drew attention to various writers and books as he sketched his version of the history of philosophy and theology. I read the literature he and others mentioned and eventually began fashioning my own account.

I wish to honor my friend Truman Madsen with the following essay, in which I set forth some of the discoveries that resulted from my efforts to recover several interesting and crucial strands of intellectual history. Specifically, I focus on the debate over the practical (moral or political) role of faith (often vaguely called "religion"), beginning with Plato (427–347 B.C.) and recurring in works of various writers up through Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59). Indeed, this issue continues to confront philosophers today, despite the efforts of those like Karl Marx (1818–83) to end the discussion.

Natural Theology

Can we live well either with or without religion? Even when religion has been seen as a *pharmakon* (drug, narcotic, or opiate), its practical utility has been recognized, though not necessarily celebrated. The struggle over the question of the utility of faith goes back to the beginnings of philosophy. The issue always seems to have been whether human beings can lead more meaningful and productive lives with the help of religion or in its absence, or whether it really makes a difference either way. There has never been much in the way of a consensus.

My first encounter with the notion that the truth of religion lies in its utility as the ground of moral discipline and restraint, or as a kind of social cement, was in a little book entitled *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.[3] Reading this book by David Hume (1711–76)—the great Scottish historian, philosopher, and essayist—was for me a truly liberating experience. What Hume, following the common eighteenth-century usage, often calls *natural religion* was previously known as *natural theology*.[4] This expression typically identifies an understanding of divine things (set forth in arguments for the reality of God) that is presumably accessible to pure reason (what Hume calls *natural*

reason) apart from any privileged divine revelations such as those recorded in the Bible or other sacred writings considered by various religions as scripture. This occurs when Augustine (A.D. 354–430) borrows from the Academic philosopher Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 B.C.)[5] a threefold classification system of theology in which the *civil* (or political) and the *fabulous* (or mythical, consisting of "lying fables" fashioned or manipulated by priests and poets)[6] are opposed to *natural* (or physical) theology.[7] Augustine seems to have adopted Varro's classification in an effort to dispose of the then-dominant Roman civic cult and its related unseemly mythical embellishments and aberrations. Since it tends in some degree to form good citizens by promoting political virtues believed necessary for living well in communities, Augustine accepts civil theology, whatever its flaws, as having advantages over the myths or fables of poets. But, he contends, natural theology—that is, the work of philosophers eager to comprehend the nature of divine things—yields a true, though perhaps not an entirely full, conception of the nature of the divine and is therefore superior to both civil and fabulous theologies. Augustine thus accords greater weight in his thought to the efforts of philosophers—especially Plato and his followers—to discover through reason the truth about divine things.[8]

But this does not explain why Augustine adopts Varro's classification of theology. Varro's *Antiquities*,[9] from which the scheme originates, is also the primary source for Augustine's attack on Roman religion in the first part of *The City of God*.[10] In using Varro's words to testify against the civil theology of the Romans, Augustine first heaps praise on Varro,[11] then indicates that Varro wrote forty-one books of antiquities. These he divides into "human and divine things."[12] Then Augustine provides a kind of table of contents for this famous, but unfortunately now lost, volume.[13] He agrees with Varro that the truth about divine things is to be found in an understanding of their "nature," using both the Latin *natura* and the Greek *physis*. Augustine then notes that Varro explains "that he had written first concerning human things, and afterwards of divine things, because these divine things were instituted by men:—'As the painter is before the painted tablet, the mason before the edifice, so states are before those things which are instituted by states.'"[14]

But is it not the case that the creator must necessarily precede the creation? Then should not that which is divine naturally precede that which is human? Augustine thus asks why Varro, in parts of his *Antiquities*, "seems to pass over no portion of the nature of the gods[.] Why, then, does he say, 'If we had been writing on the whole nature of the gods, we would first have finished the divine things before we touched the human'?"[15] Augustine argues that Varro writes first of human things because he is writing only on the cult of the Romans—that is, on their gods as portrayed in myths and fables for political purposes—and not on the nature of divine things. If he had been addressing the nature of divine things, they would have preceded human things. Augustine then insists that this was Varro's way of indicating that the Roman cult was a mere human creation and not truly divine, for if he had dealt with the nature of divine things, then "its due place would have been before human things in the order of writing."[16]

> For in what he wrote on human things, he [Varro] followed the history of affairs; but in what he wrote concerning those things which they [the Romans] call divine, what else did he follow but mere conjectures about vain things? This, doubtless, is what, in a subtle manner, he wished to signify; not only writing concerning divine things after the human, but even giving a reason why he did so; for if he suppressed this, some, perchance, would have defended his doing so in one way, and some in another.[17]

Augustine concludes his examination of the significance of the structure of Varro's *Antiquities* with the claim that by "writing the books concerning divine things," Varro "did not write concerning the truth which belongs to nature,

but the falseness which belongs to error."[18] This conclusion allows Augustine to employ Varro as a witness against the Roman cult. According to Augustine, Varro was much like Seneca, whom he describes as not willing to publicly "impugn" the civil theology of the Romans. Instead, like other wise men, he feigned respect for the Roman cult for the sake of the city. Seneca,

> whom philosophy had made, as it were, free, nevertheless, because he was an illustrious senator of the Roman people, worshipped what he censured, did what he condemned, adored what he reproached, because, forsooth, philosophy had taught him something great—namely, not to be superstitious in the world, but, on account of the laws of cities and the customs of men, to be an actor, not on the stage, but in the temples—conduct the more to be condemned, that those things which he was deceitfully acting he so acted that the people thought he was acting sincerely.[19]

Augustine's adoption of Varro's famed threefold classification of theology enables him, in addition to invoking Varro against the Roman cult, to call upon him as a witness that the truth about divine things is in the quest for knowledge of the nature of things—that is, in natural theology. He explains in detail how Varro provided what would now be called naturalistic explanations of the deeper meanings presumably embodied by the gods of the Romans. The vulgar beliefs concerning the gods are clumsy approximations of, for example, "the patterns of things, which Plato called ideas."[20] When seen as allegories, their deeper truth begins to shine through. In fact, this description seems strikingly like Augustine's own way of reading the Bible; it was while studying the books of certain Platonists that Augustine came to see that what he had always reproached Christians for believing could be understood as allegorical.[21] Be that as it may, Augustine attributes to the learned and wise Varro the idea that "the one true God" is the one "who is wholly everywhere, included in no space, bound by no chains, mutable in no part of His being, filling heaven and earth with omnipresent power, not with a needy nature," and so forth.[22] What Augustine attributes to Varro looks much like Augustine's own natural theology—that is, his account of the true nature of God as discerned through reason.

It should also be remembered that the idea of a distinction between the natural and supernatural, which the modern mind tends to take as a given, has a beginning and an extraordinary history. Long before such a distinction existed, those seeking wisdom by unaided human reason sought to discover what they thought was the nature *(physis)*, essence, form, idea, or substance of things, especially the nature of the highest, most fundamental, or First Things. According to Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), the first philosophers were known as "physical investigators," or those who discoursed on nature, as distinguished from those who talked about the gods or divine things. The Greek word *physis*, from which we get words like *physics* or *physical*, originally meant growth, or that into which a thing can grow if given the right conditions, and hence also the type or character of a thing that distinguishes it from other things. But the word also identified things that are not made but simply are—the highest or First Things, in which everything that either grows or is made is ultimately grounded and upon which such things ultimately depend; in other words, it meant something like "nature" in the sense of *ousia* (essence) and not merely rocks, dirt, trees, or other existing stuff. When the term is understood this way, nothing is higher than nature—not even divine things, unless they are identified with or subsumed under nature. The traditional first part of philosophy, the inquiry into *physis*, allowed nothing beyond or above nature, however it was understood. The modern distinction between a natural and supernatural realm was simply not possible. Instead, the struggle to know the form, essence, or substance behind the multiplicity of things was simply an effort to identify *physis*.

As far back as Aristotle, was there not something analogous to the natural-supernatural distinction? Put another way, does not the term *metaphysics*—an old, vague, and yet respected word—imply something like a supernatural

realm, something above, beneath, beyond, or behind *physis?* Although it originally did not, it certainly does here and now. Our word *metaphysics* comes from the Greek *ta meta ta physika* ("the things after the physics"). This was the name purportedly given by Andronicus of Rhodes to Aristotle's First Philosophy, which he placed after the corpus of Aristotle's book called *Physics.* In other words, the phrase referred solely to the location of certain texts in an edition of Aristotle's works. In Latin, this term eventually became *metaphysica* when Boethius, in the sixth century, made one word out of the phrase. Averroës (A.D. 1126–98) and others later popularized the word. But even then it was simply the name for the first part of philosophy—specifically, for their understanding of Aristotle's effort to identify the nature of things, including the First Things, which presumably ground and explain everything else. Again following Aristotle, this was the science of something called Being—not in the sense of this or that being or thing that exists, but Being as such. When Christians began to explicate their understanding of divine things in the categories of pagan philosophy, eventually God was seen as Being-itself—the ground of everything that is, the power of being in everything that exists, the First Thing that created everything out of nothing, and so forth. This endeavor was, as I have shown, occasionally called natural theology.

Christians struggling to account for what God does for human beings came to contrast their own nature (or *physis*) —what they can possibly grow into apart from God—with *charis*, that which is a gift, that which is bestowed. The word *charismatic*, meaning one with a special divine endowment or gift, still identifies one who receives something that goes beyond a natural endowment, achievement, or expectation. This may help to explain why "the first use of the word 'supernatural' occurs in Greek and actually post-dates Augustine by some one hundred and fifty years."[23] Earlier, an older and more easily understandable distinction between nature and grace can be seen in various efforts to account for the fall and redemption; this distinction then comes to play a role in some early accounts of the atonement.

According to one authority, what is now called "naturalistic humanism" (that is, what skeptical contemporary philosophers say about divine things) "has developed in opposition to supernaturalism, and especially to theism."[24] This is certainly the linguistic horizon on which these things are now seen and debated. However, the modern distinction between the natural and supernatural is not found in the Bible or in early Christian theology, though later interpretations may sometimes read it back into these earlier texts and periods since it has become the uncritically accepted lens through which people here and now tend to see the world. The fact is that the naturalistic humanists of our day are in some crucial ways thinking in terms of natural theology as that expression was originally understood. The difference is that modern atheists tend to discount the utility of religious beliefs in molding dispositions and providing a social cement, whereas premodern atheists tended to be cautious and hence respectful of faith, even though they believed it to be unfounded.

Hume's Mitigated Skepticism

Natural theology subsequently came to identify attempts of theologians and philosophers to reach conclusions about the nature of deity by unaided human reason. In his *Dialogues,* modeled on *De rerum deorum,* the famous dialogue of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.), Hume assesses the coherence of what had, following Augustine's appropriation of Varro's terminology, come to be known as natural theology. In examining this literature, Hume seems to argue that the traditional proofs for the reality of God, first set forth in book 10 of Plato's *Laws,* are highly problematic, if not incoherent. Hume then draws attention to the significance of faith that appears when the limits of natural reason are fully acknowledged. He also identifies a kind of melancholy that the recognition of these limits may provoke since the questions addressed are of profound importance and since he notes at times a resistance among nonbelievers to trusting prior to rational proof of the reality of God. Hume ends his *Dialogues* by having Philo, his mitigated skeptic, insist that "the most natural sentiment which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion"—that is, when the limits of natural reason and hence the misfortunes that attend the rational proofs for God have been confronted—

> is a longing desire and expectation that Heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate, this profound ignorance, by affording some more particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the divine object of our Faith. A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: while the haughty dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of theology by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any farther aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor.[25]

These enigmatic remarks—coming at the very end of the *Dialogues* and voiced by Philo, who seems to express best what can be ascertained of Hume's own opinions—have often been ignored or brushed aside as merely an ironic rhetorical flourish. I wonder if those who do so have taken Hume seriously. Be that as it may, what Hume argues through his Philo is that "to be a philosophical sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian."[26] This could be true even if Hume was not himself a believer. If what is meant by "philosophical sceptic" is one who is wary of the possibility that unaided human reason (what Hume called "natural reason") can ascertain the truth about divine things, then I must be counted as such a one. And it was from reading Hume's *Dialogues* that natural theology lost for me any of its vaunted charms—hence the liberating experience of which I spoke.

In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Hume also argues that a proper appreciation of the limits of natural reason

> may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the *Christian Religion*, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure.[27]

Hume closed his *Enquiry* with the observation that the theology one finds in what he called "divinity or school metaphysics" ought to be tossed into "the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."[28] He insisted instead that for those inclined to the Christian religion, the "best and most solid foundation is *faith* and divine revelation."[29]

The Ancient Form of Argument for the Utility of Religion

It is not at all clear that Hume himself had even a semblance of such a faith. He could, however, discern its proper role in the lives of the faithful and was hence concerned with the question of the utility of faith for those who are believers and also for civil society. At the end of the *Dialogues,* his Cleanthes makes the claim that "religion, however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all. The doctrine of a future state is so strong and necessary a security to morals, that we never ought to abandon or neglect it."[30] This opinion and its place in the *Dialogues* are somewhat similar to the opinion with which Cicero seems to have concluded his famous dialogue on religious beliefs. It will be recalled that Cicero, in *De rerum deorum,* has his interlocutors, after having spent the night pounding away at the absurdities of various vulgar opinions about divine things, begin the next day by going forth to at least appear to defend and serve the cult for the sake of the city.

But the argument for the utility of religion—that its truth is to be found merely in its utility—has a long history, best told from its beginning by going back to Plato. The arguments set forth for God in book 10 of the *Laws* are clearly part of practical—that is, moral and political—philosophy as that intellectual endeavor was originally understood. The virtues, or human excellences, necessary to sustain good regimes necessarily depend upon education, or correct indoctrination. A good regime thus needs the proper habituation of its youths, and this depends on rewards and punishments designed to sustain and reinforce obedience to the laws that generate virtuous habits.

But, given the power of *thumos* ("desire")—especially among youths but also among childlike adults, which is to say most human beings most of the time—more is needed than merely proximate rewards and punishments: duty and obedience to laws need the backing of belief in ultimate or divine rewards and punishments, or obedience to law languishes. Fostering the necessary virtues upon which good regimes rest thus requires belief that the laws and their sanctions ultimately have a divine source and sanction.[31]

Beginning in book 5 of Plato's *Laws*, the ideal regime is described as small (with a population of no more than 5,040 landholders or citizens), with one religion, one language, no foreigners, subsistence agriculture, and therefore no commerce and none of the resulting luxury. Such a regime would support substantial equality and social solidarity.[32] These conditions were thought to be necessary for a well-constituted regime as a means of avoiding, among other evils, *stasis* (civil strife),[33] which was always believed to be the primary threat to the existence of stable republics. Likewise, those who believe in "active gods," and not in the static notions of the divine fashioned by those involved in the quest for knowledge of the nature of things, are potentially profoundly disruptive for a stable regime. Stability could be disordered by a *mantic* (prophet) going around announcing that the actual laws of the given city, and hence also the acts of the citizenry, are an abomination in the sight of God. So strict controls should also be placed on that source of disruption.

But is a belief in an ultimate distributive and retributive justice standing behind the network of rules set down by the lawgiver(s) really necessary to ground and support the virtues required in a civilized regime? Note that Plato's *Laws* begins with the opinion that it is just to claim that the laws have a divine source (*Laws* 624a), though immediate disagreement about the god to whom credit is due and about the content of the laws ensues. Plato also refers to the legendary Minos, the one who is reputed to have visited with Zeus in his cave and received oracles in preparation for setting down the laws for the Cretans (*Laws* 624b). But Plato's drama immediately moves to the Athenian stranger (Socrates in Crete?) and his two wise old companions; as they ascend from human to divine things—that is, as they climb from the sea coast to the cave and temple of Zeus—they begin to legislate for a city that exists only in their speech. So the drama seems to tell us that laws are human conventions after all, merely the work of wise old men, though the laws are to be given every appearance of being divine for the good of the city.

Could it be that the reticence of premodern philosophers to attack the absurdities of political and poetic theology was grounded in a sense of the necessity of such beliefs as ordering devices for communities? Of course, this is not to discount entirely their fear of persecution for public manifestations of impiety. But at least in some instances philosophers were cautious about revealing their heresies precisely because they seemed to believe that only the wise, and not the vulgar, were genuinely capable of the necessary restraint once the fear of divine rewards and punishments was removed. In this regard, it should be recalled that Augustine, in his anxiety to discredit pagan political theology, draws on Varro's earlier treatment of pagan ideology. Describing Varro as the most wise and learned of the pagans, Augustine shows how he wrote esoterically, hiding his heresies from the vulgar, while signaling to the wise that the gods were useful, perhaps even necessary, human inventions.

Now in a Modern Setting

But leaving Plato's fascinating and instructive treatment of these and related matters aside, it is apparent that something like the issue of the utility of religion is again raised in David Hume's *Dialogues.* "For if finite and temporary rewards and punishments have so great an effect, as we daily find," Hume has his Cleanthes ask, "how much greater must be expected from such as are infinite and eternal?"[34] But then Hume's Philo asks why, "if vulgar superstition be so salutary to society," is it the case "that all history abounds so much with accounts of its pernicious consequences on public affairs?"[35] Thus it appears that, from Hume's perspective, the utility of belief in God is at least debatable. Concerning religion, Hume's Philo observes further that

> factions, civil wars, persecutions, subversions of government, oppression, slavery; these are the dismal consequences which always attend its prevalence over the minds of men. If the religious spirit be ever mentioned in any historical narration, we are sure to meet afterwards with a detail of the miseries which attend it.[36]

Hume thus seems to argue that religious differences and the resulting quarrels may well be one of the leading sources of faction, civil war, and other attendant evils that disturb and even destroy civil society. But, it must be noted, in these observations Hume has in mind actual regimes and not merely one fashioned in speech, which is what Plato generated in the *Laws* when he confronted these same issues. Hume insists that evils such as "factions, civil wars, persecutions, subversions of governments," and so forth can often be traced back to religious differences and the often bitter and divisive quarrels they generate.

In 1950 I purchased a copy of David Hume's *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* in a bookstore in Wellington, New Zealand.[37] As I examined those essays, I was stunned to discover language here and there—and crucial ideas—that James Madison and Alexander Hamilton (both writing under the pseudonym Publius) had clearly borrowed from Hume in fashioning their 1787 explanation of the principles behind the proposed Constitution of the United States.

For example, Publius argued that the "mischiefs of faction"[38] were the mortal disease that had vitiated the small republics of antiquity. And by "mischief" James Madison did not have in mind something merely playful, but a disease that he considered ultimately fatal to a regime if not treated and cured. His whole endeavor was to explain how the founders had managed to fashion such a cure, not by doing away with the freedom that makes factions flourish, but by finding ways of controlling their pernicious effects. Publius plowed new ground in republican theory by recommending a large commercial republic that could not only tolerate but actually benefit from diverse religious opinions and yet contain and control the mischiefs of partisanship and faction. In doing this, Publius broke with the traditional small-republic theory by drawing on and modifying ideas set forth earlier by David Hume. This connection is now well known, but in 1950, when I first encountered Hume's *Essays*, I assumed that I had been inattentive to the sources of Madison's argument in the *Federalist* concerning the mischiefs of faction and their potential remedy in an extended republic. I did not then realize that no one had, to that point at least, noticed that Madison and Hamilton had borrowed crucial ideas from Hume's *Essays* when they wrote the *Federalist* in 1787.[39]

Instead of insisting on religion as the primary source of republican virtues and then stressing the absolute need for such virtues, Publius treated the religious spirit, much like Hume, as one of the primary sources of the mischiefs that threatens republican regimes. Following Hume, Publius argued that in constituting a republic one ought to begin with the assumption that the virtues will not restrain evil—or, in Hume's terms, one must assume that every man is a knave, which assumption is false in fact but still true in theory.[40] Hence the following observation by Madison:

> All civilized Societies would be divided into different Sects, Factions, & interests, as they happened to consist of rich & poor, debtors & creditors, the landed, the manufacturing, the commercial interests, the inhabitants of this district or that district, the followers of this … religious Sect or that religious Sect. In all cases where a majority are united by a common interest or passion, the rights of the minority are in danger. What motives are to restrain them?[41]

Could we not rely on the moral sentiments or the conscience of the faithful? Not according to Madison, echoing Hume: "Conscience, the only remaining tie, is known to be inadequate in individuals: In large numbers, little is to be expected from it. Besides, Religion itself may become a motive to persecution & oppression.—These observations are verified by the Histories of every Country."[42]

When Madison took up the task of defending the plan for the proposed American republic, he was confronted by a citizenry already deeply divided on religious matters, one that already lacked both the foundation and much of the content of what had previously been understood as the necessary republican virtues. In addition, republican or civil liberty not only permitted but encouraged and facilitated sectarian religious differences. Indeed, one of the primary objects of a well-constituted republic, from the perspective of Madison, was the protection of individual conscience and especially the right of choice on religious matters. Whatever else might be said about the passion for building Zion—a zeal that has marked a portion of the American character—those efforts, though rightfully protected by republican principles, are not directly part of the republican program. In the American republic, at least as it was proposed by Madison, the work of the religious spirit should remain outside the official sphere of the regime. Ultimately, he saw the quarrels of religious sectarians as a source of competing and potentially fatal factious quarrels.[43]

Madison argued in *Federalist* 51 that

> in a free government, the security for civil rights must be the same as for religious rights. It consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in the other, in the multiplicity of sects. … The degree of security in both cases will depend on the number of interests and sects; and this may be presumed to depend on the extent of country and number of people comprehended under the same government.[44]

This is, of course, the basic argument offered by Madison for an extended, compound republic as was set out in the proposed Constitution. Hence, in *Federalist* 10, Madison declared that "a religious sect, may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the … Confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it, must secure the national Councils against any danger from that source."[45] Just as enlarging the sphere of republican government would tend to increase the likelihood of a variety of sects, it would also make it less likely that any one sect could constitute a majority faction or that some alliance of sects might be formed and thereby tyrannize competing opinions. In this same way, a large commercial republic would reduce the likelihood of any other faction forming a tyrannical majority.

Instead of seeing the religious spirit as a necessarily salutary source of virtues, modern republican theorists have sometimes pictured it as yet another in a long list of potential vehicles available for gratifying ambition, manipulating others, exercising unrighteous dominion, or expressing or justifying aggression and violence, and not as a way of finding favor in the sight of God and cooperating for the common good. In these defiled manifestations, the religious spirit is perverse and mean; it is not calculated to enlarge the soul and bring peace and prosperity. Contrary to this view, Hume had his Cleanthes insist:

> The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience; and, as its operation is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in danger of being overlooked, and confounded with these other motives. When it distinguishes itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper sphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition.[46]

Hume's Philo also argued that religions may often work precisely "in direct opposition to morality; ... the raising up a new and frivolous species of merit, the preposterous distribution which it makes of praise and blame, must have the most pernicious consequences, and weaken extremely men's attachment to the natural motives of justice and humanity."[47] In these remarks we see one element of the popular argument for "political atheism" as that concept was presented, for example, by Francis Bacon (1561–1626).

Hume raised the issue of whether religion has political utility in one other context. In the *Enquiry*, Hume creates a hypothetical case in which "a friend who loves skeptical paradoxes"—an Epicurean, many of whose "principles" Hume insists he cannot approve—is brought to face the charge that a school of philosophy, by "denying a divine existence, and consequently a providence and a future state, seem[s] to loosen in a great measure, the ties of morality, and may be supposed, for that reason, pernicious to the peace of civil society."[48] This argument then confronts "questions of public good, and the interest of the commonwealth."[49] The Epicurean then defends his views from the charge that they undermine the public good in what Hume calls a "harangue."[50] Hume subsequently offers against Epicurean atheism a minimal, bland version of the argument that allows for at least the possibility of a provident deity. The Epicurean responds with the claim that the political interests of society have no connection at all with what are merely abstruse philosophical disputes.

The Epicurean, by arguing that "religious doctrines and reasonings *can* have no influence on life, because they *ought* to have no influence" has overlooked, according to Hume, the fact that the citizenry may reason differently and might actually "suppose that the Deity would inflict punishments on vice, and bestow rewards on virtue."[51] Hume then points out that the practical or moral issue does not depend on speculation about whether the Epicurean is right but on what people actually believe about such matters.

> Whether this reasoning of theirs be just or not, is no matter. Its influence on their life and conduct must still be the same. And, those, who attempt to disabuse them of such prejudices, may, for aught I know, be good reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians; since they free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of society, in one respect, more easy and secure.[52]

At this point in his argument, Hume seems to grant that something can be said for restraining atheism for practical, moral, or political reasons. The difficulty that then must be confronted lies in finding a way to impose the necessary salutary restraints on atheism and yet allow the necessary freedom to science and other useful pursuits that seem to him to be altogether desirable. Hume seems willing to recommend taking whatever risk that allowing atheism might require. He does so in order to guarantee that science is not hobbled by what seems to be a legitimate concern over the moral restraints necessary for public order that religion tends to provide.

And in an American Setting—Tocqueville on the Utility of Religion

In his justly famous *Democracy in America,*[53] Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59) linked political theory, understood as a branch of practical or moral speculation, to arguments about the utility of religion. In addition, he set forth arguments that religion is necessary to properly civilize and morally restrain citizens in times of equality, thereby helping to make democracy safe for the world.

In 1831, when only twenty-six years old, Tocqueville traveled with his friend Gustave de Beaumont for nine months in the United States. This journey was ostensibly to study the American prison system. Tocqueville, however, had much more than this in mind.[54] He spent much of his time gathering information for what eventually

became the book *Democracy in America*. His writing is, by and large, immediately intelligible yet also subtle, puzzling, and many-layered. I will examine some of what Tocqueville said in his famous book about religion both in America and, more generally, in the democracy of the times.[55]

Tocqueville identifies the guiding principle or "spirit" animating democratic man—the peculiar and predominating element that controls all the rest of his nature—as the love of equality, not as a fondness for freedom, which is always subordinate and easily jettisoned. He strives to demonstrate that this "principal passion," equality, becomes a kind of "delirium" (pp.480–81), for its charms are simply overpowering. He also shows how this passion affects religious faith, concluding that when equality begins to reign, everyone seeks the grounds for belief within oneself. He labels this disposition "individualism" (p.482), an expression borrowed and popularized to describe the ethos preferred by those for whom equality is the dominant passion. The result of individualism, which is the recent "democratic" and somewhat moderate manifestation of selfishness (see pp.482–84), is an assortment of "isolated individuals" who "no longer feel bound by a common interest" to the fate of those around them (p.484). Instead, they are "reduced to being occupied only with" themselves (p.485). They thus lack public-spiritedness, or virtue, or a willingness to sacrifice their own immediate interests for the common good (see p.484). But they sometimes "enjoy their newly acquired independence only with a sort of secret restiveness" (p.485).

Tocqueville then moderates his rather bleak portrait of individualism by showing that free institutions may induce care for others and thereby generate a spirit of mutual helpfulness. Such sentiment, supported by what he called "self-interest well understood" (p.500), provides the necessary grounds for virtuous acts. Tocqueville thus strives to show that selfishness—a narrow, unrestrained pursuit of self-interest—in general destroys public virtue but that its American version is not virulent or especially dangerous, for it induces sentiments that yield mutual helpfulness. But even that doctrine is flawed and cannot by itself sustain the citizens of a democratic regime. Such salutary behavior somehow rests more on the doctrine of self-interest well understood. But in a democratic regime, the proper understanding of self-interest is itself simply not self-sustaining; it needs the support of education that teaches self-sacrifice for a larger and remote private good as well as for the common good. And Americans rightly call in the aid of every device to induce this self-sacrifice because, as Tocqueville explains, "the century of blind devotions and instinctive virtues is already fleeing far from us, and I see a time approaching when freedom, public peace, and social order itself will not be able to do without enlightenment" (p.503).

Having thus demonstrated the value of some form of "enlightenment" to moderate the dangerous tendencies of selfish individualism, Tocqueville then introduces his argument: "If the doctrine of self-interest well understood had only this world in view, it would be far from sufficient; for there are a great number of sacrifices that can find recompense only in the other world; and whatever effort of mind that one makes to prove the utility of virtue, it will always be hard to make a man who does not wish to die live well" (p.504). Thus the issue is whether "self-interest well understood can be easily reconciled with religious beliefs" (p.504).

Those Tocqueville labels "philosophers" are the ones who claim that self-interest, if well understood, is compatible with religious beliefs. The "founders of almost all religions" have "only moved the goal back; instead of placing the prize for the sacrifices they impose in this world, they have put it in the other" (p.504). It is not, therefore, the fear of divine retribution so much as it is the longing for rewards that leads to self-sacrifice. "The philosophers who teach this doctrine say to men that to be happy in life one ought to watch over one's passions and carefully repress their excesses; that one can acquire a lasting happiness only in refusing a thousand passing enjoyments, and finally that one must constantly triumph over oneself to serve oneself better" (p.504).[56] This represents the core of what "self-interest well understood" means for Tocqueville, who discounts the differences between the moral teachings of those he calls "philosophers" and those he refers to as "the founders of almost all religions" (p.504). This tactic

facilitates his subordination of religion to philosophy or his appropriation for political purposes of the teachings concerning divine things, for his philosophers teach a mercenary morality in which the goal is happiness understood as the gratification of appetites. The goal for Tocqueville is thus the gratification of lasting rather than passing or momentary pleasures. It does not include the kind of demands found in the teaching of prophets or the founders of religion. Whatever their deeper differences from the philosophers may be, asserts Tocqueville, they "have held to nearly the same language" (p.504).

Tocqueville also contrasts the moral teachings of those who stress self-interest and whose morality thus seems mercenary with the teachings of the founders of religions. He notes that Christians claim "that one must prefer others to oneself to gain Heaven," thus appealing to self-interest,

> but Christianity tells us as well that one ought to do good to those like oneself out of love of God. This is a magnificent expression; man penetrates the Divine thought by his intelligence; he sees that the goal of God is order; he freely associates himself with that great design; and all the while sacrificing his particular interests to the admirable order of all things, he expects no other recompense than the pleasure of contemplating it. (pp.504–5)

But Tocqueville also knows of the opinion that believers who "practice virtue out of a spirit of religion act only in view of recompense." Those who say such things are, from Tocqueville's perspective, simply deceiving themselves (p.504). "I therefore do not believe," he claims, "that the sole motive of religious men is interest; but I think that interest is the principal means religions themselves make use of to guide men, and I do not doubt that it is only from this side that they take hold of the crowd and become popular" (p.505).

Those influenced by preachers and hence charmed by a popular teaching will easily practice their religion out of a sense of self-interest. They will also perform their duty out of self-interest, and they will place in this world the interest they have in doing it (see p.505). But this amounts to a fundamental modification of Christianity or at least a shift in its moral horizon. The point of Christian teaching is certainly not merely to habitually and effortlessly sacrifice "the pleasure of the moment" for the lasting interests of one's life (p.505). The sacrifices are to be made for God and not merely as some more effective way of grasping pleasures in this life.

Fortunately for democratic man, "American preachers constantly come back to earth and only with great trouble can they take their eyes off it. To touch their listeners better, they make them see daily how religious beliefs favor freedom and public order, and it is often difficult to know when listening to them if the principal object of religion is to procure eternal felicity in the other world or well-being in this one" (pp.505–6).[57] Preachers in America soon learn, he claims, that they must cater to the passions of the herd or go unattended (see pp. 419–21). It is thus in their own self-interest to bow somewhat before the passion for comfort, physical well-being, entertainment, material possessions, and sensual gratifications. Preachers hope to make the mad search for such things somewhat restrained and more or less legal. They even become as spies who have scouted the territory beforehand and present themselves as better fitted to lead others safely to the promised land of lasting pleasures and happiness in this life (and, almost as an afterthought, perhaps in the next one as well). They help induce some measure of virtue by reconciling self-interest to religious beliefs and by allowing the one to come to the aid of the other.[58]

But even for Tocqueville's American preachers, the love of comfort still remains the dominant passion, though moderated somewhat by religious sentiments. The love of comfort leads not so much to great crimes and terrible excess as to indulgences and small iniquities. This process continues in American society today, with the passion

for wealth leading to white-collar crime or to homes that rival hotels. Tocqueville insists that "these objects are small, but the soul clings to them: it considers them every day and from very close; in the end they hide the rest of the world from it, and they sometimes come to place themselves between it and God" (p.509). In so doing, they expose an underground of deeper longings, which, when suppressed, break out in forms of "religious follies"—such as "bizarre sects"—which portend the possibility of an "enormous reaction" to the excessive "search for material goods alone" (p.510) generated by the freedom available to democratic man. These manifestations of the religious spirit, however, are generally seen as aberrations, Tocqueville claims, and are mocked by most Americans.

Tocqueville then describes how greed generated by prosperity turns eventually against self-interest well understood and weakens the virtue necessary for a moderate, safe, and decent democracy. He argues that "men who live in centuries of equality have a continuous need for association in order to procure for themselves almost all the goods they covet" (p.515). But being filled with "excessive taste" for the good things of this world and quite unmindful of one another, they are ready to hand themselves over "to the first master who presents himself. The passion for well-being is then turned against itself and, without perceiving it, drives away the object of its covetousness" (p.515). This is the dangerous stage in which democratic man, confronted with rumors of public passion that disturb the trivial pleasures of private lives, comes to fear an approaching moral anarchy and hence is ready to jettison liberty. Tocqueville thus paints a dark picture of a world in which virtue has fled and with it liberty and the search for even higher human things.

What can possibly save democratic man from such a fate? The answer is that, if anything can do it, it is religion, for religious beliefs at times turn the attention of citizens toward divine things, toward beliefs that restrain the greed that otherwise leads to tyranny (see pp. 517–21). Tocqueville returns once again to the themes he introduced earlier, but now he invents an edifying picture of a people turning on the Sabbath to hear preachers who instruct them of "the innumerable evils caused by pride and covetousness. [They are] told of the necessity of regulating [their] desires, of the delicate enjoyments attached to virtue alone, and of the true happiness that accompanies it" (p.517). Here, once again, are the salutary moral teachings of philosophers placed in the mouths of preachers, who provide the moral education necessary to limit the excesses of selfishness lurking just beneath the surface of individualism.

When offering this analysis, Tocqueville remarks:

> In another place in this work I sought causes to which one must attribute the maintenance of Americans' political institutions, and religion appeared to me one of the principal ones. Now that I am occupied with individuals, I find it again and I perceive that it is not less useful to each citizen than to the entire state. (p.518)

Then he argues that "Americans show by their practice that they feel every necessity of making democracy more moral by means of religion. What they think in this regard about themselves is a truth with which every democratic nation ought to be instilled" (p.518) among all peoples in ages of equality. But how can it accomplish such wonders?

Tocqueville assumes that the founder, the one who possesses the lawgiver's art, should know what is best for the particular society which he has founded and should arrange things with a noble end in view. At this point Tocqueville assumes for himself the role of lawgiver; he opines on what is necessary for the good of democratic peoples. In an aristocratic age, the lawgiver would have no need to be concerned about religion but would instead want to "stimulate the sentiment of needs among such a people" and thereby make them focus on "well-being" (p. 518). He would strive to send them in search of affluence. But in a democratic age the wise legislator must "have

other cares. Give democratic peoples enlightenment and freedom and leave them alone. With no trouble they will succeed in taking all the goods from this world … , and render life more comfortable, easier, milder every day; their social state naturally pushes them in this direction" (p.518). This is the "honest and legitimate search for well-being," but as a person is so engaged, "it is to be feared that he will finally lose the use of his most sublime faculties, and that by wishing to improve everything around him, he will finally degrade himself. The peril is there, not elsewhere" (pp.518–19). Whatever its strengths, democracy has a crucial defect: it threatens the highest possibilities in humankind by turning attention away from noble deeds and self-sacrifice to gratification of immediate, petty wants.

Switching from the concern for the democratic man to a concern for the human race as such, Tocqueville sees some hope. "Legislators of democracies [that is, founders] and all honest and enlightened men" have a solemn duty to "apply themselves relentlessly to raising up souls and keeping them turned toward Heaven" (p.519). This mastering of the legislator's art, he implies, might be the means for the higher perfection of the soul of citizens. And exactly what might constitute such a cultivation of the soul? Initially, Tocqueville describes the goal of the legislator as generating "a taste for the infinite, a sentiment of greatness, and a love of immaterial pleasures" (p.519). Then he indicates that efforts must be made by the legislator to counter certain "harmful theories that tend to make it believed that everything perishes with the body" (p.519). Tocqueville's label for these "harmful theories" is "materialism." Those who profess such views must be considered "the natural enemies of this people" (p.519).

Since democracy springs from a passion for physical well-being and earthly pleasures, it is easy for this materialism to take root and become excessive, thereby undercutting and destroying the salutary effects of self-interest well understood. It does so by turning the search for comforts and pleasures into a kind of madness. Since Tocqueville speaks from the point of view of the wise legislator representing the interests of the honest and enlightened and attempts to locate a palliative for the sickness that must eventually infect democracy, he could easily turn to a set of beliefs, in which he did not himself believe, to work their wonders on democratic man.

What set of beliefs might counter the threat posed by the materialist malady? Whatever it is, according to Tocqueville, it has something to do with the work of "Socrates and his school" (p.520) and would be a practical means of treating the malady by directly contradicting the core materialist belief. Instead of holding that nothing but matter exists, that "everything perishes with the body," Tocqueville's wise legislator would teach that the soul is immortal. Such a dogmatic belief would presumably prevent democratic man from experiencing the liberation of the passions and the wanton indulgence of the appetites that overcame Tocqueville in his father's library when he was sixteen.

The incident is at once more trivial and more profound than it seems. Tocqueville had at a young age lost his Catholic faith, though he seems to have gone along with appearances and never seems to have made public his religious skepticism. He also seems, however, to have found it impossible to discuss his lack of faith with his wife, an English lady who had been brought up as an Anglican but had become a Roman Catholic prior to their marriage. Tocqueville took part in the salon life of Paris, where he enjoyed clever conversations and witty exchanges with those of cultivated and refined talents. He exchanged letters with one such cultured woman, an interesting Russian lady by the name of Sophie Swetchine. One letter to her contains the deepest secrets of his life, including a confession of his loss of faith in Roman Catholicism when he was sixteen as a result of encountering the skeptical literature of the Enlightenment.[59]

But Tocqueville was not the village atheist. He seems to have regretted and not celebrated his loss of faith and was fully aware of how that loss had unloosed his own passions. Thereafter he pondered the possible effects of such an event on others, especially on those in France who were then involved in the struggle to fashion a stable democratic regime out of the ruins of an old aristocratic order. The prospects genuinely alarmed him. He was convinced that citizens in a democratic regime—even more than those of an aristocratic one—needed the moral discipline of an uncritically accepted Christian faith. In the introduction to *Democracy in America*, he insists that those who are committed to liberty but are not themselves believers need to realize that freedom cannot be had without morality and that morality cannot last without faith. In addition, he offers a warning to democracies against certain powerful elements at work in the new order, speaking "in the name of progress, striving to make man into matter," and thereby "want[ing] to find the useful without occupying themselves with the just, to find science far from beliefs, and well-being separated from virtue" (p.11; cf. p. 42). Thoughtful and faithful citizens have a duty to moderate democracy—to purify it and control its thirst for well-being, to restrain its wanton passions. They should strive to somehow render it safe for the world. A striking feature of *Democracy in America* is the attention given by Tocqueville to the role of faith and the situation of churches in providing the necessary moral foundation for democracy.

Tocqueville discovered numerous versions of Christian faith in America, which at the time of his visit was swarming with competing preachers and sects. He saw the proliferation of sects in America as flowing from both freedom and equality. He notes in *Democracy in America* that the passion for equality in the citizenry places authority in the individual, and therefore each isolated social atom turns to the maelstrom of public opinion for the ground of belief. The judge of both human and divine things becomes the individual, but the individual tends to be at the mercy of public opinion (see p. 407). He theorizes that the opinion of the majority assumes the role of supplying individuals with ready-made opinions, thereby relieving them of the necessity of fashioning their own. Philosophical, moral, religious, and political theories are mostly determined by fashions and thus rest on the shifting sands of public opinion. Even religion in America is less a matter of divine special revelation than it is an expression of uncritically accepted public opinion. And Tocqueville warns that "in centuries of equality, one can foresee that faith in common opinion will become a sort of religion whose prophet will be the majority" (p.410).

For Tocqueville, the opinions on which a regime necessarily depends "are born in different manners and can change form and object; but one cannot make it so that there are no dogmatic beliefs, that is, opinions men receive on trust without discussing them" (p.407). Without such beliefs "there is no common action, and without common action men still exist, but a social body does not" (p.407). Tocqueville thus held that dogmatic beliefs are both necessary and desirable. By accepting some opinions without discussion, one takes on a salutary bondage of the mind, which is necessary in both the moral realm and the life of the mind. These observations, according to Tocqueville, apply to the philosopher as well as humankind in general (see p. 408). Even in religious life, citizens look within the confines of public opinion for the final authority and not to the heavens. Tocqueville thus observes:

> Men who live in times of equality are therefore only with difficulty led to place the intellectual authority to which they submit outside of and above humanity. It is in themselves or in those like themselves that they ordinarily seek the sources of truth. That would be enough to prove that a new religion cannot be established in these centuries, and that all attempts to cause one to be born would be not only impious, but ridiculous and unreasonable. One can foresee that democratic peoples will not readily believe in divine missions, that they will willingly laugh at new prophets, and that they will want to find the principal arbiter of their beliefs within the limits of humanity, not beyond it. (p.408)

This observation may help us to understand the immense hostility faced by Joseph Smith and his followers. The reason behind this mocking attitude is that Americans, as well as others enthralled by debased notions of equality, "will want to find the principal arbiter of their beliefs within the limits of humanity, and not beyond it" (p.408). According to Tocqueville, citizens in democratic times will strive to find the authority for everything in themselves; hence, they will tend to spurn efforts to call them to the service of some authority beyond themselves. And, in addition, under such notions of equality the majority or those who presume to speak for it ultimately determine or are believed to determine the content and moral message of religious beliefs, including even those that presumably come down from the heavens through special divine revelations.

It appears that Tocqueville, while very curious about churches and religious matters in America, was entirely unaware of Joseph Smith, who in 1831 was just beginning to found a community resting on belief in a divine mission. Tocqueville's understanding of the dynamics of American religiosity helps one better comprehend why the faith Joseph Smith advanced seems in crucial ways unlike the brands common in his world and why it was greeted with hostility. It also might help one identify and appreciate some of the distinctive American elements that have both frayed and molded Mormon culture and against which the prophetic voice continues to speak.

Though not favoring a religious establishment (that is, a state church), Tocqueville prescribes a kind of bland civic religion in which an essential dogma would be the immortality of the soul. In his opinion, all the various American sects of the time offered sufficiently similar moral teachings to fit this requirement. In order for such a teaching to be effective in countering materialism, selfishness, and instant gratification run wild, he cautions that "one must maintain Christianity within the new democracies at all cost[s]" (p.521). But then the question remains: "What means, therefore, remain to authority to bring men back toward spiritualist opinions or to keep them in religion that evokes them?" (p.521). Tocqueville grants that his recommendation is likely to do him harm in the eyes of politicians, but "the only efficacious means governments can use to put the dogma of the immortality of the soul in honor is to act every day as if they themselves believed it." He adds that "it is only in conforming scrupulously to religious morality in great affairs that they can flatter themselves they are teaching citizens to know it, love it, and respect it in small ones" (p.521).

These are the broad outlines of Tocqueville's argument for the political "utility of religion."

> Most religions are only general, simple, and practical means of teaching men the immortality of the soul. That is the greatest advantage that a democratic people derives from beliefs, and it is what renders them more necessary to such a people than to all others. Therefore when any religion whatsoever has cast deep roots within a democracy, guard against shaking it; but rather preserve it carefully as the most precious inheritance from aristocratic centuries; do not seek to tear men from their old religious opinions to substitute new ones, for fear that, in the passage from one faith to another, the soul finding itself for a moment empty of belief, the love of material enjoyments will come to spread through it and fill it entirely. (p.519; cf. p. 448)

There is little in any of this to suggest that the opinions advanced by philosophers or by legislators are, or need to be, simply true.

> There are religions that are very false and very absurd; nevertheless one can say that every religion that remains within the circle I have just indicated and that does not claim to leave it … imposes a salutary yoke on the intellect; and one must recognize that if it does not save men in the other world, it is at least very useful to their happiness and their greatness in this one. (p.418)

What has this got to do with "Socrates and his school"? Why would Tocqueville introduce Socrates (that is, Plato) at the crucial point in his argument? He grants that "it is not certain that Socrates and his school had decided opinions about what would happen to man in the other life" (p.520). But what Tocqueville calls "Platonic philosophy" included—publicly, at least—a doctrine of immortality, and this gave that philosophy the "sublime spark that distinguishes it." Plato's dialogues contain accounts, Tocqueville recognizes, that counter anticipations of modern materialism. Those dialogues include noble or sublime, though not necessarily true, *mythoi* or even poetic *theologia* —noble lies, whose teachings seem best fitted by wise legislators to counter materialism (see p.520). Are we to assume this to be the proper course for enlightened men or the wise legislator?

Those who have accepted the Prophet Joseph Smith and his restoration message continue to insist—rightly, I believe—that the gospel to which they are committed is nothing if not simply true. And they prosper thereby. But what of those few who now seem inclined to toy with the idea that the truth of the Latter-day Saints' faith is to be found merely in its ability to deal with pressing social problems? One must ask if the salutary moral impact of a faith could survive the reduction of that faith to a useful mythology. Religious beliefs, when treated as merely useful, may, of course, impel a few to reach beyond greed, selfishness, and the quest for simple physical comforts to higher and more noble and lasting things. But it is not likely that much in the way of genuine self-sacrifice can survive such a transformation.

Tocqueville strove to indicate how religious beliefs restrain the dominant passions unleashed in democratic ages. "In men, the angel teaches the brute the art of satisfying itself" (p.521). But it is also true that whatever tends to elevate, enlarge, and expand the soul in turn enables it to better succeed, even in those undertakings that are not the soul's primary concern. In order to master the world by controlling their own souls, human beings must learn to suppress the abundance of petty, passing desires in order to satisfy the great longing that looks toward heaven. Through these observations Tocqueville introduces once again, though now with a somewhat different vocabulary, the practical link between self-interest and religion. In order to serve his own best interests, particularly the passion for comfort and wealth, the democratic citizen must learn to frustrate or dampen some of his immediate interests and appetites. "The principal business of religions" (p.422), and something that "religious industry" does rather well, "is to purify, regulate, and restrain the too ardent and too exclusive taste for well-being that men in times of equality feel" (p.422). "Religions supply the general habit of behaving with a view to the future. In this they are no less useful to happiness in this life than to felicity in the other. It is one of their greatest political aspects" (p.522; cf. pp.42–43). Without the habit of sacrificing immediate advantage for greater future gratifications—which sounds much like self-interest properly understood—even the democratic passion for physical comforts cannot persist. Therefore, "philosophers and those who govern ought constantly to apply themselves to moving back the object of human actions in the eyes of men; it is their great business" (p.523).

It would be a mistake, according to Tocqueville, for preachers to direct all attention to the future life. Why? Simply because the "taste for well-being forms the salient and indelible feature of democratic ages"; hence, any attempt to "destroy this mother passion" would eventually cause religion to destroy itself (p.422). After describing "the principal business of religions" as the moderation of the "taste for well-being," Tocqueville immediately adds: "I believe that they would be wrong to try to subdue it entirely and to destroy it. They will not succeed in turning men away from love of wealth; but they can still persuade them to enrich themselves only by honest means" (p.422). Preachers can succeed in their business only by restricting their encouragement in the honest pursuit of prosperity. Tocqueville's struggle to make a large place for religion in a democratic society can be understood as something like the endeavor of certain philosophers to show a certain deference to the opinions on which society rests, and hence especially to religious opinions, for practical or political reasons.

One cannot, it seems, separate passages on religion in *Democracy in America* from the larger context of Tocqueville's analysis and preserve the integrity of his arguments. His own uneasiness with those skeptics who mock the traditional beliefs echoes something that reaches perhaps as far back as Plato and consequently to philosophy in its original form. Even the uneasiness Plato expressed in the *Laws* about believers in divine beings who intervene in human affairs—who like atheists, were said to be dangerous to a well-ordered regime—is reflected in Tocqueville's consternation over the possibility of a genuinely vital new faith in democratic times. Such efforts, whatever their impact on believers, are profoundly unsettling for the larger community and may thus be seen in some crucial ways as disturbing the democratic ethos. They begin to dissolve the social cement of dogmatic beliefs—the sentiments and opinions on which society rests. They may even eventually begin to challenge the moral substance of society, whatever its traditional content. From Tocqueville's perspective, it is enough for the democratic citizen to assume that he has control of his own beliefs and is the master of his world—even though he is obviously in a kind of "salutary bondage" to dogmatic beliefs—simply because he accepts the most important opinions on trust in the ever-shifting sands of public opinion.

Preachers, Tocqueville insisted, must not confront the passions of the citizen directly, but only indirectly and mildly; they must appear to show that religious beliefs and demands are fully compatible with self-interest well understood and so allow a rather full scope for the somewhat modified egoism characteristic of and essential to the democratic ethos. What this means is that there can be no genuinely effective restraints on the passions and appetites of democratic man because whatever restraints might actually flow from religion are themselves subject to the same debasements as the human soul of itself.

Tocqueville, it should be noted, did not turn to public education to stimulate the desire for independence and give democratic citizens a deeper understanding of the nature and dangers of their own society. He obviously did not have such a confident view of the powers of general enlightenment, of a self-generating, self-sustaining, publicly held wisdom, of an education shorn of moral roots. He turned instead to other agencies for practical (or political) education to provide the necessary restraints that might help prevent the gross debasement of humankind, which itself could yield a new and even more terrible soft tyranny.

Marvin Zetterbaum has shown that Tocqueville was more concerned about the "utility of religion" than about its truth—that for him the truth of religion is its utility.[60] Zetterbaum rightly complains about Tocqueville's ploy. Among other reasons, it is unsound because it is an effort to employ religion as a socially useful myth and, as such, is bound to fail precisely because the social usefulness of such myths depends upon their being believed. It is unlikely that myths (meaning, in this context, dogmatic religious beliefs) held to be merely salutary or socially useful, but not in some fundamental sense simply true, will have the power needed to effect the social control that Tocqueville deemed necessary. Zetterbaum also correctly laments that advancing

> salutary myths cannot but weaken genuine religious belief rather than strengthening it, for by propagating them men are emboldened to consider religion from a functional point of view. But there is no assurance that genuine religion is necessarily salutary, and in case of conflict, society will surely sacrifice the genuine for the salutary. Moreover, the effectiveness of spiritualistic myths is dependent on whether their nature remains hidden; they are not likely to retain their usefulness if they are known to be myths.[61]

Zetterbaum thus raises the decisive issue, especially from the point of view of genuine believers, regarding the position that the truth of religion is to be found merely in its utility as a social cement. Without the color of public authority, moral restraints work their magic, as Zetterbaum recognized, only when they are freely chosen—that is,

genuinely believed. When they have their roots in religious dogmas, they move and restrain only to the extent that they are genuinely believed. It is at exactly this point that Zetterbaum notices a problematic element, if not a fatal weakness, in Tocqueville's argument: A salutary myth is only effective if it is not known as merely salutary. As soon as it is known to be contrived by purely human artifice, even if it is the work of some human lawgiver, it loses much, if not all, of its moral authority and power.[62]

Others want to quarrel with Tocqueville because they see his concept of freely chosen restraints grounding public virtue as stripping citizens of liberty. This complaint reflects a strange form of liberal dogmatism, not to mention moral blindness, but it is common even among Latter-day Saints, where confusion over moral agency is transformed into liberal slogans about the evils of something called blind obedience or into complaints about the supposed shackles of faith. Does a fondness for freedom of choice demand that one reject the consequences of freely accepted moral restraints? Does it demand that one reject the willingness to sacrifice immediate self-interest for something eventually good for all, which Tocqueville saw as one of the most salient political consequences of religion? At least from the perspective of believers, such a willingness to sacrifice immediate interests is the means for liberating them from bondage to base and demonic things. Tocqueville was willing to make political use of such consequences. He would even strive to simulate the effects of sacrifice for the common good by contriving religion, if that were the only alternative to moral chaos in democratic times.

Those who doubt that any good whatsoever can flow from religious faith—those deeply into what can be called "political atheism"—might also find Tocqueville's argument disconcerting. To believers, arguments that transform God and divine things into mere useful social conveniences must appear ultimately as a form of blasphemy. That is not to say that believers deny that useful consequences flow from belief; in fact, they insist on it. Tocqueville's point is that it makes no difference to society whether a religion is simply true, for such is only of concern to individuals and especially to the faithful—only the individual has any stake in the primary consequences of religious faith as opposed to its secondary consequences (see p.278). Cannot both those who believe and those who sense something of the utility of religion—the indirect or secondary influence of faith—understand and even appreciate the significance of belief for the immediate practical (or moral) life of a people (see pp.290–91)?

Tocqueville is aware that churchmen can be aligned on the wrong side of issues affecting liberty, and he is certainly no naive apologist for churches, their material interests, or their agents. He also holds that those who take up the standard of liberty might end up advocating policies inimical to liberty. Both possibilities present dangers in a democratic society. When certain necessary "dogmatic beliefs"—or opinions uncritically accepted—are challenged, according to Tocqueville, the principle of liberty is easy prey for an ardent and debased notion of equality with which it is quite inconsistent. It is precisely the liberals who spoil liberty—not from low motives, but rather with a naive confidence that leads easily to tyranny in the sacred name of liberty. It is exactly when a public agency claims the right to control or manipulate morality or when it ignorantly presumes to do so that liberty is crushed and replaced with a terrible, though perhaps bland, tyranny. Tocqueville fears such an eventuality; it is to provide a protection against it that he recommends that wise legislators (or just and good men) make possible the necessary moderation of democratic tastes and passions by means of religion.

It is precisely Tocqueville's argument that the principle of equality, when coupled with a lack of moral restraints on appetites and passions, eventually turns democratic citizens into grains of dust—all equally powerless, equally unimportant, and equally fearful, and hence ready to abandon liberty at a moment's notice when the call comes offering comfort, ease, and plenty. It is religion that demands sacrifice and thereby provides the necessary moral discipline; it is the spokesmen for religion who may, even in a weak way, insist on the postponement of gratifications, who lead people to look to the heavens or at least the distant future for the final rewards for

sacrifices and who thereby perfect the virtues needed by democratic man at times when commercial passions are joined to the lust for a debased notion of equality.

Between Tocqueville and those who see religion as the general designation for all that degrades humankind, or merely as a skillfully administered narcotic crafted and employed solely for base purposes or with debasing consequences, is a gulf. This gulf is precisely the one that separates the active hostility or detached neutrality of the dogmatic political atheism found among secular fundamentalists, who now dominate much intellectual life, from the more cautious and less active variety found among the ancients. That older view permitted and even insisted upon a prominent place for religion, especially in the moral realm and particularly in the life of republics. It is in his view of the utility of religion where those elements in Tocqueville's thought appear that make him something less than a simple child of modernity—he is less so than the American founders he admired and much less so than those who simply ignore, disregard, downplay, or despise religion. He was within the general horizon of modernity, especially on certain issues, but certainly not within the form of modernity that makes war on all religion as a dangerous illusion or patronizes it as a delusion and therefore the symptom, if not the source, of the societal diseases that afflict humanity.

Tocqueville appears to have taken pains to avoid confronting, at least in public, the question of whether any religious teachings are simply true—that is, whether they have ultimate rather than merely proximate consequences. In public, he addressed the question of the practical or moral role of beliefs—their social utility, or what Tocqueville called their secondary rather than primary consequences—which he thought was the proper kind of question to be addressed by one concerned with a secondary question like the life and death of society. One need not be a believer to have an appreciation for the secondary consequences of faith or for the practical impact of religious devotion. One does get hints about Tocqueville's position on such issues when he gently mocks the prospects for a faith founded on a modern mantic or makes remarks about the majority of "believers" basing their faith on opinions rather than on revealed doctrine (see p.410).

An Epilogue

Because of the ubiquity of the word *religion,* it has become necessary to employ it as the label for, among other things, the exploration of opinions about divine things. Since such a quest was once part of the quest for a knowledge of the nature of things, the possible answers appear to be something very much like purpose or "function"—the reason "for which" a thing exists. The word *theology,* which from the linguistic horizon of antiquity is the more proper designation, comes eventually to be joined and even somewhat replaced by the later and still more obscure term *religion.* I have noted how this conjunction can be seen in David Hume's willingness to alternate between *religion* and *theology.* Where religion bears the stamp of human manufacture—acting as a mere soothing *pharmakon,* if not an entirely demonic element—the question of its function still remains paramount. When something called religion is denounced as a justification for the evils of this world, a consolation, or an opiate, it is nevertheless treated as having some prominent albeit malevolent social function. Even in that case the paramount question concerns the utility of religion rather than its truth as such. Some of the apologists for religion have differed from its most radical critics more on how they assess the details of its political or practical utility than on whether that was the appropriate standard by which it should be judged. Where do Latter-day Saints stand on such issues? Are we merely cultural Mormons, or are we genuinely faithful? For me this is a question well worth asking.

A few among us seem tempted to suggest that what they like to call "the religion of the Latter-day Saints," like all social institutions, must be judged not on whether the revelation is really true but according to its usefulness in dealing with the problems of humanity. To continue to be concerned about the truth of the prophetic claims is, they suggest, to remain in bondage to an embarrassing polemical past. They thereby turn away from such questions as whether Jesus was resurrected or whether there was a Lehi colony and insist instead that it is the usefulness of the faith as a social cement and consolation for the evils of this world that should really be of concern to the Saints.

But what is really needed is not guile but genuine faith, as even Hume realized when he made reference to "those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the *Christian Religion*, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason."[63] He further suggests that Christianity "cannot be believed by any reasonable person without" a miracle taking place to bring about such faith, and this explains why he was critical of what he calls "the principles of those pretended Christians" who picture the faith "not as the word or testimony of God himself, but as the production of a mere human writer and historian."[64]

In our setting, some of these writers then find nothing problematic about turning to naturalistic categories to explain the faith of the Saints (in their sense, the Mormon myth) and then to assess its mere usefulness. The power of this so-called myth—though it does not appeal, they sometimes maintain, to the rational faculties—may somehow help to organize the moral disposition as well as tap the creative power of those whose lives it somehow comes to control. Here we see at work among a few of the Saints the subtle inroads of the argument that the truth of religion is its utility. These writers claim that, in the final analysis, the faith of the Saints must be judged on its capacity to mold character and so forth. In this way they ignore the content of the faith in which it is taught that we are judged by God and not the other way around. Be that as it may, in this way they strive to justify a thoroughly naturalistic assessment of what they call the Mormon myth. But, as I believe I have demonstrated, treating the ground and contents of faith as merely salutary must ultimately be seen by believers as a form of blasphemy, even though they necessarily insist on the usefulness of their faith. And when the content of faith is seen as merely salutary—a kind of noble lie or a soothing, controlling, or even necessary *pharmakon*—even its obvious usefulness is thereby radically compromised. For the myth to work its wonders, it cannot be considered merely salutary but must be seen simply as true. So the utility argument surrenders much of its utility, and hence its attractiveness, when it becomes the locus of loyalty and is thereby known for what it is.

Notes

I wish to thank Brian D. Birch, Ted Vaggalis, Todd Compton, and others who read earlier drafts of this essay. I have striven as best I could to consider each suggestion. And, in addition to honoring my good friend Truman Madsen with this essay, I also present it to my former students, especially to those who over the years have read with me David Hume's *Essays* and other writings, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America,* and the *Federalist.*

1. Truman G. Madsen, "Joseph Smith and the Ways of Knowing," in *Seminar on the Prophet Joseph Smith, Brigham Young University, February 18, 1961* (Provo, Utah: Department of Extension Publications, 1964), 41.

2. McMurrin began his professional career in 1938 as a Latter-day Saint seminary teacher in rural Utah and Idaho, and then in 1940 he was employed as an institute teacher in Arizona. During this time he worked in the summers on his Ph.D. at the University of Southern California. After receiving his degree in 1946, he taught at USC before moving to the University of Utah in 1948, where he had once studied.

3. See the essays on religion conveniently made available in J. C. A. Gaskin's edition of Hume's *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion: Principal Writings on Religion, Including* Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion *and* The Natural History of Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 29–133; or David Hume, *Writings on Religion*, ed. Antony Flew (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1992), 182–292. I still have the little paperback edition of Hume's *Dialogues* (New York: Hafner, 1953) that I originally read, which is brimming with my primitive markings and marginalia. This tattered thing is like an old friend.

4. See *Dialogues* (Gaskin ed.), 32, 129, or *Writings,* 188, 291, where Hume employed the expression *natural theology.*

5. See Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 2000), 4.1, 9, 22, 31; 6.2–12; 7.5–6, 9, 28–30. When quoting from *The City of God*, I use this translation.

6. Augustine used both the Latin and Greek words for each type of theology.

7. On the Greek word *physis*, see pp. 145–46.

8. See Augustine, *City of God*, book 8, which should be compared to his comments, in his *Confessions*, on the role of certain books of the Platonists in his conversion.

9. Varro, *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum (Antiquities of Human and Divine Things).* This work, like most of Varro's writings, is known mostly in fragments, some of which are preserved in Augustine's writings. The primary source for understanding Varro's position is Cicero's dialogue entitled *Academica* (second version), book 1, in which Varro, a fellow Academic, is cast as engaging in a hypothetical conversation with Cicero.

10. See Augustine, *City of God*, books 1–10.

11. Ibid., 4.1; 6.2.

12. Ibid., 6.3.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 6.4.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 6.10.

20. Ibid., 7.28.

21. See Augustine's *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 7.20, where he describes how reading some books of the Platonists, presumably those by Plotinus (A.D. 204/5–270) and Porphyry (ca. A.D. 234–301), had shown him to think of the divine as incorporeal; Augustine originally censured the Bible for teaching and Christians for believing that God was corporeal. Cf. *Confessions* 8.2. Study of the Platonists also opened to Augustine ways of overcoming the offending language in the Bible by interpreting it allegorically, that is, by reading it as containing in its vulgar, unrefined language a deeper understanding of divine things and hence a partially hidden natural theology that those with a philosophic disposition could uncover.

22. Augustine, *City of God* 7.30.

23. Frederick Van Fleternen, "Nature," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 585–87 at 586.

24. Kai Nielsen, *Naturalism and Religion* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2001), 267.

25. Hume, *Dialogues* (Gaskin ed.), 129–30; *Writings*, 291–92.

26. Hume, *Dialogues* (Gaskin ed.), 130; *Writings*, 292.

27. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Essential Works of David Hume*, ed. Ralph Cohen (New York: Bantam Books, 1965), 141; *Writings*, 87, emphasis in original.

28. Hume, *Enquiry*, 167.

29. Ibid., emphasis in original.

30. Hume, *Dialogues*, 121.

31. Hence also the demand—for example, in book 10 of Plato's *Laws*—for severe punishments for atheists, who are pictured as mortal enemies of the ideal regime, since they challenge the opinions about an ultimate justice and divine retribution upon which such regimes are founded. See Plato's *Laws*—especially 909e, where the death penalty is mentioned—in *The Laws of Plato*, trans. Thomas L. Pangle (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

32. See Plato, *Laws* 726a–747a.

33. The Greek word *stasis*, carrying the primitive meaning of something like "set," "position," or "stance," is sometimes translated "faction," but it can also be translated as "quarrel" or even "civil war." Allan Bloom preferred "faction" to the other alternatives. See his translation of *The Republic of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1968). The passages are found at 351d–352a, 440b, 440e, 444b, 459e, 464e, 465a–b, 470b–d, 471a, 488b, 520c–d, 545d, 547a–b, 554d, 556e, 560a, 566a, 586e, 603d. On the other hand, Thomas L. Pangle prefers "civil war." See his translation, *The Laws of Plato*, passages 628b–c, 630b, 636b, 678e, 679d, 690d, 708b–c, 713e, 715b, 729a, 744d, 757a, 757d, 832c, 856b, 869c, 945e. In the words *stasiodes* or *stasiotikos* a move in meaning is made from "quarrel" or "faction" or "party" to something like "sedition."

34. Hume, *Dialogues*, 121–22.

35. Ibid., 122. There is a long tradition, for polemical purposes, of blurring the distinction between religion and superstition. Translators differ on whether the Latin *religio* should be translated as "superstition" or "religion" in *De rerum natura (On the Nature of Things)*, the famous Epicurean didactic poem of Lucretius (ca. 99–55 b.c.). Though shy and retiring, Epicureans, it should be noted, were the closest to being overt atheists among the ancients. The reason for such caution might be that political atheism was feared precisely because regimes were thought to rest on myths about the laws that linked them in various ways to the gods, often through lawgivers or legislators. Modern political atheism, as is made clear by Karl Marx, rests on a conscious choice to make war on all belief in the divine as the first step in liberating humankind from every form of bondage.

36. Hume, *Dialogues*, 122.

37. The quaint little edition of Hume's *Essays* that I first read and still own was published in London by Grant Richards in 1908. But see the nicely edited version of Hume's *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary,* ed. Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1987).

38. This phrase is found in the famous tenth number of *The Federalist.* See *The Federalist,* ed. Jacob E. Coke (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 58, 61.

39. Douglass Adair was the first to notice Madison's dependence upon ideas set forth by Hume in his *Essays*. The probable source for the novel idea that a large or extended republic, rather than a small one, would provide a cure for the mischiefs of faction was the essay entitled "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," *Essays,* 512–29. In speculating about the possibility of France or Great Britain—what were then clearly mixed regimes—ever being "modelled into a commonwealth," or pure republic, Hume explains that "such a form of government can only take place in a city or small territory." Then he adds the following pertinent observation: "Though it is more difficult to form a republican government in an extensive country than in a city; there is more facility, when once it is formed, of preserving it steady and uniform, without tumult and faction." Hume, *Essays,* 527. Democracies are turbulent. "For however the people may be separated or divided into small parties, either in their votes or elections; their near habitation in a city will always make the force of popular tides and currents very sensible. Aristocracies are better adapted for peace and order, and accordingly were most admired by ancient writers; but they are jealous and oppressive. In a large government, which is modelled with masterly skill, there is compass and room enough to refine the democracy. … At the same time, the parts are so distant and remote, that it is very difficult, either by intrigue, prejudice, or passion, to hurry them into any measures against the public interest." Hume, *Essays,* 528. Adair pointed to this essay as the source for Publius' justification for the way the founders had sought a cure for the "mischiefs of faction" by extending and compounding the proposed republic. See Adair's "'That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science': David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist," in his *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair,* ed. Trevor Colbourn (New York: Norton, 1974), 93–106.

40. "Political writers have established it as a maxim, that, in contriving any system of government, and fixing the several checks and controuls of the constitution, every man ought to be supposed a *knave,* and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest. By this interest we must govern him, and, by means of it, make him, notwithstanding his insatiable avarice and ambition, cooperate to [the] public good. Without this, say they, we shall in vain boast of the advantages of any constitution, and shall find, in the end, that we have no security for our liberties or possessions, except the good-will of our rulers; that is, we shall have no security at all." Hume, "On the Independency of Parliament," *Essays,* 42.

41. James Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*, ed. Adrienna Koch (New York: Norton, 1969), 76. Madison's remarks were drawn from his memorandum made in April 1787 on the "Vices of the Political System of the United States," prior to the Philadelphia Convention. See *The Papers of James Madison*, ed. Robert A. Rutland et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 9:355.

42. Madison, *Notes on the Debates,* 76; see *Papers of James Madison*, 355–56.

43 There are those whose loyalty to the republic defended by Madison may at times be compromised by an even deeper, premodern-style passion for a community joined in the same beliefs, with interests united and directed by a common faith, where, as much as is possible, there will be no disputations over doctrine that divide the community into warring factions. Madison strove to allow such religious communities to exist in peace in his extended commercial republic by providing security for their rights against the tyranny of a majority faction, which

otherwise would employ the power of the regime to vex its competitors. The language found in D&C 101:76–80, I believe, should be read with these considerations in mind.

44. *Federalist*, 351–52.

45. Ibid., 64–65.

46. Hume, *Dialogues*, 122.

47. Ibid., 124.

48. Hume, *Enquiry*, *Section XI*, in *Essential Works of David Hume*, 142–43.

49. Ibid., 144.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 153, emphasis in original.

52. Ibid., 153–54.

53. The first volume of *Democracy in America* appeared in France in 1835, while the second appeared in 1840. These two volumes were then translated into English by Tocqueville's friend Henry Reeve and then later by George Lawrence. A much improved translation by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop is now available. Hereafter, citations will refer to this latter edition of *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and will appear parenthetically in the text.

54. For some indication of his interests and the information he gathered, see the diaries, notes, and literary sketches he made on his visit, conveniently available in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971).

55. Tocqueville fits well the model of the noble gentleman. Coming from the French aristocracy, he was refined, restless, temperamental, and uneasy about his accomplishments. He was also above lusting for the gratification of base appetites. He appears to have thought that the proper work for a man of his sensibilities and cultivated capacities was to do something for the welfare of humankind. An aristocratic pathos led him to strive for great deeds. His literary endeavors might be seen as political acts intended to advance what he considered a noble cause. He seems to have sought appropriate ways of manifesting his own nobility and thereby also gaining justifiable fame.

56. Mansfield and Winthrop provide a note at this point in their translation identifying René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, David Hume, and Adam Smith as having advanced just this theory.

57. The "greater part of American ministers" are, according to Tocqueville's notes, entrepreneurs "of a religious industry." Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, 189.

58. Tocqueville helps us understand why the Saints have a tendency to move away from the radical demands placed on them and even further from a genuine effort to build Zion as they become charmed by the American ethos and converted to taking care of what they see as their self-interest, often understood as the gratification of their appetites.

59. See André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography*, trans. Lydia Davis with Robert Hemenway (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988), 61–66.

60. See Marvin Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1967), 116–17.

61. Ibid., 122.

62. Ibid., 19, 118–23.

63. Hume, *Enquiry*, 141.

64. Ibid., 141–42.