

Governing Religion:  
A Study of Religion's Function Across  
Three Distinctly Different Societies

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## ABSTRACT

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Religion's place in political order is a controversial subject. How does the function of religion compare to that of political order? Can it support a society in the same way? My research attempts to answer these questions by investigating three distinct time periods and cultures. I first examine the primitive people of the Azande tribe in Africa, an example of a society based mainly on religion. My research then turns to the fifth and sixth century Greeks, a society in flux, attempting to hold on to religion in the throes of a logical revolution. Finally, I turn to America to discover if religion has any function at all in a society whose Constitution forbids the establishment of a national religion. I conclude that while religion and political order are not identically functioning institutions, they do share many qualities, such as the ability to empower leaders, support morals, and function as a tool for personal manipulation. Through my research, it will be shown that a society based on religion is similar, at the core, to one governed by political order.

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## Introduction

Religion and political order share a unique relationship. Their relationship takes many forms, and it often spurs on controversy. While there are some obvious differences between religion and political order there are also some important similarities. We will explore some of these similarities in various societies. Do religion and political order have similar functions in communities? Do they operate in similar ways? Are they both logically constructed? Will a society organized by politics look the same as one governed by religion? We hope to answer these questions, and more, in an attempt to uncover the true function of religion.

We must first define the two terms: political structure and religion. Political order can be viewed as a compilation assemblies, leaders, and administrative decisions. Trickling down from these composite parts are laws. From here, additional methods to govern and maintain control are created within established legal bounds. Religion is a belief in a supernatural order, or sacred being/object, that provides rules by which one is instructed to live his or her life. The main similarity here is that while they are composed of different elements, on the surface they are both systems that strive to prevent chaos. This is a theme that will run throughout our search for religion's function. Sadly, inherent to the nature of an institution that functions as a means to control is an aspect of manipulation. Due to this, we must also explore the capacity that religion holds for manipulation. We would like to say that religion is *only* used to maintain order peacefully, but this is hardly the case. We will examine instances where religion is used as a tool for manipulation and evaluate the danger that it presents. The relationship between the prevalence of logic in a society should also theoretically influence how prevalent religious manipulation is. It is possible that the primitive people will be the most open

to manipulation because they exist in societies based primarily on religion. Following this logic, the ancient Greeks should show us a state that is somewhat closed off to religious manipulation, and the United States should not be open to it at all. We will see if these theoretical observations concerning the relationship between logic and the prevalence of religious manipulation hold true.

In addition to the themes of keeping order and religion acting as a tool to be manipulated, we are now going to introduce some of the other common themes that will be found in our research. One of the most important themes, as some form of it is found in most societies, is the concept of a court system. The existence of a court system is a good litmus test for determining how highly a society values defining the difference between right and wrong. If a society has a fairly well established court system, we can come to the conclusion that the society holds defining this distinction as important. The court system also provides us with a glimpse into the rationale that the societies use when making decisions. This rationale is a reflection of the idiom of thought that the society is using. The potential reasoning strategies that exist present themselves in several different permutations. First, there can exist a court system that is established religiously, and whose outcomes are determined purely by religious means. We will see this with the Azande who clearly have a well-established court system, but whose decisions rely mainly on religious interpretations of various oracles. The second variation is a non-religiously established court system that has incorporated religious overtones and rhetoric. The ancient Greeks exemplify this condition, and their commitment to logic and finding the truth shone through in their court system. Despite this newfound commitment to logic, both religious appeals and rational appeals were made throughout their trials. This can be seen clearly in the trial of Socrates. He opened with a humanistic appeal to the jury and closed with a highly religious argument for his innocence. Finally, we have the United States. The United States

represents a third type of court construction: a politically constructed court where legal, logical arguments are now the norm. While religious topics are still present in the courtroom, the use of religious rhetoric is much less persuasive than it might have been to the ancient Greeks. By looking at the court systems in these various societies, we are able to gauge some of religion's functions in regards to the ability to define morals and enforce the distinction between right and wrong.

The next recurring theme that is incorporated into our work is the concept of control. One would be hard pressed to make an argument against the idea that political order, regardless of the type, attempts to control its people in one form or another. Religion also shares this trait and it manifests itself in two ways. First, there is the concept of personal control. It is quite possible for one person to harness the power of religion and use it to obtain his or her own ends, whether positive or negative. This will be evident in the scope of primitive religion when we view prophets. They are able to define their followers' beliefs in order to control them. This type of control was also present in the ancient Greek society. We will see that the participants often attempted to manipulate the jury with religious arguments. Furthermore, rulers would often draw on divine sanctions in order to justify their decisions. Although, in regards to this last point, it will be shown that the legitimacy of this process was shaken once the ancient Greeks committed more fully to logic. Finally, in the United States of America we see blatant uses of control in both the past and the present. This is most evident when we examine some of the political rhetoric that presidents and other political office holders use while campaigning and in office. He clearly had potent religious views about various issues, and attempted to control the moral outlook of the country through his presidency. This is an example of what we deem universal control. This differs from personal control in the sense that you are not trying to

control an outcome beneficial to just yourself, such as Socrates attempted to do in his trial, but are attempting to dictate a pattern of action for others. The level of control that religion exhibits within the societies that we are studying is very telling of its function because it shows (a) how strong a force religion is, and (b) how willing the people are to believe in that religion.

This brings us to the recurring theme of belief. The extent to which people believe in religion, and what religion's function is, are naturally tied together. The more that a people believes in a religion, the more power it is going to have. This especially applies to the idiom of thought that people reason with. The Azande only have religion, and believe in it strongly. This creates one idiom of thought within which they can reason. The ancient Greeks were in the throes of a logical revolution and are able to process things through multiple idioms of thought. Although we will see that while this was the case, the ancient Greeks were not able to shed religion's function totally, and it was still able to influence many aspects of their lives. The theme of increased belief leading to increased control plays a peculiar role in the United States. While there may be an overall increase in belief, there is also a prolific fragmentation of belief. Because of this fragmentation, one of religion's functions in America is to act as an expression of personal morals and opinions rather than a pure reflection of universally mandated doctrine.

This raises another important implication that we will discuss mainly in the chapter regarding the United States. We will see how the function of religion differs when it is viewed as a definer of universal morals, as opposed to a definer of personal morals. Under which circumstances is it able to exercise more control? In addition to examining whether or not their functions are different, it is important to hypothesize about the future of religion. It is quite possible that religious fragmentation on the universal level could lead to the breakdown of universal religion on the whole. The increase in personal religion could also strengthen the



bonds of people and force them to find factors to relate to other than religion. Perhaps as religion fragments, people will begin to identify with each other more through race, as that is something that cannot be altered and is not chosen. At the same time, instead of identifying more with characteristics outside of religion, it may strengthen the bonds of religion. People may begin to search out those who share their “personal religion” rather than their “universal religion.”

With the main themes enumerated, we now present a brief overview of the chapters before delving into them completely. Our research begins with primitive people and the Azande tribe. Here we rely on E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who has done extensive research on the Zande people, and Emile Durkheim. We will see that the primitive man is a man who has been given an idiom to reason within, and he is not able to break out of it. He is intelligent, but trapped within the only form of reasoning he knows. Through this we are able to discover three main tangible similarities between religion and political order’s functions. Like political order today, the religion of the Azande tribe is able to give power to leaders, clearly establish areas of right and wrong, and set up a fully functioning court system. Prophetic power is granted to leaders, the distinction between the sacred and the profane provide laws, and these laws lead to trials strikingly similar to those we see around the world today. We then move into a more abstract argument regarding the “logical” belief in religion and the construction of myth embedding beliefs into primitive society. We argue, based on a hypothesis by Tylor in combination with some observations from Northrop Frye, that religion is a logical endeavor to the primitive man. It is logical because the primitive man uses religion to explain the world around him, and this becomes his idiom of thought. He then *reasons* within this idiom for all other thought processes. It is the *logical* thing for him to do. This argument is enhanced by the idea of a mythos advanced

by Northrop Frye. As primitive people create a mythos, the distinction between the sacred and the profane becomes even more defined, and passed down to following generations.

Our second subjects for study are the ancient Greeks. Where the Azande are a society based primarily on religion, ancient Greek society presents us with a fusion of religion and politics. Both play prominent roles within the *polis*. We begin with a brief examination of the Oracle of Delphi and how it provided political legitimacy to a pronouncement given by Lycurgus of Sparta. This shows how in ancient Greek society, similar to the Azande, religion was used to legitimate power. We then take a slight transition, while still examining Sparta, to note that while religion was most certainly still prevalent, there appeared to be a shift in thought that no longer valued religion as logical in the same way that the Azande currently do. We examine the ancient Greek emphasis on *logos* in combination with a theory posited by Tylor, “the falsehoods of savage and barbaric peoples must withdraw before the spreading truth of the sciences” (Pals 2006, 30), to show that the function of religion as an explanatory force for the world may not have been to the degree that it is currently with the Azande. However, we are not too quick to count out religion’s function within ancient Greece. As we did with the primitive people, we move on to examine the trial system of the Athenians. The trial system is quite telling of the function of religion within ancient Greek society and has a paradoxical nature. It was politically established, with logical rules governing its function, yet one could be brought up and convicted on religious charges. As mentioned earlier, we will be focusing on several different instances in the courtroom, with the emphasis being on the trial of Socrates. So while the trial system itself was constructed in a political manner, with rules and regulations, religion still played a large role in defining the sacred and the profane within ancient Greek society. We will even see how Meletus, Socrates, and others were even able to contort religion within the court system. During

this time of flux, religion became not only an explanation for the world around the ancient Greeks, but also a tool to be used to accomplish one's own personal goals. Finally, we examine the mythos of the ancient Greeks. We are able to see that while the ancient Greeks made strides towards alienating religion from their life, they were only able to do so on the periphery. Some of their beliefs were certainly proved fallible, but the ancient Greeks were unable to shake the core of religion's function. In spite of the introduction of logic into the ancient Greek idiom of thought, religion continued to play an important role in ancient Greek life.

At this point we will have examined a society that has openly embraced the function of religion and let it act as a building block for the community through the Azande. In addition to this, the ancient Greeks will have shown us a society that heavily relied on religion while slowly evolving away from it. Now we will see the United States, a society that has made, and debatably currently makes, a concerted effort to separate religion and politics. First and foremost, this can be seen with the inclusion of the Establishment Clause in the Constitution. We will go into a discussion involving some of the reasons for the inclusion of this clause. Certain events that occurred in the pre-founding years took a drastic toll on the American psyche and caused a shift in religious thinking in regards to morality. This occurrence resembles the clash of religion and logic that the ancient Greeks endured. Yet despite these logical and moral revolutions, religion still has the power to define morals, albeit in a much smaller scope than one might first imagine. In tandem with a moral defining power, religion can also be seen as a reactionary device that emerges during moral breakdowns in America. It not only functions to create morals, but to uphold those long lost when the country is in moral flux. We will also observe how religion is intertwined with politics, and has become, in this sense, much more corruptible and open to manipulation than in ancient Greece. In conclusion we will evaluate

religion's function across these three societies. This will be followed with a discussion revolving around the nature of personal and universal religion, as well as a discussion about why religion is so easily manipulated. We will show that, paradoxically, the introduction of logic into the idiom of thought causes religion to become alienated and take on this manipulative function.

## Chapter 1: Primitive Society

The first task at hand is to define more fully what we mean by “primitive man.” At the risk of sounding elitist, we define the modern man as someone who exists and participates in the industrialized world, such as the United States of America. If we accept this definition then the argument could be made that every nation in the past and present that has not obtained our level of scientific and intellectual sophistication falls under the category of primitive. But using scientific and intellectual sophistication as our criteria is far too constricting and narrow-minded. We turn to E.E. Evans-Pritchard and his study of the Azande, which will be referred to throughout, for an explanation of the “primitive man.” At his time, the conceptions of the primitive man were less than flattering. However, “Evans-Pritchard found it unacceptable, as we have seen, to say with Tylor and Frazer that primitive people are partly irrational and childish” (Pals 2006, 235-236). In fact, Evans-Pritchard discovered that

“on their own terms, he wrote, the Azande are very logical, curious, and inquiring. In social and practical affairs, they are clever and perceptive. They are skilled craftsmen; they are poetically imaginative, and in matters of survival and daily living extremely resourceful” (Pals 2006, 236).

It would be wrong for us to characterize our primitive man as unintelligent. Yet despite this obvious intelligence the primitive man accepts a belief in the supernatural that many today may find absurd. Evans-Pritchard combats this by stating that

“although the Azande clearly do not see the theoretical weakness in their system of witchcraft belief, their blindness is not due to stupidity, for they display great ingenuity in explaining away the failures and inequalities of the poison oracle and experience mental keenness in testing it. It is due rather to the fact that their intellectual ingenuity and experimental keenness are conditioned by patterns of ritual behaviour [sic] and mystical belief. Within the limits set by these patterns they show great intelligence, but it cannot operate beyond these limits” (Pals 2006, 238).

The primitive man is not an unintelligent man. Rather he is a man that is trapped within the framework of his beliefs. Everything that takes place in his world must be justified by his beliefs, even failures by those same beliefs.

Durkheim provides further evidence for the intelligence of the primitive man. He notes that “it is a basic postulate of sociology that a human institution cannot rest on error and

falsehood or it could not endure” (Durkheim 2001, 4). Were the primitive man truly unintelligent, he would not be able to construct a stable society. If the Azande society were to crumble this would be a show of the weakness of their beliefs. Yet this has not happened. The Azande tribe is a testament that primitive society, based on belief in religion, is not founded on error.

Our next task is to determine whether or not the primitive man’s belief in religion is logical. This may seem counterintuitive at first. How can the belief in something as irrational as religion be considered rational? To truly understand the answer to this question we must understand the mindset of the primitive man. As alluded to above, he is a man constrained. He uses the tools at his disposal to come to an understanding of the world around him as best he can. The primitive man sees the sun fall and rise, the seasons slowly change, and either rejoices or laments as the gods answer and deny his prayers daily. The world that he lives in is all that he knows. Let us repeat this for emphasis because it is a crucial point: *it is all that he knows*. Evans-Pritchard astutely notices that the Azande “reason excellently in the idiom of their beliefs, but they cannot reason outside, or against, their beliefs because they have no other idiom in which to express their thoughts” (Pals 2006, 238). All that the Azande know is the world around them filled with magic, witchcraft, and superstitions. All of their reasoning takes place within the scope of this world. It is their paradigm. Because of this, when the poison oracle convicts someone of practicing witchcraft they accept this as *fact*. It is fact *to them* because religious interpretation is the only paradigm they have access to. There is no other idiom of thought to challenge their accepted way of thinking. We have the benefit of reasoning within several different idioms when presented with new situations. We judge a situation and then decide what is the most logical explanation for it by passively passing it through the different

idioms engrained in our minds. Irrationality springs from the conscious choosing of a less valid idiom of thought from multiple available idioms of thought, in an attempt to explain something unknown. The primitive man does not have the luxury of more than one idiom of thought, and can only reason within the one religious idiom that he has discovered. His reasoning can only be *logical*.

With an understanding of the primitive man in mind we can now move on to our comparison of religion and political order, and their respective functions. The easiest way to go about comparing religion and political order is to set up certain exemplifying characteristics of political order, and then to see how primitive religion matches up to those characteristics. While there are myriad identifying characteristics of political order, there are a select few that really are crucial to its existence. First and foremost, there exists some sort of leader, or group of leaders. Democracy, totalitarianism, monarchy; while they may share incredibly different ideological structures, they all appoint a leader. A leader governs and the people adhere to the decrees that he or she enacts.

This leads to the second identifying characteristic of political order: the presence of laws. Laws, or the distinction between right and wrong, are an essential part of any functioning political order. Laws help maintain order, and societies need order to survive. Lastly, and more abstractly, is a belief in political structure *working* as it should. There is a certain blind confidence that one must place in its governing body in order for it to function effectively. Durkheim writes that, “we accept, for example, that a legislator can create an institution out of nothing by the simple exercise of his will, transforming one social system into another, just as believers in so many religions accept that divine will has drawn some beings into others”



(Durkheim 2001, 29). There is an inherent aspect of blind faith within both systems. These are the characteristics that we must look for within primitive society.

We begin this search within primitive religion by looking at some concepts furthered by Evans-Pritchard. Evans-Pritchard spent a great deal of time studying primitive people and their societies, and one great work that he produced was Theories of Primitive Religion. He focuses on attempting to explain primitive religion through the dual lenses of psychology and sociology. Evans-Pritchard notes, “apart from the psychological relief they provide, in early stages of social evolution these superstitions were useful in giving support to leaders, and hence in sustaining order, government, and custom” (Evans-Pritchard, 1965, 48). Evans-Pritchard is making both a direct and an indirect claim regarding religion’s function in primitive society. By stating that religion helps assign power to leaders, he is admitting that religion not only has leaders, but that it is within religion’s ability to *create* leaders. As noted above, this is one of the key characteristics of political order. Not only does religion create leaders, it provides them with incredible power and influence. This concept is evidenced within the Azande. Evans-Pritchard observes, “control over the poison oracle by the older men gives them great power over their juniors and is one of the main sources of prestige” (Evans-Pritchard 1937, 283). More importantly, religion gives leaders power over the idiom of thought that the primitive man reasons within. This is an example of both personal control and universal control, with the emphasis leaning towards the latter. Any leader, due to the nature of his or her position, obviously has the ability to make decisions beneficial to him or herself. This is the essence of exercising personal control. However, the concept of universal control applies more directly to the primitive people than does personal control. The primitive people function with one idiom of thought. This idiom of thought defines their morals. When religion functions to give power to

leaders, they can take control of the idiom of thought. If you control the idiom of thought you control how a society views events. As explained above by Evans-Pritchard, religion does not just sustain leaders but culture and customs as well. Evans-Pritchard is suggesting here that religion can be described as an extremely important founding aspect of society. As shall be seen, religion is indeed a powerful motivator, fanaticism instigator, and potential governmental building block.

All forms of society have some notion of right and wrong, and a violation of these norms generally leads to punishment. The relationship between law and punishment is crucial to the development of a society in order for it to function coherently. The cornerstone of maintained order can be found buried within the textbooks of written law. Thus, it is safe to say that one function of political structure and government is to create laws for its people, and enforce these laws when they are broken. It is important to note that this includes both the laws themselves, and the punishments that accompany them. Naturally, a question arises. Does religion create anything in the semblance of laws? Religion, as we have defined it, can be seen as a belief in a supernatural order, or sacred presence, which may include adherence to a certain order in regards to the correct way to live one's life. Durkheim shares a similar view, as he "observes that the thing which seems truly characteristic of religious beliefs and rituals is not the element of the supernatural but the concept of *the sacred*" (Pals, 2006, 95). This concept of the sacred is incredibly sweeping. For example, in Christianity the Bible is often referred to as the "Holy Bible" or the "Sacred Bible." One could also look across the world to certain Buddhist traditions where all life is considered sacred. These worldly examples show the diverse range across cultures pertaining to what objects can be considered sacred.

As we break down the core elements of religion even further, we see three main concepts emerge: the sacred, the profane, and rites. Each of these holds implications to the question at hand, and we turn again to Durkheim, for an initial examination of these three concepts. Durkheim posits that

“sacred things are those things protected and isolated by prohibitions; profane things are those things to which such prohibitions apply and which must keep their distance from what is sacred. Religious beliefs are representations that express the nature of sacred things and the relations they sustain among themselves or with profane things. Finally, rites are rules of conduct that prescribe how man must conduct himself with sacred things” (Durkheim 2001, 40).

A clear distinction of right and wrong is presented through the sacred and the profane, and rites are very similar to modern laws governing action. But law has more functions than to just define right and wrong and indicate the correct way to act. It must be able to tangibly maintain order within a society. Our next task is to look for examples of religious law successfully maintaining order within primitive society.

Before we can begin this search we must take a quick digression to address a possible counterargument. In a strict practical sense, one could argue that these “beliefs” do not serve the same function as the laws that a political order will produce. This is due to the different intentions that religious law and political law have. By intention, we mean the intention when the law was created. Let us take the Constitution as an example. There are many different interpretations of the Constitution. Some believe that it is a living document that should reflect the times. Others believe that the letter of the law should be followed when interpreting the Constitution. Yet there are still others who believe that it should be interpreted with the Founder’s original intent in mind. This sounds very similar to the way people interpret religious law. There are those who believe it should update with the times, while others think a strict textual interpretation is best. However, there is one clear difference regarding the intention of the two. The Constitution has built in safeties for it to be modified. Regardless of how one

interprets the Constitution there is an amendment process built into it. If enough people desire it to change, it can change. Religious law does not share this intention. It is stagnant, and unable to change. The United States had the foresight to put build the amendment process into its system. Those who wrote the ancient religious texts did not present their followers with such a luxury. This presents religious law with the unfortunate problem of inflexibility. Luckily, evolution is religion's saving grace. Because people evolve, the application of religious law does not remain stagnant as this analysis might first suggest. While the "law on the books" might remain the same, it is ultimately up to interpretation, much like the Constitution. Initially the text itself gives meaning to the laws, but as society evolves the people following the laws slowly begin to adapt and define them to better fit their needs. This principle is exemplified in the evolving forms of punishment that we will see in the Zande trial system.

On this note, let us begin the examination of the Zande trial system and its views on witchcraft. The trial system is important because it allows us to see if religion does indeed have the ability to maintain order. Here too we draw on Evans-Pritchard's knowledge of the Azande. Evans-Pritchard explains that to the Azande, "the term 'witchcraft' actually refers to a physical substance that some people have in their bodies, unknown to themselves...it operates in a mystical fashion to bring misfortune, and especially sickness on other people" (Pals, 2006, 236). One starts to feel sick, and because 'science' is not yet included in the primitive man's idiom of thought he is left with only one interpretation of the incident. The primitive man reasons within his idiom and arrives at the conclusion that witchcraft is the culprit.

If the Zande trial system were truly similar to one constructed by political order, the next step in the justice process would be to place the blame on an individual. This is exactly what happens. Evans-Pritchard found "when a truly serious misfortune makes an

appearance...the person whose witchcraft is their cause must be found” (Pals, 236). After the accusations have been levied the trial ensues, which is described as

“[a] procedure, [where] a man forces poison into the throat of a chicken while at that very moment asking a question which can be answered with a yes or no. The death or survival of the chicken then determines the answer...there then follows a procedure of accusation, a ritual of ‘blowing water,’ in which the accused agrees to ‘cool’ his witchcraft, which is devouring the soul of the sick person, and all is considered to be at an end—unless of course the victim of the witchcraft dies after all. In that case, vengeance must be taken” (Pals, 2006, 236-237).

We can see some very clear similarities to the way that a political entity might go about apprehending a suspect. First, one levees a complaint about another member of his or her community. This accusation may result in an arrest, or for civil cases an appearance in civil court. The defendant enters his or her plea and a trial/settlement ensues after the verdict is awarded. As indicated by Evans-Pritchard research, in the Zande system one tribe member accuses another of witchcraft. This person must then present himself or herself for judgment in front of the poison oracle. During this judgment, a ritual is conducted to determine if the correct culprit has been apprehended. The next thing that Evans-Pritchard observes could almost be seen as a precursor to some of the punishments that exist in our judicial system. In regards to the punishments enacted,

“Evans-Pritchard points out that at one time in the Zande past, this act [punishment] might have involved murder of the accused witch. Now, however, it is usually a matter of offering compensation to the family or, even better, of discovering, again through oracles, that another person in the community, now deceased, was in act the witch and has thus already suffered a fitting punishment for his witchcraft. Vengeance, moreover, cannot be claimed until the verdict of one’s private oracle has been confirmed by the secret poison oracle of the local prince” (Pals, 2006, 237).

There are several similarities here to a trial system constructed through political order. To begin with, the Azande have a clearly established system of reparations and damages. If damages have been done there is the option, if convicted, to pay the accusing tribe member what is deemed sufficient damages for the “crime” of practicing witchcraft. This is the cornerstone of the United States civil court system. When a complaint is levied against another person, and a judge upholds that complaint, it is likely that he will award the plaintiff reparations of some sort. This

passage also shows us that the Azande possess some notion of our concept of “innocent until proven guilty.” It is quite clear that they have taken some length to insure that no vengeance is unjustly enacted. We challenge one to distinguish between the religious trial system created by the Azande, and the complex trial systems that advanced governments provide just given these two facts. At the core they are almost identical systems.

As mentioned previously, the concept of evolution is religion’s saving grace from stagnation. This is exemplified through the courts, as advanced court and justices systems evolve throughout the years. When laws are no longer viewed as practical they are modified to better suit society’s current state. Punishments change throughout the years as well. While the United States may not have a perfect system, and some cruel forms of punishment may still exist, the system is always evolving. We saw this as punishment in the Zande trial system *evolved* from vengeance through death to vengeance through reparations. This is a reflection of how the religious law of the primitive people may not have evolved, but the primitive people outgrew it and modified it. It was readapted to better fit their evolved state. This mirrors the transition that the United States has made out of draconian forms of punishment to the “better” system of punishment that we have in place today. In quite a few aspects, the well functioning, religiously established primitive trial system of the Azande mirrors that of a well-functioning trial system established by political order. Furthermore, the religious trials of the Azande indirectly act as a catalyst that enforces morals. Each decision that is rendered adds to the mythos that the Azande are in the process of creating. The mythos, whose importance will be discussed soon, is an essential part of primitive principles and morals akin to the records of law that political order possesses.

Not only does religion help produce laws for the Azande, but it also has the ever-important task of reinforcing a moral code of conduct. Evans-Pritchard notes,

“the concept of witchcraft...provides them [the Azande] with a natural philosophy by which the relations between men and the unfortunate events are explained and a ready and stereotyped means of reacting to such events. Witchcraft beliefs also embrace a system of values which regulate human conduct” (Pals 2006, 238)

Witchcraft is more than just a superstition that produces religious laws; it produces a code for living. Witchcraft is an instigator of Zande social norms. One could argue that laws are the same things as morals. While some laws certainly exemplify morals, there is a subtle difference between the two. The distinction can be seen through a difference in thought process. Laws promote right courses of action, and the main deterrent for doing, or not doing, an action is punishment. If we can generalize for a moment, one chooses not to speed in a car because of the threat of a fine or arrest, if apprehended. Chances are that the deterrent is the fine, and not a moral opposition to speeding. A right course of action does not always reflect a universal code of morals. Moral codes of conduct differ from laws because the deterrent is the repugnancy of the act itself, not the fear of punishment. To emphasize the importance of this distinction we shall repeat it: moral repugnance in lieu of punishment is what differentiates moral codes of conduct from laws. They are equal parts of society, and furthering a moral belief is just as important in producing a well functioning society as any other aspect.

We can also look to an ancient religious text, the Holy Bible, to reinforce this idea of the function of religion including the creation of law and the conducting of trials. Four consecutive chapters of Exodus, twenty through twenty-three, are dedicated to the creation of laws. But this is not politically created law; it is law handed down by an authoritative religious figure. For, “the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written that thou mayest

teach them” (Exod. 24.12). Exodus also brings up the idea of a divinely authorized judiciary system. This occurs simultaneously with the creation of leaders when

“Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves” (Exod. 18.25-26).

This is incredibly similar to the way that the United States judicial system works today. The lower courts deal with most cases, but hard cases eventually make their way to the Supreme Court, much like they would have made their way to Moses. These passages in Exodus provide us with some more solid evidence supporting religion’s strong function in primitive society.

Until now we have been looking at function from a practical standpoint. Comparing the more tangible functions of religion and political structure is bound to lead to the most accessible results, but it will not yield all the results. By using this practical argument, we have been missing out on the psychological aspect of religion and political structure, specifically the psychological aspect of their creation. Another important question arises: were these two similar enterprises *fashioned* in the same manner. Let us look at a popular theory proposed by Tylor. Tylor recognizes that humans are rational beings, and paradoxically grounds his hypothesis in the realm of myth. He espouses,

“myths arise from, among other things, the natural tendency to ‘clothe every idea in a concrete shape, and whether created by primitives of the remote past or those of modern times, they tend to follow orderly laws of development.’ Myths originate in the logical association of ideas. They account for the facts of nature and life with the aid of analogies and comparisons” (Pals, 2006, 25).

Essentially, people are looking to explain the world around them and do so by making, in their minds, logical connections between what they see and what they are *capable* of reasoning. They construct these “myths,” and make them a reality. It is no longer a myth in their mind. We saw earlier that because of the primitive man’s mindset, this is a rational construction of the world.

Pals points out a perfect example of Tylor’s point in saying that



“if the noise of a storm sounds like an angry human outburst and rainfall suggests tears of sorrow, it is easy to see how, in myth, the great forces of the natural world lend themselves routinely to tales in which their activities are made to look just like those of animals and human beings” (Pals, 2006, 25).

We inherently have a fear, or uncomfortable feeling at least, regarding the unknown. In order to get rid of this inherent fear we name things to the best of our ability at the given time. This is a *rational* response. The crux of the rationality is found here. If a person takes in all their surroundings and develops an understanding, information interpreted through this view is considered rational. Yet paradoxically, while it is rational it has the potential to *become* irrational. This comes with the appearance of another idiom of thought. However, mere presence is not enough to render a belief that was once valid, invalid. A society must accept this new idiom in order for a belief to be rendered invalid and irrational. Irrationality comes with the acceptance of a new idiom of thought, and then a conscience choice to adhere to the insufficient explanation that the old idiom of thought offers. We stress that this idea of conscious irrationality is not the case for societies with only one idiom of thought. This explains how hindsight can lead to misinterpretation regarding the logical beliefs of the primitive man. For the primitive man, this is all *logically* created through a rational process, and incorporated into his mythos.

As we conceptualize myth, our minds may wander to tales of lunacy. Perhaps recalling childhood memories about learning how Hercules had to overcome his twelve tasks, or how Zeus turned poor little Io into a cow. These sorts of myths probably seem silly to us. Northrop Frye states an alternative understanding regarding the concept of myth. He says that “myth to me means, first of all, *mythos*, plot, narrative, or in general the sequential ordering of words” (Frye, 2006, 49). To put it simply, myth is a compilation of words. Collections of myth eventually turn into a mythos. Each experience that someone has contributes to the mythos and it expands indefinitely through time.

This expansive mythos also contains notions of the sacred and the profane. Frye notes, “as a literature develops, ‘profane’ or secular folk tale and legend become part of its material” (Frye, 2006, 56). At the beginning, no actions are deemed right and wrong, or sacred and profane in the language that we are using. As societies mature these lines become more distinguished. This establishes an initial mythos for people to draw their information from. As the primitive man experiences more, his mythos and the conception of the sacred and the profane grow accordingly. Myth is like a living textbook of experiences constantly defining and redefining the line between the sacred and the profane.

The concept of myth as creating a sort of metaphorical textbook of right and wrong leads us to another crucial point. One of the reasons that our laws are so effective is due to the fact that most people have a general knowledge of what is right and wrong. Our laws can be looked up, examined, and scrutinized if one so desires. Because of this, some of these laws become so engrained within us that it is unlikely that we will ever forget them. Permanent, persistent mental reminders of consequence are likely to deter a logical person from committing an undesirable action. For instance, one could break into an electronics store and steal a television, but what purpose would it serve? It is general knowledge that, if caught, jail time, or at least a hefty fine, would be imposed. This knowledge generally helps deter the common, rational man from making decisions such as this. Ipso facto, society stays relatively safe and in order. We recognize that a certain appeal to crime will inevitably exist, but to the rational man in a comfortable situation crime offers no appeal. Myth serves a similar purpose. As myth matures and expands, the line between the sacred and the profane becomes much clearer, and much more present in the mind of the community. Perhaps in a primitive tribe a rain dance is required every harvest. One year a man refuses to do a rain dance because he is angry and wishes to spite the

gods. This blasphemous action leads to a poor crop yield the following harvest season. The myth of this man will be passed on to consecutive generations to help them avoid the profane action of spiting the gods. This concept can be applied to many other aspects of the primitive man's life. We can look again at the Azande's witchcraft trials for an example of this. The very idea of witchcraft has been engrained in to the Azande tribe's mythos. So engrained that,

“in addition to its task of explaining misfortune, witchcraft works along with magic to achieve other useful social purposes. It not only serves as the foundation of legal affairs but also governs Zande morals and softens the rough edges of social life. The chances of violence, for example, are reduced because there is a routine procedure for determining the identity of those who are believed to have caused misfortune and an expectation that, in the appropriate way, they will be punished” (Pals 2006, 238).

The morality established by the mythos of witchcraft compels the Azande to act in a morally upright way, lest they wish to be accused of a crime. This mythos governs their actions, and continuously expands as additional practices are declared either sacred or profane. This is an example of both laws and moral codes. The exemplification of a law is seen in the fact that there is an initial inhibition to commit witchcraft because *swift* punishment is offered as a deterrent. This case also presents itself as a moral code because, as mentioned earlier, the Azande show a moral disdain for witchcraft. Not only is religion able to set up physical laws within the Azande tribe, but the mythos has shown that it also has a strong grip on the creation of moral ones. The encompassing grasp that religion has on the Azande might show why they do not need to rely heavily on political order to function. With religion providing both physical laws and moral codes of conduct, there is no need for highly organized government to do the same. The Azande's religious beliefs are quite sufficient for supporting a society over an extended period of time.

This creation of a split between the sacred and the profane enumerated by Durkheim, and the idea of an ever evolving mythos purported by Frye, provide strong evidence that religion can provide society with the same stability that political structure can. Frye leaves us with one

more piece of evidence for this claim. This pertains to the idea that myth, as a part of religion, is able to help maintain an established order. Frye notes that it [myth] “has two parallel aspects: as a story, it is poetic and is recreated in literature as a story with a specific social function” (Frye, 2006, 67). Not only is myth present as a guideline to what is right and wrong, it is incorporated into the very fabric of society. Myth guides, it helps, it reinforces. But it is so much more than that. As Frye posits, “myth...is a program of action for a specific society” (Frye, 2006, 67). It is adaptable to a society’s needs, much like the varying political entities and government types that exist today. If a society begins to tumble into chaos a political entity will step in and either reinforce laws or create new ones. The same runs true for the mythos established by religion. It can be expanded and shrunk as needed in accordance with what society demands. No one government works for everyone, nor does one mythos work for everyone. It fits the needs of the society presented to it. When the primitive people were looking to explain the world they turned to myth. And myth in turn bequeathed them law, structure, and direction.

Let us take a quick digression and glimpse at the United States of America. While democracy has done many good things for the country, and helped it evolve throughout the years, there will always be a certain form of resistance to its policies. Criticism is fired off left and right about government decisions, policies, or just views in general. Yet in spite of all of this, you will find that the majority of these people still believe in democracy as a valuable and functional form of government. This speaks to the aspect of inherent blind faith incorporated in religious and political beliefs. There are certain beliefs that most people in America hold as core beliefs. For instance, many people are calling for the right to gay marriage, yet democracy is slow to respond. In spite of this people are still in favor of democracy, and will defend it even

though their desired result is not being achieved. The Azande share a similar logical pattern.

For instance,

“the fundamental ideas are always affirmed in a way that allows for certain adjustments and protections of them if they *do* happen to be contradicted by the facts...when a poison or type of magic does not work, they declare that it may have been inappropriately used or that it was applied against mystical powers whose action is beyond the natural realm and so cannot be contradicted by events within nature...their small beliefs rest very logically on certain large ones, and these important basic principles are extremely well guarded (Pals, 2006, 239).

The basic principles of witchcraft are not the harbingers of failure. The religious institution itself is not at fault; rather a certain practice was not adhered to in the correct fashion. Were these basic beliefs in witchcraft and oracles to crumble, the entire society would be in an extreme crisis as their belief system is shattered before their eyes. Because they only possess one idiom of thought, the institution is infallible. They do not blame the system itself, but the actors within the system. This unshakable belief in the correct functioning of religion shown by the Azande mirrors that of those who participate in highly evolved forms of political structure. We do not see democracy as a failure when it produces a result we disagree with. Rather, we see the participants in democracy as having failed the institution. As Evans-Pritchard astutely notes, “in any culture, certain fundamental beliefs *must* at all costs be preserved. They are too precious to lose” (Pals, 2006, 239).

Throughout our research we have been keen to stress that primitive people are logical beings because they only possess one idiom of thought. While a strong case for this has been made, there is always the possibility that some may still be skeptical of this point of view. The skeptical person may be tempted to side with Sigmund Freud regarding the matter of a belief in religion as logical. Freud states, “from their intellectualist standpoint, human religious behavior is a conscious endeavor, it represents an effort to use reason to understand the world while, at the same time, it demonstrates a failure to reason correctly” (Pals, 2006, 66). Now while we have just stated above that to the Azande, religion is the most *logical* choice, we also acknowledge

that what Freud says does carry some merit. It has merit from an evolutionary standpoint. As people evolve, so do their views. It is for this reason that it is logical for the Azande to believe in religion and let it govern them, and also why in the future it may be illogical for that same occurrence to happen. To augment this evolutionary argument, there is the theory by Tylor that “the falsehoods of savage and barbaric peoples must withdraw before the spreading truth of the sciences” (Pals, 2006, 30). He sees it as inevitable that religion will eventually give way to science in more developed societies. We do not entirely agree with this statement, and some strong thinkers back our stance.

In defense of this stance,

“the Italian social theorist Vilfredo Pareto, the French philosopher Henri Bergson, and the German sociologist Max Weber... [acknowledge that] instead of regarding religion and magic as forms of primitive thought, while science is assumed to be modern, they suggest that these two types of thinking are perhaps best seen as complementary configurations—forms of understanding that are clearly different but equally necessary in all human cultures, primitive and modern alike. No society can survive without something like science *and* something like religion; all cultures will always need both science’s constructs of the mind and religion’s constructs of the heart” (Pals, 2006, 252).

It is impossible for both science and religion to rule, yet it is also impossible for one to exist without the other. Although the primitive religion the Azande people adhere to shows little or no semblance of what we call science, it is only not science by our standards. Perhaps if we are to put our selves in the shoes of the Azande, we could see scientific elements in their practices. This intermixing of science and religion will become much more apparent when we examine more developed societies. We will discover through the ancient Greek’s interest for both religion and politics, and finally the United States concerted effort to keep the two separate, whether or not this assessment regarding the necessity for both a construct of the mind and a construct of the heart to exist is true.

But just as we defended against one dissenter, another arises, this time in the form of David Hume. Hume is not so willing to readily accept the logical construction of religion that

the primitive man exercises based upon the evidence that we have just provided. Through the character of Philo in Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Hume develops a contrary idea in regards to the truth of religion being based upon experience. Philo states,

“supposing, which is the real case with regard to man, that this creature is not antecedently convinced of a supreme intelligence, benevolent, and powerful, but it left to gather such a belief from the appearances of things; this entirely alters the case, nor will he ever find any reason for such a conclusion. He may be full convinced of the narrow limits of his understanding; but this will not help him in forming an inference concerning the goodness of superior powers, since he must form that inference from what he knows, now from what he is ignorant of” (Smith 1947, 204).

Philo goes to great length to explain that religious explanations for the world are not valid to the primitive man because he cannot comprehend the nature of religion. Hume here is arguing in direct contrast to our point. As he states that you cannot reason from what you do not know, the unknown being supreme religious forces, we argue that the primitive man can reason from religion because it is familiar. Hume is plagued with both the curse of hindsight and the fortunate possession of more than one idiom of thought. These are the tools that let him make these judgments. In order to truly understand the rationality of primitive religion one must remove themselves from the privilege of multiple idioms of thought. We have previously determined that the existence of only a religious idiom of thought makes religious reasoning logical. Hume’s argument is valid to those possessing more than one idiom of thought, but not to the primitive man. The primitive man takes sensory information and rationally turns it into abstract religious thought.

At the beginning of this chapter, we established the logical construction of religion. So at the close we must discern if political ordered is also constructed in a similar manner. Let us look at the creation of a hypothetical society in order to accomplish this task of comparison. Imagine a group of people is presented with the world around them. Naturally they look for some way to create order out of this world. Perhaps one man is very good at hunting and trapping. Subsequently he always brings the other members of this society food, and slowly

becomes a prominent leader in this society. Finally this man is elected 'leader' of these people due to his skills. Now this is where the logic takes a daunting turn. We must simultaneously envision the intangible respect for the leader's skills, and the primitive man's respect for created deities such as the sun. The reverence shown to the leaders and deities in the primitive society likely arises out of a combination of respect and fear of chaos, a natural human fear. As humans we want something to keep us safe. The same can be applied to the *elected* leader and the government he or she has established. People follow his or her laws out of a dual respect and fear. For what would happen if they disrespected a law that the leader enacted and then he or she refused to go hunting? The community would be deprived of a food source, and chaos would ensue. In another sense, following a leader also requires some sort of blind faith, as does religion. As religious concepts are currently impossible to prove or disprove by today's scientific methods, belief in these ideas requires a special sort of blind faith. This belief in the workings of a political order is quite similar to that of blind faith, following without questioning. Belief in the functionality of a political entity requires inherent trust. Trust that it will lead you in the right direction, trust that it will protect you, and trust that it will prevent the society from slipping into the unknown. The evidence presented above illuminates some very eerie similarities between the logical construction and faith-based belief between primitive religion and political structure. The origin and original upkeep of religion and political structure, as presented by these examples, is eerily similar. Both are born from the dual relationship between reverence for the existing and fear of the unknown, and both require a faith that cannot be explained.

We are now going to move on to our final aspect of political order: leaders. Most forms of political structure and government have leaders. The democracy of the United States



has a president, ruthless despots controlled fascist regimes of the past. Naturally, for religion to match up it would have to present some form of leader. While they were organized, the primitive religions did not have nearly the hierarchy of power that has been refined throughout the centuries by religions such as Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. What they did have were prophets. Weber notes that, “historically, prophets have been of two main types. The ‘exemplary prophet’—the wise man who teaches by his own example—has predominated in the Far East...the ‘ethical prophet’ has predominated in the Near East in and Western civilization” (Pals 2006, 168). The ethical prophet is one of the few examples within primitive religion that we see religion manipulated. It is done so in the universal sense as “they present themselves not as wise men modeling the life of wisdom but as instruments chosen by an almighty and personal God to proclaim his will. Their mission is to speak as his oracles and to demand obedience to the universal ethic that he imposes” (Pals 2006, 168). We defined universal control as an attempt to define the morals of a populous, and that is exactly what these ethical prophets function is. As powerful as these prophets were, they could not rise to power without the help of others. Perhaps the most important aspect of a prophet is the charisma that he or she possesses. As Weber states, “charisma, in prophetic or any other form, does not exist unless a community of laypeople comes to recognize and reinforce it” (Pals, 2006, 169). Charisma is the most important asset in the prophet’s arsenal, and it is symbiotically tied to the people’s recognition. The power of charisma grows in tandem with the prophet’s popularity.

There is an inherent notion within a political order that if the government, with the possible exceptions of fascism and totalitarianism, is not respected than it loses its legitimacy. In fact, built into the founding of the democratic United States was the idea that if the government ever went rogue and lost the respect of the people, the people could overthrow it in order to

restore balance. We saw that the same concept applies to prophets. They hold power only as long as they treat their believers well and garner respect from them. Once this respect is gone, all power is lost, as referenced to in the hypothetical society that we briefly created earlier. If we take what we learned about the Azande, and their belief in witchcraft, it is not hard to imagine a rogue leader in their presence. It is quite possible that were a prophetic leader to bring “misfortune” upon a tribe, he, or she, would be accused of witchcraft, and deposed of, in some sense mirroring the process of impeachment in the United States.

There is one aspect of prophetic religion that primitive people do not have to grapple with. Weber notes, “whenever prophetic religions have stated a universal doctrine of salvation of love, they cannot help coming into conflict with the state, which always puts first the interests of a political entity, whether that is a city territory, nation, or empire” (Pals, 2006, 174). Because primitive people gravitate so strongly towards religion, and to the structure that religion provides, they often show deference towards religion. Religion is the predominant force within their communities and thus, does not come into conflict with potential political organizations at an early stage. The problem occurs once both religion and political structure evolve. If we take a quick peek into Christianity we can see that this is the case. The hierarchy and procedural actions that are present in Christianity almost seem as if a political entity and religious body have combined. There are church leaders, a hierarchy of control, promotion, and excommunication just to name a few. But we are getting ahead of ourselves, as this point regarding the mixing of a heavy belief in religion and a newly found faith in political structure will be examined much more in depth when we move past primitive religion and to the ancient Greece, and finally the United States. What is important in regards to primitive religion is that the state and religion are not likely to come into conflict.

The time has come to wrap up our initial discussion of primitive religion and its merits when juxtaposed against the function of political order. Along the way we have discovered some very important evidence regarding primitive religion in relation to sophisticated political structure. At the beginning we established some essential characteristics of political order. Most notably, how it provides order through a system of laws and empowers leaders. Throughout this chapter we have shown numerous accounts of how religion, applied to the primitive people, is able to have the exact same function as political order. Religion sets up a distinction between the sacred and the profane, and these boundaries act in the same way as laws conceived by a political order. For the primitive people this comes into being in two ways. The distinction is first created once an undesirable action occurs, and is labeled as bad. Next this belief is perpetuated in subsequent generations through an ever-changing mythos and the outcomes produced by their justice system. The construction of this mythos greatly reflects that of the United States system of recorded laws. We saw that because the primitive man is only able to reason within the limited idiom that he has before him, religion *becomes* the most rational choice for him. Let us not forget the procedural similarities that we discovered between primitive religion and government. Primitive religions are drawn towards prophetic characters as people born to highly developed government are drawn towards strong political leaders. They both share the ever-important trait of charisma. Charisma gives the prophet and the politician their power, and it lets them try to maintain universal control in similar ways. So in conclusion, the function of political religion seems to be very similar to that of political order.

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## Chapter 2: Ancient Greece

Our next subject for study is ancient Greece. We will be focusing mainly on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century ancient Greeks. Greece during this time gives us a midpoint in thought evolution. We will examine the ancient Greek trial system, dramas, tragedies, and political decrees to see if the function of ancient Greek religion is similar to that of the Azande, or if it has evolved into something completely different. We expect to find religion acting in similar ways as it does with the Azande, but with one important distinction. We expect to see that Greek religion was questioned much more deeply than that of the Azande, and hope to discover the implications of this statement if it is indeed true.

We have already developed, through our study of primitive religion, the context from which the function of religion will be judged. We can apply these same concepts to our study of ancient Greece. In our study of primitive religion, we saw that prophets had the charismatic ability to use their association with the mystical to legitimize their rule and attempt to exercise control over the idiom of thought. We identified this as universal control because it was an attempt to project one's beliefs over an entire community. Religion being used as a tool to exercise both personal and universal control can be seen within ancient Greek society through oracles. Oracles were a very important part of ancient Greek religion. Particularly, "oracles were consulted when the Athenians were troubled by a bad portent or religious oversight" (Mikalson 1991, 88). One of the most important oracles was Apollo's oracle, the Oracle of Delphi. Just as the primitive prophets used religion to legitimize their power, we can see some changes and reforms made in Sparta by Lycurgus justified in a similar manner. It was recorded that

"mythically, the reform was associated with one wondrously omniprovident lawgiver, Lycurgus, to whom was ascribed one 'Great' *rhētra*...and several lesser ones. *Rhētra* means a 'pronouncement' or 'ordinance'...in this case one divinely sanctioned by the oracular authority of Apollo at Delphi" (Cartledge 2009, 43).

We quite clearly have another case of religion being used to give legitimacy to the action of a leader. While it is hard to determine the type of control being exercised at this point, we venture that this instance is an attempt at religiously backed universal control because these decrees must have had the potential to affect many. Moreover, in the previous chapter we talked about the creation of a “mythos,” and how this contributes to religious ideas becoming engrained within a society. This passage demonstrates that this same concept applies to the ancient Greeks. The idea that these “pronouncements” were divinely recognized and supported is integrated into the mythos. It is a self-enforcing cycle. Lycurgus obtained legitimacy from religion, it was integrated into the mythos, and seeking divine recognition for actions became the norm. The only way to break this cyclical mythos is with the introduction of another idiom of thought. By running religiously sanctioned decrees through a religious idiom of thought the cycle is perpetuated. By running these same decrees through a different idiom it has the potential to be broken.

This divine legitimacy is similar to that incorporated within primitive religion, but there is a slight difference. As the primitive people do not have the sense of political order that the ancient Greeks did, religion vests a different type of legitimacy in its leaders. For the primitive people, religion confirms the power and legitimacy of the leader him or herself. There is little semblance of political decrees being offered that needed justification. The most important aspect is the power to affirm a leader. But the Ancient Greeks offer us a different example. Politics and religion were both very prominent in their lives, and it was an inevitability that the two of them would have eventually met in the political spectrum. As shown by Lycurgus’s treatment of oracles, religion was being used to not only empower leaders for election, but to also empower the system itself. It is not hard to imagine that many leaders

running in an election in ancient Greece would have appealed to the remaining religious sympathies of the ancient Greeks in an attempt to gain favor. Even after being elected, we have no doubt that the leaders would have sought out divine sanction for their decrees similar to the style that Lycurgus. Religion powered the system itself more than the leaders. Even though this is a key difference, the fundamental point is that religion still helps the reigning institution maintain stability.

But the ancient Greeks were an intellectual people who were always searching for answers. It was inevitable that they would eventually start questioning the merits of divinely approved candidates. This would, in turn, cause the function of religion to shift. This shift can be seen clearly in Sparta some time after Lycurgus' decree was issued. It sparked a turn in Greek thinking from the religious to the political. At the moment described above, religion still maintained a prominent function in Sparta regarding the confirmation of a ruler's dictum. This change in thinking

“served to split and dethrone the power of the old aristocratic ruling classes – the Homeric and Hesiodic ‘kings’ (basileis) – irreversibly. Only a very few *poleis* thereafter were strictly aristocracies, governments of the ‘best’ men who defined their claim to exclusive rule in terms of noble descent ultimately from a hero or a god” (Cartledge 2009, 44).

The function of religion in Sparta was slowly shifting. God given decrees and leaders professing their loyalty to gods were becoming much less prominent. This also had ramifications on personal and universal control. As the universality of religion became less prominent in the community it became harder to exercise universal control with religion at the helm. With a shift away for universal religion, religion as a voice for personal control is a much more stable role for it to fulfill because it does not require societal approval. It only requires the approval of one.



A shift away from divinely sanctioned decrees can also be seen in many of the plays from ancient Greece. In one of Euripedes' plays, he remarks, through a servant of Menelaus, that

“I saw how worthless and full of lies the business of seers is...why, indeed, do we consult seers? People ought to sacrifice to the gods and ask them for good things, and dismiss prophecy. That enticement of life was wrongly invented, and no lazy man ever got rich from (omens in) sacrifices. Reason and good planning are the best seer” (Mikalson 1991, 96)

This presents us with the embodiment of the Greek dilemma of logical evolution. They were caught in flux. On one hand, you have Menelaus' servant criticizing the work of seers showing an evolution away from belief in the magical and mystical. Yet on the other hand, he relates “sacrifice to the gods” with “reason and good planning.” While the ancient Greeks truly attempted to shed themselves of religion and move into the realm of *logos*, examples such as this show how they were only able to shed the fringe elements, and not shake religion at its core. Menelaus' servant attempted to use the Greek concept of “logic” to connote the move away from a ridiculous religious belief. Instead of landing on an entirely new belief founded in logical “reason and good planning”, he falls back upon an old religious belief that “sacrifice to the gods” is the equivalent of “reason and good planning.” This shows what happens when a newly emerging idiom of thought is present in a society. It is clear that Menelaus' servant has accepted this new idiom of thought, but was not quite sure how to orient it on its own merit. Because of this, he grounded the new idiom of thought in the old religious one. This inhibited its progress, and hindered it from operating to its full extent.

While there certainly was a shift away from religion empowering political decrees, its ability was not entirely lost. In our study so far we have been overlooking some prominent, non-political figures, of Greek society: poets. Paul Veyne aptly sees, “we easily note that Pindar uses myth not at all to exalt the aristocracy but to raise his own position vis-a-vis his listeners. As a

poet he deigns to elevate to his own level the victor whom he celebrates” (Veyne 1983, 19). Religion’s function here is used not to affirm power, but to elevate status. This represents an early form of religion being used as a tool rather than as a guide. Instead of providing a path for the people to follow, it was used as a means to an end. The example of the poet attempting to elevate his own *personal* status is a good indicator that *personal* control was being exercised.

Because poetry oftentimes turned religion into a means to an end, poets were not the only people being elevated. This is especially evident in ancient sporting events and the summaries of them. Through the poet,

“the effect is both to elevate, to put *this* wrestler or winner of the footrace on a par with the great beings of a glorious past, and at the same time to point the contrast between men and gods, for Pindar all the time reminds his victor and his audience in their moments of celebration that by comparison with the gods men are weak, ephemeral, ‘a dream of a shadow’” (Easterling in Easterling and Muir 1985, 42).

The poet was used by the ancient Greeks to reinforce the centuries old cosmic order. He simultaneously elevated the victor of a great match and reminded him that while great, he was still not a god. Through poets, religion in ancient Greece took on this peculiar function of a self-perpetuating entity. The poets were able to extend religion’s life in the eyes of the ancient Greeks in spite of the massive transition in thought that they experienced in the fourth and fifth centuries.

The trial system of the primitive people proved particularly revealing when examining the function of primitive religion. The same can be said for the trial system used by the ancient Greeks. It simultaneously resembles a politically constructed trial system and a religiously constructed system. Cartledge sums up the Athenians trial system thusly: “rather it was a matter of dispute settlement, involving individuals – of course, the prosecutor and defendant at the least, but also the good of the community as a whole, in the interests of citizen harmony and solidarity” (Cartledge 2009, 81). The trial system of the ancient Greeks was an

even more refined system than that of the primitive people of the Zande tribe. We can see that there were clearly established prosecutors, defendants, and a citizen jury. One may be tempted to argue here that there would have been no room for religion within the courtroom that the Athenians established. What possible purpose could religion serve in a justice system that already possessed such clearly defined laws and processes? Yet, because the Ancient Greeks existed in a society that was governed in tandem by law and religion, religion still managed to work its way into the courtroom. Cartledge notes, “such dispute settlement could acquire strong religious overtones, like those of a ritual cleansing and purification of the city’s Augean tables polluted by alleged criminality, even when the overt content of the court case was not religious – as it was the trial of Socrates” (Cartledge 2009, 81). While the Athenians were progressing away from the era of religion and into the era of political order, religion still had the function of defining the sacred and the profane, and manifesting itself in the courtroom. This caused religion to be further integrated into the mythos in spite of the valiant attempts to shed it from that same body of beliefs. It may have been possible for the ancient Greeks to deny various beliefs that religion had promoted, but as long as religious overtones existed within the court system and their laws, religion in ancient Greece retained its moral-defining function.

The continued presence of religion in ancient Greek society presents us with another dilemma. Why, if the Greeks placed such emphasize on *logos*, did they still integrate these religious concepts so heavily into their society. To quote Tylor again, he believed that “the falsehoods of savage and barbaric peoples must withdraw before the spreading truth of the sciences” (Pals 2006, 30). While the ancient Greeks were so engrained with religious concepts, there were inklings of this transition, such as a move towards disbelieving seers as discussed above. In addition to this, there were a

“series of profound changes in the theory and practice of politics (in the broadest sense) in late archaic Greece: from myth to *logos*, from gift exchange to instituted political change, from divine to human understanding, from concrete to abstract reasoning, and from unwritten to written law. In sum: from a city of gods to the city of reason” (Cartledge 2009, 70).

For the primitive man, religion was enough to support society on its own, but the ancient Greeks seem to have altered its function. They did not see it as such a stabilizing force. The ancient Greeks were able to see the holes in religious reasoning that could only be revealed through the introduction of an additional idiom of thought. There was a thought revolution, and

“central to this revolutionary process was what Vernant (in Vernant and Vidal-Nauet 1988) has called the ‘tragic moment’ at Athens: the old divine and heroic myths were subjected to a democratically inspired rereading within the framework of a revolutionary genre, tragic drama” (Cartledge 2009, 70).

The ancient Greek myths provided a literal conception of a mythos. This enabled them to have a tangible source of history to use when interpreting and defining their beliefs. It also gave them something to reinterpret with their newly acquired idiom of thought, drastically altering the meaning of the mythos. The subjection of religious foundations to the logical idiom of thought had an auxiliary effect as well. It helped mold religion from the backbone of society into a supporting aspect, and potential tool, of political order.

We discussed in our chapter regarding primitive people, and briefly in this chapter, the importance of the function of myth in establishing a framework for one to think and reason within. The Athenians began their lifespan with their own thought framework created by myth, but then this logical revolution affected them so deeply that they rearranged their idiom for thinking, and consequently their mythos as well. Cartledge examines Pelasgus, and sees another transformation. Due to this transformation “his [Aeschylus’] mythical-era Pelasgus, king of Argos in the Peloponnese, becomes magically transformed into a citizen king, one who before taking a major political decision declares he must await the prior decision of the Assembly of Argos to be taken by the counting of votes” (Cartledge 2009, 71). Dramas and myths had similar functions. They were intended to instruct and reinforce certain moral codes. These moral codes

were reflected in dramatic representations of the myths for all the public to see. The shift in thought paradigm naturally triggered a shift in dramatic representation as well. Drawing from the two examples before us, we can see that the introduction of logic has the potential to completely annihilate religion from the political sphere of life. But we believe that it goes deeper than that. It is not just the introduction of logic that causes the function of religion to change, but rather a mutation in a society's thought idiom that shifts what is considered to be logical. As it was shown earlier, to the primitive man a belief in religion is the most logical choice at the time. When constructing his idiom, he was presented with a world and his primary goal was to define the world around them, without the benefit of past definition. There was little semblance of political order and most of the society's rules were composed out of religious beliefs, specifically the distinction between the sacred and the profane. With the advancements in science, mathematics, and politics that the ancient Greeks made, this idiom of thought began to seem less logical. Primitive religion is simultaneously logical in the present, and has the potential to become illogical in the future. For the ancient Greeks, primitive religion was illogical. *Logos* was attempting to find a place to stand on its own two feet independent of religious help.

For all this discussion involving the ancient Greek conception of a mythos we have failed to ask one critical question: did the Greeks actually believe in their myths? The primitive people are guided by their myths because the myths presented them with an idiom to reason with, and at the beginning they accepted this idiom. The ancient Greeks had the benefit of reasoning through multiple idioms, and thus were bestowed with the ability to reject an idiom if it no longer made sense to them. But did this added information affect the Greeks belief in their mythology? This was hinted at earlier when we examined the overturning of the ancient Greek

mythos as a consequence of the introduction of logic. Paul Veyne proposes one theory, stating, “for them, as for the ancient Greeks, historical truth was a vulgate authenticated by consensus over the ages. This consensus sanctioned the truth as it sanctioned the reputation of those writers” (Veyne 1983, 6). This speaks accordingly to our analysis of the concept of an expanding mythos examined in chapter one. Tacit consent. With no objections raised, myths are allowed to run rampant throughout the generations, never questioned. One might be tempted to conclude that it would have been improbable that the ancient Greeks could have been persuaded that their myths were false because they also possessed religion as an idiom of thought. This may have been for a society with only one idiom of thought, but when presented with multiple idioms of thought, evolution is possible. When the ancient Greeks examined their myths through the idiom of religion, “the Trojan War, the *Thebaid*, or the expedition of the Argonauts—passed for being completely authentic. Thus a listener to the *Iliad* was in the position of the modern reader of a historical novel” (Veyne 1983, 21). As expected, religious thought confirmed religious beliefs as “true.” They would have had to change their way of thinking in order for their perception of the truth of myth and religion to change. Veyne notes,

“similarly, in Greece there existed a domain, the supernatural, where everything was to be learned from people who knew...this state of affairs may have lasted more than a thousand years. It did not change because the Greeks discovered reason or invented democracy but because the map of the field of knowledge was turned upside down by the creation of new powers of affirmation (historical investigation and speculative physics) that compete with myth, and unlike it, expressly offered the alternative between true and false” (Veyne 1983, 24).

In accordance with Tylor’s prediction, “the falsehoods of savage and barbaric people must withdraw before the spreading truth of the sciences” (Pals 2006, 30). The ancient Greeks perception of religion only changed when their way of examining it was altered. Their orally created mythos was no longer able to maintain its stability with the introduction of these new forms of investigation. While it functioned as a pseudo-history, these new processes injected the

idea of tangible proof into ancient Greek reasoning. Tangible proof is something that the religious idiom of thought has always had difficulty grappling with, and one that the logical idiom of thought excels in.

This analysis brings up an important point regarding blind faith. We discussed earlier that there is a certain element of blind faith inherent in both religion and a belief in political order functioning as it should. The ancient Greeks were able to dispel *some* of this blind faith when logic was introduced as a new idiom of thought. However this did not mean that blind faith evaporated from their religion entirely. In order to preserve this element of blind faith within religion, they attempted to transfer it to something more tangible: heroes. For

“this is the paradox: there were people who did not believe in the existence of the gods, but never did anyone doubt the existence of the heroes. And with reason: the heroes were only men, to whom credulity had lent supernatural traits, and how could one doubt that human beings now exist and have always existed” (Veyne 1983, 42).

This is just another place where we can see that while the presence of more than one idiom of thought contributed to the more advanced mental state of the ancient Greeks, they still clung to the remaining straws of religion even after logic caused their validity to be questioned. It perfectly exemplifies the concept that because their new idiom of thought was founded out of their old one, some remnants still remained. They attributed great deeds to heroes. This is plausible and could have been conceived of rationally and logically with their new idiom. But by attributing special god-like powers to the heroes they were showing the fallible extent of their logic. A religious attribute was assigned through a logical idiom of thought. This voids the true nature of the religious idiom of thought and shows that even the logical idiom of thought was still somewhat grounded in logic.

We mentioned briefly the similarities that the ancient Greek trial system had to one constructed through political order. Yet we have not really touched upon the religious

significance of trials. While the trial system was not constructed in a religious manner, religion did have its place in the courtroom. The trial of Socrates presents us with a peculiar case that shows how, even though the Greeks were separating themselves from the religious thought process, it was still deeply engrained into their society. In the trial,

“Meletus, son of Meletus of the deme Pitthus, has brought this charge and lodged this writ against Socrates son of Sophroniscus of the deme Alopece. Socrates has broken the law by [Ia] no duly acknowledging the gods whom the *polis* acknowledges and by [Ib] introducing other new divinities. He has also broken the law by [II] corrupting the young. The Penalty proposed is Death” (Cartledge 2009, 85).

There are several points worthy of discussion here. First, it must be noted that the first two charges were entirely religious in nature. Furthermore, the first charge states that Socrates was in violation of not believing in gods that the Athenian state previously acknowledged. Through a politically established trial system Socrates was charged with a *religious* crime. This was in a nation where, although religion still had its influence, logic was supposed to be the champion of reason.

This raises an interesting point. Perhaps we have been neglecting the true extent to which religion and politics were intertwined in ancient Greece. As Cartledge believes, “in ancient Athens, religion was itself not just politicized but political – part of the essence of ‘the political’, indeed. It would therefore be anachronistic and misleading to distinguish a ‘political’ from a ‘religious’ charge” (Cartledge 2009, 77). So despite the shift in thought regarding the validity of religion as an explanatory factor, it was still a large part of the foundation supporting ancient Greek society. The reliance on state approved religious law exemplifies this point. Had the Greeks actually been able to discard the myths that they had so carefully created, the charges against Socrates would have seemed erroneous. They were stuck with an inkling of religious influence on their logic. In primitive society, religion functioned alone as the foundation for the Azande. For the Athenians, religion provided the framework, out of which their advanced



political order was able to develop. It was the initial idiom of thought for them, as it was with the Azande. But the idiom evolved. Logic arose from this religious idiom of thought and tried to take on a life of its own. Yet because of its heritage, it still maintained traits of the parent idiom, as represented in the trial of Socrates. The logical idiom of thought, while certainly powerful in ancient Greece, would be forever tainted with religious influences.

Returning to the trial of Socrates, as noted previously one of the charges levied against Socrates was a belief in false gods. If there was a paradigm shift away from the belief in the gods into more logical beliefs, then what does this say about some of the charges levied against Socrates? This example gives us a slight preview of what we expect to find within the United States regarding religious manipulation. If we are to accept Veyne's argument that the ancient Greeks belief in religion was fading, this means that a way religion functioned in ancient Greece was as a tool for manipulation. We can see this by taking a quick digression to examine a hierarchy of legitimacy, in regards to myth, within ancient Greek society. It begins with the concept discussed above that the idiom of thought was changing for the ancient Greeks. Because of this, myth was beginning to be called into question and,

“except that, in matters of information, a professional investigator does not have the docility of other men. He cross-checks and verifies it. The social distribution of knowledge is thereby transformed; henceforth other men, not wishing to appear untutored, will prefer to consult this professional. And, as the investigator cross-checks information, he imposes the need for coherence on reality” (Veyne 1983, 33).

It may seem like we are approaching our conclusion about the function of religion in the trial of Socrates in a roundabout manner, but we ask the reader to take note of a few key points and it will become clear. This piece of information affirms the Greeks shift in thought towards scientific processes and away from religion. But more importantly, it established positions of power. Those who filled the seats controlled the idiom of thought. We saw with primitive religion how controlling the idiom of thought meant that you controlled the belief system for a

society. This concept can be applied to the leaders of thought as well. In light of this evidence we can conclude that the ancient Greeks preferred to come to an affirmed conclusion made by another rather than one made by his or herself. The first piece of the puzzle is thus: in ancient Greece, emphasis on scientific processes established positions of power over the idiom of thought that could be assumed by various people.

Puzzle piece number two is found in the ancient Greeks fading, but still existent, belief in the gods. For while there was certainly a large amount of doubt being tossed around in ancient Greece at the time, “even those who mistrusted myths did not dare challenge them at their basis” (Veyne, 1983 65). This is the key concept that there still existed some level of belief. The last piece of the puzzle can be found in one of Veyne’s final comments on the Greeks true belief in religion. Stating,

“the Greeks believe and do not believe in their myths. They believe in them, but they use them and cease believing at the point where their interest in believing ends. It should be added in their defense that their bad faith resided in their belief rather than in their ulterior motive” (Veyne 1983, 84).

The ancient Greeks stopped believing because they realized the falsity of said beliefs. While we agree with Veyne that non-believing might not be fueled by ulterior motives, we do believe that *believing* can be fueled by them as evidenced in the trial of Socrates. These conditions created the perfect storm for the manipulation of religion’s original function. It began with the prosecutor Meletus. He may not have been a leading individual within the community, but he assumed this role because hundreds were obligated to listen to him within the courtroom. Yet instead of trying to search for truth he used religion to crucify Socrates. Now combine this with the second piece of information that while the ancient Greeks were trending away from belief in religion and mythology, there were still base beliefs that they would not let go. Meletus was able to manipulate these beliefs, and while the Greeks were not likely to find a lack of belief in the gods disturbing, as many of them were trending that way themselves, they *were* likely to find a

belief in false gods as an offense to their base mythos. For the primitive man, religion was used to define the difference between right and wrong, and convicted those in the courtroom accordingly. This was done without malice. Here, the courtroom function of religion changed into a malicious tool of manipulation for personal gain.

But it would not be fair for us to crucify only Meletus for these underhanded tactics. Was it possible that Socrates also attempted to manipulate the jury's belief in religion during his trial? Unfortunately there is no simple answer to the question because he attacked Meletus' points from multiple stances. Throughout the *Apology*, Socrates often mentioned the Athenian people by making a direct call to them. It was common for him to say something akin to, "above all things, therefore, I beg and implore this of you, O Athenians" (Cary 1875, 9). Throughout the trial, while made religious justifications for actions, Socrates did not once ask for *the gods* to acquit him. The power to acquit or convict was job of the people. He even directly states, in regards to spreading his teachings, "and I call upon most of you [the jury] as witnesses of this [Socrates' innocence]" (Cary 1875, 11). The stress again is clearly on the human aspect of the trial. Ancient Greek citizens, no different from Socrates himself, were called upon as witnesses to the alleged crime. The gods were left to rest on Olympus. Socrates was well aware that he must appeal to the human side of the jury and not just bank on their religious background. Religious arguments may have had the potential to be manipulated to one's needs, but there was never certainty that the jury would buy it.

However, while Socrates did make a valiant attempt to appeal to the rational side of the jury regarding his general innocence, he took a much different route when attempting to explain the specific crimes that have been levied against him by Meletus and others. To begin with, he grounded much of his argument in conjunction with a reported message from the Oracle

of Delphi. Socrates appeals, “for the account which I am going to give you is not my own; but I shall refer to an authority whom you will deem worthy of credit. For I shall adduce to you the god at Delphi as a witness of my wisdom, if I have and, and of what it is” (Cary 1875, 13). After mentioning that he has been given divine authority to commit the ‘crimes’ that he is being accused of, Socrates went on to bolster his argument, “for assuredly he [god] does not speak falsely” (Cary 1975, 13). At this point in the trial, Socrates had completely transitioned away from the nonreligious appeals that he made to the jury in his opening, into fully-fledged religious justifications for his actions.

But Socrates went even further than just asserting the authority of the gods to justify his actions. Indeed, his attempted manipulation of the jury may prove to be even more underhanded than the original charges levied against him by Meletus and company. Socrates continued upon this path in an attempt to apotheosize himself. He next broached his actions from the perspective of duty, claiming “still therefore, I go about and search and inquire into these things, in obedience to the god, both among citizens and strangers, if I think any one of them is wise; and when he appears to me not to be so, I take the part of the god, and show that he is not wise” (Cary 1875, 16). In a desperate attempt to reach the sympathies of the jury Socrates employed this religious tactic quite cleverly. By stating that (a) his actions were due to following god, and (b) that he assumed a godly form, was playing with the conception that the gods knew all and would not do something that is wrong or false. Following this logic, if the jury accepted that Socrates did indeed take on the role of a god then he could not have committed a crime. Criminal action was not a godly trait. Furthering this conception, Socrates adds, “this duty, as I say, has been enjoined me by the deity, by oracles, by dreams, and by every mode by which any other divine decree has ever enjoined any thing to man to do” (Cary 1875, 28).

Making every religious claim that he could possibly think of, Socrates attempted to tug the heartstrings of the jury in his direction.

The most telling statement regarding the state and function of religion in this trial is encapsulated by Socrates statement, “O Athenians! I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you” (Cary 1875, 24). This is in regards to his god given duty. We are presented with a very clear-cut situation. On one side were the Athenians laws; on the other side existed the heavenly sanctioned realm of action. In this instance, when these two institutions came into conflict, Socrates decided that a religious argument would benefit him the most. Even after being condemned to death he persisted with this religious idea, warning the jury, “it is now time to depart—for me to die, for you to live. But which of us is going to a better state is unknown to every one but God” (Cary 1875, 37). Ironically the fact that he was convicted may potentially speak to the evolution of the Athenian court system. Of course there is no way of knowing the motives behind the decision of the jury, but it is clear that the use of a heavily religious argument by Socrates was not able to sway them. So perhaps the jury complied with Socrates’ appeal to the jury when he espoused that, “for a judge does not sit for the purpose of administering justice out of favor, but that he may judge rightly, and he is sworn not to show favor to whom he pleases, but that he will decide according to the laws” (Cary 1875, 28). Socrates’ own reasoning may have done him in. However, one could also interpret the outcome of the trial as *Meletus*’ religious arguments working instead of Socrates’ arguments failing. But if the jury indeed discounted Socrates’ arguments because of their religious merit, then it was a great triumph for the Athenian court system.

We can see several other instances religion functioning as a tool for manipulation within the ancient Greek courtroom. This time, manipulation of the Court system occurred through perceived favor by the gods. To show one of several examples,

“Andocides, who in 415 had been involved in two or more blatantly impious acts perpetrated by Athenian citizens, the mutilation of the statues of Hermes and the profanation of the Eleusian Mysteries, fifteen years later could use his record of safe voyages at sea as proof that he was not an impure and impious man” (Mikalson 1983, 25).

This type of defense extended much further than just safe sea voyages. In fact, the perception was that “safe seas voyages and general good fortune were clear evidence that the gods were not angry” (Mikalson 1983, 28). This meant that the Athenian trial system was potentially reduced to luck in some circumstances. Religion was manipulated within the court system to create an outcome based not on evidence that the defendant was not innocent, but on a *lack* of evidence that the defendant was guilty. This was innocence achieved through a negative claim. Yet even though their logical arguments were sometimes tainted by the religious idiom of thought, the Athenians were a people moving towards logical reasoning and scientific understanding of the world around them. For the court this meant that while religion was still able to function as part of a defendant’s strategy, or perhaps even a prosecutor’s, there still had to be an appeal to the human side of the jury. We saw that Socrates attempted this, but eventually favored the religious realm of argument. Aeschines remarks, “‘first of all I call upon the gods and implore them to save me, and secondly I implore you the jurors...to save me’ (Aeschines 2.180)” (Mikalson 1983, 62). This acknowledges that while a religious argument still held weight within the courtroom, it was ultimately an appeal to the humanistic side of the jury that would yield the most positive outcomes.

While it may seem like we have been quick to discount the strength of logic’s idiom of thought, as it always seems to be beaten tainted by religion, the above example by Aeschines

does gives us hope. More evidence for religion's changing legal function can be found in the ancient Greek views regarding oaths. This changing view can be seen in both tragedy and the opinion of Plato. Medea, angered at a broken oath,

“concludes that he [Jason] has taken on fundamentally new religious beliefs: ‘Trust in oaths is gone, and I cannot learn if you think that the gods (who ruled) then (when you swore the oath) no longer rule or if you think that now there are new principles of right and wrong established for human beings’ (E. *Med.* 492-494)” (Mikalson 1991, 135-136).

Jason's willingness to break his oath implies that he did not fear retribution from the gods that he swore his oath under, and served to discredit and illegitimate them. This view was reflected in more than tragedy, as

“nearly a century later Plato too saw perjury largely as the result of changed religious views: ‘Oaths are no longer appropriate in law suits because now some men do not believe in the gods at all and some think the gods have no concern about us. Others, those who are most numerous and wicked, are of the opinion that if the gods receive flattery and some small sacrifices they help us steal a lot of money and rescue us from great punishments’ (*Leg.* 12.948B-D)” (Mikalson 1991, 136).

Plato presents us with another example of religion's changed function: a manipulative political tool. He concluded that there were those in ancient Greece who would pray in order to help them commit various crimes, or who would make unfaithful oaths that they did not even believe in. Oath making had turned from a sincere form of contract into a gesture clouded by ulterior motives.

Let us now move into a slightly more morbid realm that religion deals with: death. One function of religion is to provide relief to our consciousness regarding death. It soothes people to think that there is a place for them after life. At one point in ancient Greece, joining certain cults was thought to guarantee a good place in the afterlife. Religion functioned to assuage the fearful mind of the initiates. But this brought into conflict religious practice and morality in a way that caused some of the ancient Greeks to abandon certain religious thought in favor of a different moral view. Some were upset that mere initiation guaranteed such glorious afterlife success, and

“later, in any case, it was thought to be paradoxical that the satisfaction of purely ritual requirements should act as a passport to happiness after death. This view stimulated the celebrated protest of the Cynic Diogenes, who asked why the thief Pataikion should be better off than Epaminondas in the after-life merely, because he had been initiated” (Richardson in Easterling and Muir 1985, 59).

While religion was deeply engrained within Greek life, again it came into conflict with evolving moral ideas. Where in the past it may have been acceptable for an initiation to be enough for the gods to save the soul of the common Athenian, the thought pattern was changing. This was represented again with

“Ion, in Euripides’ play of the same name, mounts a strong challenge against the inviolability of sanctuary (1312-1319). This divine law, he argues, is bad and foolish since asylum should be provided only for those who act justly and are treated unjustly. The good and the evil should not receive equal treatment” (Mikalson 1991, 75).

There was clearly a changing Greek perception about certain aspects of religion. No longer did they blindly accept some of religion’s claims. Personal discrimination for acts began to enter the mind of the ancient Greeks as they chose to come to their own conclusions instead of following predetermined ones.

While examining religion’s function within ancient Greece we have noted that one of the main causes for its change has been the switch from faith-based beliefs to those of scientific process and logical construction. We would be remiss if we did not take a minute to examine the people behind the change, or at least those advocating to be behind the change. Philosophers, while an extreme of the Greek public, truly exemplify the transition that the ancient Greek mind was going through. Scientific processes were becoming much more prevalent, and religion slightly more obsolete. But while this was true at the surface, could it be that religion still had a function in actively defining, rather than just passively reinforcing, core beliefs? Were scientific processes really masking religion instead of removing it from the idiom of thought? We can find the answer to this in a brief discussion about the ancient Greek view of the soul. According to N.J. Richardson,



“if all men in general, rather than merely certain heroes, could be seen as having some element of divinity in their origins and hence in their nature, it followed that there must be a part of oneself which shared the divine characteristic of immortality...thus one can see how the philosophers, who criticized so severely the ideas of their poetic forerunners, nevertheless tried to assimilate and re-interpret these ideas in the light of their own assumptions” (Easterling and Muir 1985, 65-66).

This belief about the immortality of the soul exemplifies the flaw in the progression of Greek thought. Their logical idiom of thought let them reason out the concept that heroes were not special, and everyone was made up of the same material. Yet instead of coming to the conclusion that this means that everyone is normal, their religious idiom of thought took over and they came to the conclusion that everyone has something divine in them. Once again the religious idiom trumped the logical one. As mentioned throughout, the relation of their logical idiom of thought to their religious idiom of thought prevented them from examining things through a truly ‘scientific’ perspective. To truly be thinking with this new idiom of thought, the ancient Greeks would have had to construct beliefs from the bottom up. However, they used a combination of their idioms of thought. The ancient Greeks started to think through divine matters in a scientific, questioning way, but they still kept a divine pretext. This allowed religion to maintain a hidden function within the arena of defining morals.

Before concluding we are going to examine some more tangible effects that religion had in ancient Greece. If we look at the idea of the creation of medicine within tragedy we can see conflict erupt as the two idioms of thought come into opposition in regards to a practical matter: medicine. To juxtapose two views, “Aeschylus’ Prometheus claims he gave humans the medical arts (*Pr.* 478-483), Sophocles’ chorus views them as an entirely human invention (*Ant.* 363-364), and the chorus of Euripides’ *Alcestis* treats medicinal drugs as Apollo’s gift to the Asclepiadae (969-972). Even the great dramatic writers knew not how to solve the puzzle that the combination of ancient Greek idioms of thought presented.

Sticking with the tangible side of religious effects, in Greek society religion also provided a way of reinforcing gender stereotypes. This can be seen in Greek tragedy. In regards to gender roles, “it seems natural that by and large, women in tragedies appeal to female deities for children and successful births. Women also tend to pray that their children find long and happy lives, men that their children be useful and obedient” (Mikalson 1991, 59). Religion’s ability to define roles in society presents quite a problem. Not only did religion in ancient Greece reinforce gender roles, but also defined some of its own characteristics. When a religion indicates certain gods that only women pray to, and certain gods that only men pray to, it is making religion exclusive. This process eliminates gods that one can pray to based on a characteristic, gender, that the devotee has no control over. This eliminates the ability to practice personal religion, and forces one to adhere to a predetermined universal religion.

This example, along with that of cult initiation, leads us to a theory as to why the ancient Greeks attempted to transition to a more scientific and methodological way of thinking. One of our early premises was that one of the main functions of religion is to eliminate chaos and provide order and stability in a world that strives towards chaos. Inside this we can incorporate the idea of control. Both religion and political order attempt to control society through various institutions that they establish. The primitive man lets religion exercise control over him because it is the only idiom of thought with which he can reason. He knows that religion protects him and provides him with other various needs, and he lets it. It appears, however, that the ancient Greeks wanted more control within their lives. This need for personal control is what we believe spurred on the paradigm shift. When they were unhappy with the way that cult initiation functioned they examined it heavily. But for all their efforts to throw off these religious bonds they still were not able to define their new idiom of thought on its own. This is demonstrated in

the enormous amount of deities and cults that the ancient Greeks created over the years. While still a religious act, the creation of cults was an attempt to exercise control. The Greeks wanted to worship the deities that they wanted to worship. They did not want to be told who to worship. Yet for all this progress, “one major function of real oracles in the fifth century was the validation and establishment of new or changed cults and sacrifices, a function shared by tragedy” (Mikalson 1991, 89). So while the Greeks were attempting to wrestle control away from religion and into their own hands, they were not able to completely do so. They acquired the ability create their own religions, but these new religions still needed to rely on an outside religious source for validation.

There is no doubt that in many ways the ancient Greeks thought process was more developed than that of the primitive man. This was evidenced by many of the same similarities to political order that primitive religion had, but in a more refined sense. Many aspects of their lives showed this improved development. The trial system, especially the trial of Socrates, showed the intertwining of religion within a political created order. We saw both Meletus and Socrates attempt to manipulate the jury by calls to religious sympathies. Manipulation of the courtroom through religion was also seen in the testimony of the accused when some used tales of their safe sea voyages to “prove” their innocence. Within the courts it appears that religion’s function was no longer to maintain order and keep the system running, but it was now a tool in the arsenal of both the prosecution and the defense. We next saw various sentiments regarding religion conveyed through dramas and tragedies. There was the rejection of the power of the seer, and general anger at some cult initiate benefits. This is where the big difference in regards to religion’s function to the primitive man can be seen. As shown, the primitive man was only able to reason with one idiom of thought. Although this was a separate idiom, it is worth noting

that it was the offspring of the religious idiom of thought, and not an entirely new creation. In accord with the differences mentioned above, this new idiom caused the shift in political decrees being sanctioned by the gods, to political decrees being sanctioned by the assembly. While there were many shifts in religion's function between the ancient Greeks and the primitive man, the most important shift is thus: religion was no longer a mechanism for *establishing* a society, it was now a mechanism for the people to *use* to establish society in their image. The ancient Greeks stumbled upon the concept of control. They strived to have control in their life, and instead of being guided by religion, they chose to guide religion in some aspects themselves. All this being said, the ancient Greeks were still in a period of great transformation. While they made great strides in shedding some of religion's function, they were still not developed enough to challenge it at its base. As shown above, even the philosophers, supposedly the most "logical," had trouble questioning some of the canon. While simultaneously similar and wildly different from religion's function in the primitive man's setting, the ancient Greeks did not reason purely with logic. This ultimately led to religion being used as a tool for personal manipulation, and sets the stage for our examination of religion in the United States.

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## Chapter 3: The United States of America

So far we have examined the religions of the primitive man and of the ancient Greeks. The primitive man holds tightly to his religious beliefs because they are all he knows. There is not much that can challenge his understanding of the world. The ancient Greeks were in a period of flux. They wanted to believe in their gods with the vigor that the primitive man has, yet they were also curiously drawn to the side of logic. This caused religion to function both as a way for explaining the world, and as a tool that could be manipulated by the people for personal gain. Finally, we approach our last subject of study: the United States of America. Our goal here is the same as ever. We desire to uncover the function of religion within this society. There is a rich history of religion in the United States and we will examine some key points during this history in an attempt to determine religion's function. We will look at the Founding of America, slightly before the Founding, and religion's function within the past fifty years or so. The Founding is of interest for two distinct reasons. First, we wish to know what the Founders intended the function of religion in America to be. This is something that we were not able to ascertain with our other two case studies. As much material from the founding period was preserved, we can have a firsthand insight into the thoughts of the Founders. Second, by contrasting the Founders' intentions for religion's function with religion's function today, we can see if, and how, it has changed.

We begin the search for religion's function slightly before the Founding. As examined previously, one of the main functions within primitive and ancient Greek religion was to define morals. In the early 1700s,

“departing from the Bible on moral matters was more difficult than on physical ones. Much had been staked on following the Bible literally where morality was concerned. The Bible, after all, was the Puritans' warrant for executing witches (Exodus 22.18) and for many other details of their penal system” (Wills 2007, 86).

This presents us with a retroactive moral defining power of religion. The religious text was used, presumably, after the fact to justify the atrocities committed against potential ‘witches.’ But more importantly, we can see that at this point it was resistant to change. This is because change would have shaken the moral backbone of past actions, and cast a negative light upon the institution itself. Were the Puritan Bible to suddenly be interpreted as disdaining the actions that were taken against witches it would have lost its validity. This is a virulent stagnation that we did not see within the function of ancient Greek religion. While the ancient Greeks were not able to alter their fundamental beliefs at the core, the introduction of logic helped them to dissipate many of the beliefs that they found to be too radical. This was not the thought process of the Puritans. Where the Puritans could have potentially found Biblical evidence to back up their hanging of witches, slavery was a different matter. According to the Puritans,

“the Bible distinguished two kinds of slavery, for Jews and for non-Jews; but these were all in the broad sense cases of white slavery. It says nothing of black slavery. But Genesis 4.15 (the Mark of Cain) and Genesis 9.25 (the curse of Ham) were misread to make the mark and the curse become blackness. Needless to say, there is no reference of blackness in the texts...but the two myths became a part of the biblical folklore that stigmatized blacks” (Wills 2007, 87).

This represents a moral repugnance to African Americans. In the past they were cursed and sullied, making them less than human. This type of religious manipulation recalls images of jury trial in ancient Athens where criminals would use safe see passage as evidence that they were innocent. Religion’s function in late pre-America became, in part, a tool for manipulation used to secure personal and group gain. Here the Puritans used religion to actively discriminate against another race. This demonstrates that while religion oftentimes defines morals in a good way, it also has the potential to stagnate moral change.

However, we are quick to note that this type of zeal is not characteristic with all religions. In fact, the fervor with which the Puritans followed their beliefs is of a peculiar kind. It is this fervor that played a large role in the ability for religion to be manipulated. To



summarize, “the difference between the Anglican and the Puritan, then, was that the Puritan thought the Bible, the revealed word of God, was the word of God from one end to the other, a complete body of laws, an absolute code in everything it touched upon” (Johnson and Miller 2001, 43). This interpretation is so strict that it may remind one of the concept of *sharia* law in the Islamic tradition. The danger of such a strict interpretation is the ease with which the leaders in thought could control the moral code. Once a justification for slavery was fabricated from the Bible, or the right to execute witches, the Puritans were obligated to follow this sentiment to exactly. Yet even though the Puritans were obliged to follow this doctrine, hope still remained in evolution. As seen through the ancient Greeks, one can take a universal religion and adapt it to personal life. This is exactly what Samuel Sewall did when “meditating upon the evil of negro slavery, he wrote and published a small pamphlet, *The Selling of Joseph*, 1700, the first antislavery tract in America” (Johnson and Miller 2001, 376). It is critical to note that with slavery, as with any other issue, religion has the potential to simultaneously be a proponent and an opponent.

Before venturing further into our investigation, we must take the time to discuss a peculiar notion that arrives with slavery. When considering slavery of the past one must always consider the economic ramifications that are carried with it. While we have just argued that the Puritans used religion to discriminate on the grounds of moral repugnance, there is always the chance that they recognized the economic advantages that slavery offered, and this is what led to the religiously sanctioned discrimination. However, even if we accept the guise under which they searched for evidence supporting slavery in the Bible was that of potential economic gain rather than out of general repugnance, this does not much hurt our argument. Either yields the same result when looking at religion’s function. If the Biblical passages were searched for in the

hopes of making a race into an economic workhorse, then we have religion being used as a tool for manipulation. If instead the Puritans searched for Biblical evidence because they viewed African Americans as abhorrent, then we still have religion being used as a tool for manipulation. The area that these two postulates differ is in the type of control that the Puritans would have been exercising. If they found the passages to support slavery for economic gains, the Puritans were using religion to exercise personal control on a massive scale because it was for *personal* profit. If the Puritans were attempting to render the African American as unclean to the nation, then they were clearly trying to use religion to exercise universal control.

We show the examples of witchcraft and slavery for several reasons. As just discussed, we believe that they are strong examples of how religion can be used to craft a warped sense of morals to fit one's own beliefs. We also do this because when we compare this function of religion with that in the years directly prior to the founding, we can see the evolutionary quality that religion possesses at one of its greatest moments. To observe this we must look at the Quakers, and then finally the founding. In the early 1700s there was a shift in Quaker belief. To take slavery as our example again, "despite the involvement of Quakers in slaveholding, some Quakers suffered qualms of conscience. This was a matter of Quaker self-scrutiny" (Wills 2007, 137). We have here, what we had with the ancient Greeks. Conscious objection to a previous religiously defined and imposed moral. Yet the Quakers did not let religion's chains hold them back when redefining their beliefs about slavery. This illustrates the beginning of a transformation in religion's function from a way of life, to a guideline for life. We saw that the Greeks were almost able accomplish this, but were just not able to discard their core religious beliefs in favor of their new idiom of thought. The Quakers took logic by the horns and pierced religion through the stomach. Wills notes, "the Quakers made possible all later forms of

abolition by proving that one can be a sincere Christian and yet defy the scriptural endorsements of slavery. If reason says slavery is wrong, then it is wrong no matter what the Bible says” (Wills 2007, 152). In contrast to the earlier Puritan view of slavery, the Quaker view shows quite an evolution. In our first chapter we emphasized that religion for the primitive man was a very logical thing. We also noted that one of the things that made it so logical was that it was open to evolution. Eventually the Azande stopped executing people for minute crimes and incorporated more realistic punishments. This adaptation was achieved in spite of the trial system being established and maintained through religious authority. The evolution in religious thought that the Quakers experienced is quite similar. Quaker thought also provides us with another example of how religion can be divided upon an issue. We previously saw a schism within the Puritan belief itself, and the Quakers show how individual religions form schisms in relation to one another. Religion as a whole can never be stagnant, but individual religions may do so. The varying authority of religious text is paramount to understanding this religious divide. The Puritan belief in the exact word of the Bible allowed Puritan religion to stagnate. The Quakers, on the other hand, established the viability of personal religion in opposition to universal doctrine. We only brush upon the concepts of personal and universal religion now, as they will be examined in full further along in this chapter.

This discussion brings us to a crucial point regarding the moral defining power of religion. In the original context, one of religion’s main functions was to provide a set of morals. We have seen that eventually these morals are going to come into conflict with reason once it is injected into the equation. So then what is it that allows religion to maintain a moral defining function despite this seemingly inevitable injection of views contrary to scripture? The answer is three-fold: evolution, incorporation, and persistence over generations. As demonstrated by the

Quakers above, religion is forced to evolve through the ages if it wishes to stay relevant. In turn, it is forced to incorporate new ideas into itself that it did not originally hold. Evolution begets staying power. This conjures up images of the Constitution of the United States. In order for it to survive a built in amendment system had to be installed. Nothing so rigid that it cannot be changed will survive very long. We need look no further than the Puritans to see this. These new conceptions of religion then get *incorporated* into the universal doctrine, and are passed down from generation to generation. Religion is constantly renewing itself in order to survive.

We now arrive at the founding of the United States. The incorporation of the Establishment Clause shows that the Founders had a specific image in mind of what they wanted religion's function to be. The Establishment Clause states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (Wills 2007, 229). Wills astutely notes, "history shows that magistrates have enforced false religions (as Jefferson put it). And they did it to suit their own projects (as 'engines of civil policy'), putting sacred things to profane use" (Wills 2007, 213). Jefferson recognized the human tendency, shown through examples such as Meletus, that people are prone to manipulating religion for their own causes. Madison augmented this argument by adding that "'the religion, then, of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right'" (Wills 2007, 208). The fact that religious expression is an unalienable right makes mandated religion a monstrosity. It would be a severe form of oppression. In support of this point, "Madison argues that...even if the count by population should yield a majority in favor of the bill, that would not establish the justice of the measure, since this is a matter of fundamental right, not to be settled by majority" (Wills 2007, 220). It is quite clear from statements like this that the Founders

intended to change religion's function from an agent of control and manipulation to that of personal choice.

Let us now jump forward in time to the recent past. Congress, through votes, and the President, through executive orders, both have the ability to pass laws. A good gauge of the function of religion is to look at the President and Congress and to see what is motivating their decisions. If religion is found to be the motivator we can say that religion has still retained its universal control over the community even though the founders intended this to be a personal choice. Since the inception of this country we have had many different personalities and religions among presidents. There have been those like John F. Kennedy who "became a symbol of American pluralism when he was elected the first Catholic to win the presidency, after a speech in Houston to Protestant ministers where he said, 'I believe in an America where separation of church and state is absolute'" (Wills 2007, 458). Echoing the views of the founders, Kennedy recognized the importance of the separation of Church and State. But slightly later we have another event telling of religion's function within America. In regards to nationally endorsed worship,

"putting 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance was a Cold War move. Proponents of the change said it was an important way to differentiate Americans from 'Muscovites,' who could not pledge allegiance to their country and name God at the same time" (Wills 2007, 461).

This example presents us with a complete contradiction to the Founders views and intentions. A religious element was reincorporated into a pledge supporting nationalism. This caused one to be branded as believing in God if they identified themselves as Americans. In this instance a universal form of control overrode personal control.

While the examination of these concepts regarding control is useful in determining religion's function, we still must apply the same tests that we did with our two previous societies. One test that we have consistently applied is an examination of the court system and its religious

undertones. Because the United States has so many different courts it would be implausible to ask us to examine them all. Therefore we will look exclusively at the Supreme Court. While it is true that the Founders did not want a federally declared religion, it is most certainly still possible for this to subtly exist within Supreme Court decisions and the laws that Congress passes. Because of this, legislators and justices can have a large influence on religion's function within the laws of the United States. Wills sees,

“for them [the Evangelicals] control of Supreme Court nominations was the most vital issue in the campaign. They blamed the Court for many of their troubles...the Right felt that the Court had reached a tipping point, and they knew that their only chance for achieving that was to have a Republican president nominating future justices” (Wills 2007, 533).

So while the Founders attempted to account for the protection of individual religion, there is no way for the Constitution to actively enforce a ban on decisions made with religious motivation. Politicians become synonymous with the leaders of thought. As a consequence of this, religion has become closely associated with political parties and it is still able to exercise a degree of control over the decisions made within the political order. Since the rise of public disdain for abortion, many abortion clinics have been under siege for their practices. Wills notes that “in 2001, there was a spike of violence against the clinics—790 incidents, as opposed to 209 the year before” (Wills 2007, 500). It was up to the government to deal with this and

“Ashcroft resisted for a long time the dispatching of marshals to quell the epidemic. This was one of many signs that the Bush administration thought of abortion as a sin, not as a right to be protected. The president himself called for an amendment to the Constitution outlawing abortion” (Wills 2007, 500).

Religious beliefs clearly caused a lack of sympathy for potential victims hurt in these attacks. Furthermore, in regards to homosexuality, after “after the Supreme Court knocked down the antisodomy law in Texas (*Lawrence v. Texas*)...the pressure from the Religious Right was now too great for Bush to resist, and he joined the effort to ban gay marriage by constitutional amendment” (Wills 2007, 501). Not only has religion maintained its function of supporting

leaders, it have evolved to be able to exert influence over the *decisions* that these leaders make. When religion is exercised this way in America it attains a strong, albeit manipulative, moral-defining power.

One of the main reasons that religion is so susceptible to this form of manipulation is that in today's society the political process naturally polarizes people on different issues. However, it only does this on incredibly salient issues, and Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell found that "religiosity's influence on public opinion thus has a narrow scope...abortion and same-sex marriage are the glue holding the coalition of the religious together" (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 387). This can clearly be seen in the example given above by Wills regarding the slow response time to attacks on abortion clinics. Politicians have this knowledge and attempt to harvest it as unscrupulously as they can. This manipulation of religion does not only appear once someone is in a position of power, but is also useful when one is attempting to obtain a position of power. President Bush knew that the country was polarized on the issues of same-sex marriage and abortion, and "Bush was hoping to benefit from vote by association. Energized social conservatives would come to the polls to cast a vote against same-sex marriage and, while there, also cast a ballot for him. The evidence shows that this is precisely what happened" (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 397). The most important point to note here is that Bush benefited from merely "vote by association" (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 397). President Bush could have chosen not to use religious arguments and justifications for issues that the public was so divided upon. Yet, he chose not to take the high road and succumbed to the temptations of religious manipulation. In fact, "in states with a same sex-marriage initiative on the ballot, campaign communications targeted to social conservatives emphasized the president's

support for ‘traditional marriage’” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 397). This was a campaign fueled by religion.

This type of campaign strategy brings up a whole new set of issues regarding religion’s function as a manipulative tool in the political sphere. Chiefly, one can make veiled religious arguments as opposed to open ones. President Bush could have announced that he believed that homosexuality was wrong because it was stated that way in the Bible. However, a strong stance such as this could have caused those not attached to religion to become alienated and this had the potential to lead to lost votes. By stating that he is for a ‘traditional marriage’ he was able accrue only minimal alienation while garnering a large amount of votes from the religious square. Furthermore, “of all voters who said that it made a difference to them if a presidential candidate was an avowed evangelical, twice as many said that it would make them more likely to vote for that candidate as said it would make them less likely” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 120). This subtle guile is what makes religion an even more dangerous tool in America than in ancient Greece. Compared to the trial of Socrates where both sides were openly pleading a religious case, religion in America can be so tacitly suggested that if one is not paying attention carefully they could be influenced by a religious argument without even being aware of it. While it may be tempting to view this religious manipulation as an evil manifestation of the Republican Party, this would be unfair. The idea has even managed to permeate the Democrats as “more and more Democratic candidates have begun using religious rhetoric and symbolism in an effort to neutralize the Republican advantage among churchgoers” (Campbell and Putnam, 415).

This association gave birth to a harmful cycle that increases prejudice. Campbell and Putnam found “a growing number of younger Americans have come to equate religion with



‘Republican,’ and react by turning away from religion” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 401). This is an unfortunate, unavoidable consequence of religion being introduced into the political spectrum. Any title introduced into there is bound to be type cast. We need not look further than our two main political parties: Democrats and Republicans. When one hears the word Democrat, images of someone very liberal, perhaps advocating for gay marriage, probably comes to mind. Republican connotes a conservative attitude characterized by a resistance to change. While we may not agree with religion being associated with Republicans, it inevitable that it was going to have to be associated with some political party once it entered the arena. It may seem like we have cast a dark light upon religion’s function in the political arena. Yet, “intriguingly, even 76 percent of Black Protestants and 77 percent of Jews—the two religious traditions where, as we will show, faith-based political mobilization is most common—object to political persuasion by religious leaders” (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 421). While the rift in public opinion in comparison to the prevalence of religious arguments used is certainly shocking, it has still not stopped politicians from attempting to use religion as a tool for manipulation of the masses.

Up until this point we have been talking about the function of religion in politics as sort of an aberration that should not exist within the political spectrum because of the Founders intentions and the Establishment Clause. What if religion has evolved from where it was when the founders were developing this country, and is now meant to function as a morally legislating institution that operates *through* the medium of politics? This is an option that we have yet to consider, and Brendan Sweetman makes not only this claim, but goes on to

“propose that some significant religious beliefs have a legitimate place in public political discussion and that politics needs religion because the religious view of the world can make valuable, indeed profound, contributions to modern debates concerning a host of issues” (Sweetman 2006, 19).

This has the potential to be a viable hypothesis if we are able to construe religious beliefs in America has being founded upon logic. Sweetman distinguishes between high-order and lower-

order beliefs where “lower-order beliefs are rational beliefs from the point of view of pluralism and of introducing them into political discussion” (Sweetman 2006, 51). The political arena is supposed to be governed by logic, and Sweetman recognizes the value of this as he argues, “beliefs that were arrived at from *rational argument*—by appeal to rational argument, evidence and human experience—are worthy candidates for inclusion in politics” (Sweetman 2006, 95).

We are starting to buy into the argument Sweetman makes that one of religion’s functions is to work alongside politics rather than as a *tool* of politics, but there do seem to be some issues with his last statement. We have no problem with religion being categorized as rational, as we have duly noted that this occurred for both the ancient Greeks and the Azande tribe. The problem with his thesis is there is a disconnect between scientific evidence and experiential religious evidence. Sweetman goes on to say, “one *can* reasonably expect others to accept the lower-order (rational) beliefs of one’s worldview” (Sweetman 2006, 189). He has essentially contradicted himself by claiming both that a logical religious argument can be introduced into the political sphere if it is grounded in experience, *and* that it is rational for others to accept this experience as true. The problem with a religious belief based on experience as opposed to a scientific belief based upon experience is that you cannot convey the experience to someone else. When a scientific discovery is made in a lab that proves a hypothesis one can merely bring someone else into the lab and repeat the experiment. This is not the case with religion. If we are to accept these hypotheses, when religion gets injected into the political sphere one would essentially be asking someone to support something based on the experience of another, not of one’s own experience. This is a case of personal religion universalizing. We cannot accept Sweetman’s claim for the two reasons. First, universalized personal religion is not fit for the political sphere because it will naturally lead to discrimination. Second, because

personal religion is a personal endeavor one cannot expect his or her experiences to translate universally because they are uniquely his or her own.

However, in spite of the flaws in Sweetman's hypothesis he does make a critical recognition about the nature of politics and religion. He argues, "it is a key claim of my view that *coercion is always going on in political society*, and it is impossible to find an individual or worldview not trying to impose at least some beliefs on others" (Sweetman 2006, 203).

Sweetman recognizes that both religion and politics have coercive aspects to them. We have already seen in this chapter how politicians on both ends of the spectrum use religion as a means to achieve their personal goals. But where were these similarities in coercion born? Is it possible that one of religion's functions in America is to conceive of coercive tactics and strategies? If this proves to be true than perhaps America has not evolved very far from the institutions that the ancient Greeks prescribed to. Wills posits,

"historians have often noted how the revival set styles of America's political campaigning 'The hullabaloo surrounding the political campaigns of the era—the torchlight parades, the tent pitched outside town, the urgent call for a commitment—was borrowed by political campaigners from the revival preachers...Even the practice of holding national conventions was borrowed by the parties from the cause-oriented benevolent associations'" (Wills 2007, 293).

If this is true than it holds several implications for religion's function in America. First, and perhaps most important, this means that we have not truly evolved much mentally from the ancient Greeks. As we saw with primitive religion, the Azande were able to conceptualize and explain their world through religious concepts because it was all that they knew. The ancient Greeks began to diverge from this concept due to the introduction of *logos* into their world. Yet they were incredibly hesitant to abandon their beliefs at the core. With America one might be tempted to at first conclude that while religion still plays a role in politics, we have abandoned it at the core and that it is more of a peripheral belief. Not a belief that informed the system. But in light of this new evidence, that political tactics used in America today were adopted from

religious practices, we must reevaluate religion's function. Not only does it have the moral defining power that has been retained throughout the centuries, as demonstrated by the Puritans and current views on abortion and same-sex marriage, but also directly influences the political process. We still see the ramifications of this today through the national conventions held by Democrats and Republicans. In fact, one of the main facets of President Obama's recent campaign was "an urgent call for commitment" (Wills 2007, 293) that adopted the moniker of change. This may remind one of the fervent calls for commitment that historical religious figures used to recruit people to their causes. It seems that religion has shaped more of history than we first conceptualized.

There is one function of religion present in America that we have alluded to throughout, but have yet to discuss in depth. This is religion as the expression of personal belief and value that is not necessarily dictated by universal scripture. The Azande tribe seemed to have a pretty universal religion with not much deviation between individual citizens. The ancient Greeks had a plethora of gods that could have potentially led to differing ideologies and the beginnings of personal religion. But religion in America is curious. It functions not only to define universal values, but personal values as well. This is exemplified in the case of *Warner v. Boca Raton*. Legally speaking, "the *Warner* case was a 'free exercise' case, a case brought against the government on behalf of litigants asserting governmental burden on the free exercise of religion" (Sullivan 2005, 25). Sullivan notes, "the City's task at the trial was to prove that the activities of the plaintiffs at the grave sites were not significantly religious but were instead the result of what the City chose to call 'purely personal preference'" (Sullivan 2005, 69). During the case we are presented with two different interpretations of the acts. Of the two, "the city's position at the trial implies that only language in a sacred text somewhere...constitute sufficient

evidence of the religious significance of the plaintiffs' practices" (Sullivan 2005, 104). In contrast, "plaintiffs, it could be said, epitomized a subaltern religious sensibility. No one made them do it and yet they were compelled by the logic of their own religious, cultural, and psychological location" (Sullivan 2005, 140). This speaks bounds for the function of religion in America. The evidence shows that while religion in America does present us with some universal values it is ultimately up to the individual to decide on how to interpret religion. It functions has an expression of self. The religious texts are not stagnant. Much like the Constitution, they allow room for interpretation. This is a reflection of the evolutionary nature of religion. It evolves within the amount of constraints that are placed up it. With the Azande we did not see a huge amount of evolution because there were not a lot of challenges to their religious practices. The one area that we did see it change regarded cruel and out of date punishments handed down by their trial system. The religion of the ancient Greeks allowed logic to come into the conversation and religion devolved into having a diminished role in society. In the United States religion has evolved into personal expression.

Another area to note here is the fragmentation of religion, which we believe leads to religion as an interpretable expression of internal identity. Because America is so diverse and home to so many religions, it would be impractical for one to ask religion to function as the end all authority for decisions like the Puritan relic envisioned. In order for religion to survive in America it had no other choice but to become a personal matter. It requires people, like those in the *Warner* case, to look at a text that they believe in and construct beliefs in accordance with the text that are not explicitly mentioned. This adaptation allows personal religion to help maintain universal religion because personal religion exists as a subset of universal religion. We can even look at Madison and find that he believed "the religion, then, of every man must be left to the

conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right” (Wills 2007, 208). One of the premises under which the Establishment Clause was included still holds true today.

Harold Bloom presents further evidence for religion as a personal choice. Bloom taps into this notion that he deems the “American Religion.” He describes it as

“[having] three fundamental principles. The first is that what is best and oldest in us goes back well before Creation, and so is no part of the Creation. The second is that what makes us free is knowledge, a history of facts and events, rather than a belief founded upon mere assent. The third is that this freedom has a solitary element in it, an element imbued by the loneliness of belated American time, and the American experience of the abyss of space. What holds these principles together is the American persuasion, however muted or obscured, that we are mortal gods, destined to find ourselves again in worlds as yet undiscovered” (Bloom 1992, 103).

This lengthy explanation is the premise of Bloom’s argument. We, as Americans, attempt to establish a personal relationship with Jesus through the principles enumerated above. This is exemplified in several different religious groups throughout American history. Bloom is fascinated with Joseph Smith, and the Mormons in general, and uses him to illuminate several of the above fundamental principles by showing that “Joseph *knew* that he was no part of the creation, *knew* that what was best and oldest in him already was God” (Bloom 1992, 128). This view advocates defining religion’s boundaries in relation to one’s own unique personal self. Bloom even openly states, “salvation, for the American, cannot come through the community or the congregation, but is a one-on-one act of confrontation” (Bloom 1992, 32).

While Joseph Smith and the Mormons certainly are a good exemplification of Bloom’s point, perhaps none do this better than the Southern Baptists. Bloom finds that

“John Doe subtly remarks... ‘I only know to think of soul competency in practical terms. To me it means that the individual Christian is unassailable in her interpretation of Scripture and in her own understanding of God’s will for her life. It means that when someone says, ‘This is what the Bible means to me,’ I cannot tell her she is wrong. I can merely say that her understanding is meaningless for me” (Bloom 1992, 202).

This understanding of religion reflects exactly what we saw in *Warner v. Boca Raton*. When questioned, “the *Warner* plaintiffs repeatedly said that their understanding of their religious lives

was not limited to formally endorsed and explicitly denominated religious activities” (Sullivan 2005, 140). These are prime examples of personal doctrine overriding universal doctrine. It appears ever more likely that when universal religion and personal religion clash, personal religion will emerge as the victor.

If one is still having trouble grasping at the notion of personal religion, we can conceptualize of personal religion functioning as a political ideology. In fact, we can make the act of voting for presidential candidates analogous to personal religion. One might not agree with everything that a political candidate has to say. That is to say, one may not fully agree with the *universal* political doctrine that the candidate is supporting. Prescription and identification with a certain political party is like identification with a certain religion. Just as one can be identified as a Democrat without believing in every democratic ideal, one may also be labeled as a Christian without having his or her personal doctrine reflect all universal Christian beliefs. Personal religion provides people with a mode of expression that universal religion can never fathom.

Having explored the concept of personal religion, we would now like to explore the concept of the *universal* function of a religion more fully. As skirted over earlier, religion can be compared to the Constitution. The Constitution functions as a legal backdrop for the United States. Whenever issues arise and are brought to the Supreme Court, they are decided in reference to the Constitution. We believe that one of religion’s functions is to act as a tacit backdrop for the moral code of society. It slowly fluctuates in and out, increasing or decreasing its prevalence and importance, in regards to how salient the current issues are. In order to see this we need to take a look at some statistics. Campbell and Putnam note, “the fraction of all Americans who said that religion was ‘very important’ to them personally fell from 75 percent in

1952 and 70 percent as late as 1968 to 52 percent in 1978 (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 97-98). These fluctuations were caused by “moral and religious developments of the Sixties” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 102). The Sixties represented a time where society was at a moral crossroads. Drugs were prevalent, as was sexual promiscuity, and there was a general trending towards the political left. This is where we can really see the distinction between the function of law and the function of religion. The function of law is to maintain order, yet there are certain areas that it cannot legislate. There are just certain things, like regulating sexuality, which the law cannot do. This is where religion comes into play. We saw previously that Sweetman noted, “religious view[s] of the world can make valuable, indeed profound, contributions to modern debates concerning a host of issues” (Sweetman 2006, 19). While we did not agree with part of his thesis we also recognized that there were some portions that had merit. Sweetman adds, “the religious worldview supports an objective moral order and a moral account of the human person, and so can provide a clear answer to the question of where human rights come from in the first place and why we should be concerned with them” (Sweetman 2006, 101). While we would argue that human rights are a moral question, it also falls under the ability of the political spectrum to legislate. With this division between moral and political we must not forget that politicians are not heartless. Regardless, as Sweetman points out there are clearly some areas where religion is better equipped to legislate than politics. Religion is able to deftly fill in the legislating cracks that Congress cannot touch. It would be outlandish to imagine Congress passing a law against sexual promiscuity. It would be even more absurd for the Supreme Court to uphold that decision based on evidence that it “found” in the Constitution. We would liken a travesty of this magnitude to the Puritans finding purely facetious evidence for slavery in the Bible.



Where we differ is that Sweetman is advocating that religion can contribute to issues in the here and now. We acknowledge that religion does have its place to play in the moral conversation, but do not believe that it exists in the here and now. Universal religion does not function as an active definer of morals in the way that Sweetman proposes it can. It functions as a passive moral backdrop that exists to help society solve crises. We can see religion's function as a moral backdrop during times of extreme moral crisis such as the sixties. Campbell and Putnam note, "the first aftershock was caused by many things, to be sure, but a central theme was concern over collapsing sexual morality" (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 117), something that clearly could not be remedied through legislation in the political arena. So we can propose a theory thusly: laws constructed through politics do a relatively good job of maintaining order and preventing revolt. Throughout time, religion has been steadily infiltrating the political spectrum. This manifests itself in political strategies and sometimes even in laws. Yet behind all of this is the backdrop of religion. This is comparable to the idea that behind the Greek metamorphosis of thought still lay a firm belief in various gods. Religion represents unchanging, traditional values. When there is a crisis in a moral realm that politics cannot legislate on people look for somewhere to turn. This is when the age-old universal religion wakes from its hibernation and

"just as in politics, many Americans of all ages were deeply troubled by the moral and religious developments of the Sixties. For the next two decades, these people—conservative in both religion and politics—swelled the ranks both of evangelical Protestant denominations and of the rapidly growing evangelical megachurches that disavowed denominations and termed themselves simply 'Christian'" (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 103).

The message is simple: moral crisis spurs growth in religious beliefs.

The evidence is there to support this theory. It can again be seen empirically through various polling agents. Campbell and Putnam find that

"the fraction of Americans telling Gallup Pollsters that religion was 'very important' in their personal lives began to edge upward in the early 1980s, as did the numbers who said that 'religion can answer today's problems'" (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 109).

In light of this data it seems obvious that religion has the ability to lie dormant over time and then surge forward as the response to a calamity. It waits for the country to approach a crossroads where guidance is needed and the government or a political source cannot provide that guidance. There, the age old, unchanging morals of religion come unhinged and it slowly pushes itself back into society. It lets America operate under the guise of personal religion until personal religion fails, and the savior that is universal religion is needed.

This theory, while back by evidence, does beg the question: will there be a time in America where religion lays dormant long enough that it ceases to have a relevant function? We have to approach this issue from several different standpoints: political, personal, and universal. In a universal sense, we do not think that it is ever possible for religion to disappear entirely in America. One reason for this is the sheer magnitude of people that prescribe to a religion, and in doing so keep the universal religion alive. However this does not mean that the dominant religions of today will still hold their dominant functions in the future. Campbell and Puntam note that “the most important factor predicting religious retention is whether a person’s family of origin was religiously homogeneous and observant, or not. Children of mixed marriages are much more likely to leave the faith within which they are raised” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 142). The retention of religion has an obvious importance in regards to long-term sustainability. If it is as it appears that, “more and more Americans are choosing their religion independently of *both* their family of origin *and* their current family” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 143), it both supports and inhibits our initial theory about the survivability of the universality of religion. It helps it in the sense that independence breeds new ideas that lead to an increase in personal religions. While it may be conceivable that older religions disappear from the framework and stop having a function, there will always be newer ones to take their place. We must look no

further than the term ‘nones’ that Campbell and Putnam developed. They describe them as “not uniformly believers, and few of them claim to be atheists or agnostics. Indeed, most of them express some belief in God and even in the afterlife” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 126). Yet at the same time, “they reject conventional religious affiliations, while not entirely giving up their religious feelings” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 126). Here again we are reminded of the transformation that the ancient Greeks went through. They discard certain universal religious beliefs and labels while still holding on to some basic beliefs.

However the existence of the nones also has the potential to hinder our theory because it suggests the breakdown of institutionalized religion will turn religion into a *purely* personal concept. It should not surprise one that the survivability of the function of universal religion in America is tied to the survival of the function of personal religion. The existence of the nones certainly helps support this shift. The only way in which we think the universality of religion could disappear in America is if religion went under a tremendous fragmentation and religion became *entirely* personal. One of the main reasons that religion is such a powerful actor that can be manipulated is because many people prescribe to a few base religions. If the rise of the nones proves to be exponential then these core religions will fragment and all we should theoretically be left with is religion functioning on a personal level only, as demonstrated by the individuals in the *Warner* case. But the existence of the nones also proves that this is not going to happen. This is due to the fact that our society gravitates towards labels. The same can be seen with Democrats and Republicans. While there has certainly been party fragmentation over the years, most recently with the Tea Party, we still identify with people within these various sects of Democrats or Republicans. Even if the nones continue to grow they will still have a

place in society because Campbell and Putnam have already coined a label for them. Labels perpetuate universal religion.

As the fragmentation of religion at the universal level will not disappear, religion at the personal level itself will also not disappear. This is owed to human nature. We are always looking for something to guide us. Whether it is a belief in a higher power or observance of written law, we want something to light the path for us to walk upon. When universal religion cannot fulfill this we adapt it to our own life and it becomes personal religion. This goes back to a point we made very early on about religion in our chapter regarding the Azande tribe. One of the major functions of religion is to maintain order and stifle chaos when it rears its head. While we have shown that it is certainly capable of doing this at the universal level, it is also quite adept at maintaining order at a personal level. No matter the future prevalence of universal religion, individuals will always be able to adapt it to their own lives. Universal identity will always remain in the wake up personal fragmentation, and personal fragmentation will always exist because of our need to have a guide in life.

This leaves us with the last piece of the puzzle to examine: religion's lifespan in politics. Again, we feel that it will be incredibly hard for religion to disappear from the political spectrum, but for very different reasons than the universal and personal levels. In the political spectrum, religion will never disappear because one of its functions is as a mechanism for control. A good, although fictional, example of this is presented in the movie the *Book of Eli* (Hughes and Hughes 2010). It is set in a post apocalyptic world where all semblance and knowledge of religion have been all but lost. All religious documents were destroyed because they were viewed as causes for war. One Bible remains in the possession of a man named Eli. The plot centers on the mayor of a new town attempting to get his hand on the Bible because he

knows that it can provide him with a mechanism for control. While this is fictional, it fully illustrates one of the dangerous, and unfortunately everlasting, functions of religion within the political sphere. This exemplifies Sweetman's earlier observation regarding the nature of coercion in political institutions. Furthermore, religion gives power to leaders and allows for those leaders to control. In this way, the leaders will never let go of it. However this is looking at religion's function in a negative light on an individual perspective. It is not just in the political spectrum as a way to garner extra votes. Religion also has the potential to exist in the political spectrum because it gives people easy ways to associate themselves with similar others. It appears that politics has some sway over the decisions people make regarding religion.

Campbell and Putnam note,

“somewhat surprisingly, this pattern of switching suggests that people whose religious and political affiliations are ‘inconsistent’ as judged by today’s partisan alignment—that is liberal churchgoers and unchurched conservatives—are more likely to resolve the inconsistency by changing their religion than by changing their politics” (Campbell and Putnam 2010, 145).

With this in mind, it would seem to be that as long as politicians are able to maintain the importance of religion they might be able to keep universal religion strong, subverting a potential personal fragmentation. While this has not occurred on a powerful scale yet, it will be very interesting to see if politicians will be able to rescue religion from what we view as an inevitable personal split. This personal split will serve to destroy the *power* of universal religion within the political spectrum because the degree to which people will adhere to the universal religions will be extremely minimal, but it will not destroy universal religion as an institution. New universal religions will be formed and it will be up to the politicians to attempt and manipulate these new institutions as they have with those in the past.

We have thus given you the various pieces of religion's function in America. In addition to the similarities that it has to the previous two chapters, such as giving power to

leaders, there appear to be three distinct classifications of religion's function within America. They are as follows: religion as a moral backdrop, religion as logic, and religion as personal expression. But how, if at all, do these separate functions fit together within America? To begin, there is an obvious connection between religion as logic and religion as a moral backdrop. In order for religion to function as a moral backdrop, it must first exist in the form of logical statements. We can trace this back to the initial conception of a mythos that we derived from Northrop Frye. Nothing means anything until there is something to give it value. In the beginning, the Bible must be accepted as a rational source of information before any set of religious morals can be acknowledged as "legitimate." From this acceptance a religious backdrop is created. The authority that the Puritans were able to find in the Bible regarding slavery, however erroneous, could not have been considered legitimate if the Bible itself was not considered legitimate. Indeed, Johnson and Miller note, "Truth for him [the Puritan] had been written down once and for all in a definitive, immutable, complete volume, and the covers closed to any further additions" (Johnson and Miller 2001, 61). Using the example of slavery, we can see an additional relationship that exists between religion as logic, religion as a moral backdrop, and religion as personal expression. Religion as a moral backdrop will become just that, a backdrop, and not a determining moral force in the combined presence of logical questioning and religion as a personal ideal. This was demonstrated by the Quaker shift away from previous religiously defined morals. They felt uncomfortable by the morals that the current religion provided so they developed their own way of interpreting morals through a combination of the religious idiom of thought and the logical idiom of thought. Universal religion moved from the foreground to the background in the wake of personal religion.

Another telling instance of religion's function's relationships are the 1960s. As previously discussed, the reaction to the 1960s is a prime example of how religion is able to function as a moral backdrop. But we have yet to discuss why it was able to come to the foreground when it did. While we did mention that moral crisis was the cause of this, how does this relate to the other two functions of religion? We posit that religion was able to enter the foreground again because of an explosion of personal religion. While personal religion is certainly a good thing, as it lets one develop their own sense of living, the 1960s show how a surplus of personal religion. When associated with critical moral issues, this surplus has the potential to break the religious system. It *forces* universal religion into the foreground. When personal religion bloomed in the 1960s, and moral chaos ensued, there needed to be a stabilizing force. This force was the already established moral backdrop with religiously defined morals. A bizarre relationship exists here because religion as a moral backdrop can only be defined retroactively. Only visions of the present and the past shape religion, never views of the future. During the 1960s, personal religion acted as a movement of the now, and was reigned back in by the past. This gives religion's functions a cyclical nature. At the beginning, religious ideals are accepted by logic. This creates the original moral backdrop, which is initially in the forefront of defining morals. Next, the idiom of thought is tweaked and threatens the morals that are in the forefront. The current religious principles recede in favor of new personally defined *more* logical and religious morals. If these morals stick over time they form another universal religious forefront. So within the cyclical pattern we have another cycle: personal religious morals beget universal religious morals, which beget personal religious morals. If we can deem it as such, it is a reactionary science. The step that begins the cycle once again is, as mentioned previously, a surge in personal religion whose morals so conflict with the previously held

universal morals that the ancient moral backdrop is once again called upon to retroactively redefine morals. This cycle is in some ways analogous to the way that our court system works. When new issues come to the attention of the various courts in this country, judges are obligated to look back upon precedent when making their decision. Precedent is the moral backdrop of the court system.

There is one final point to mention regarding this cycle. We have posited both that a surge in personal religion in America can cause the moral backdrop of old to be resurrected, and that there is an increasing fragmentation of universal religion presently occurring in the United States. This brings up one more question: will the religious backdrop that reared its head in reaction to the 1960s rise again? We think that this depends on the extent to which personal religion differs from universal religion. If they differ on small issues that do not relate to universal morals, then the moral backdrop will remain dormant. However, if they differ in terms of the issues most salient in American's minds, then the religious backdrop may once again be summoned to "correct" the deviations that have occurred, and the cycle will begin anew.



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## Conclusion

After examining religion in these three drastically different contexts it is clear that there are some striking universal similarities both to political order and within the religious institutions themselves. The two most universal functions that we discovered are its ability to empower, and its ability to define morals. The Azande use religion to explain their world, and the fact that this is integrated into their trial system shows the ability of religion to manifest itself into law. Furthermore, we also saw through the Azande, and the Bible, that religion for the primitive man can easily be used as a powerful tool for the prophets. This concept evolved as we approached the ancient Greeks and the United States of America. In ancient Greece religion started to waver in regards to its ability to define morals and empower leaders as their thought process was continually evolving. Yet they were not fully able to shed religion from their life, and we saw how it could still be manipulated for personal gain through the trial of Socrates. Finally, we saw that in the United States religion greatly influences how leaders act. This moral-defining function, however, is confined to very specific issues and does not run rampant.

Perhaps the best way to view religion's functions across these three societies is through an analogy. Religion's function is like the developing mind of a human. Now we do not mean this in a diminutive sense, and wish to premise this by saying that this is in no way a criticism of primitive religion as we have already established the merits of their beliefs. To continue the comparison, primitive religion can be seen as analogous to a child. It is very egocentric and attempts to impose its will upon everything around it. This is executed without much resistance in the primitive world because the only idiom of thought that the primitive people possess is a religious one. Here religion attains basic functions. To name a few, it differentiates between the sacred and the profane, it gives power to leaders, and it helps maintain

order within society. But it is only ever able to attain basic functions because it is not threatened. While we noted that religion's function evolved for the Azande, it only did so on a very basic level. The evolution that we saw in the court system did not have any effect upon the higher Azande moral structure. The sacred and the profane were not redefined in the midst of this evolution. Much like an infant's conception of the world, religion in the eyes of the Azande maintains a relatively unchanging function.

We can see religion begin to attain higher function within ancient Greek society. Naturally religion fulfills many of the same roles that it does currently for the Azande, yet the ancient Greeks were presented religion with a new factor: conflict. The conflict that the introduction of logic caused forced religion to attain higher function. No longer could it self-justify. The world existed not as religion saw fit, but as the ancient Greeks saw fit. Like an adolescent flirting with various worldviews, so did the ancient Greeks flirt with the differences between religion and logic. This conflict caused religion to strengthen, as it discarded what the ancient Greeks saw as weak arguments. But even as this was happening, religion was obtaining, paradoxically, a more concrete function within ancient Greek society. Because the ancient Greeks were not able to fully discard religion, we posit that it actually became a more valid option due to the logical opposition. That is to say, in spite of the criticism against religion, the sustainability that it showed was owed to a weakening of the periphery, but a strengthening of the core. The ancient Greeks were like adolescents who had just acquired the ability to vote. They were choosing whether or not to associate themselves with the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Regardless of which party they associated themselves with, they were assenting that a two party system existed. The only difference was that these were not political parties, but parties were representing different idioms of thought.

The opposition that religion faced in ancient Greece, while strong, is incomparable to the opposition it faced, and currently faces, within the United States. Fitting with the trend of the ancient Greeks, this opposition to religion has also caused religion to solidify its place within the American system. Religion even takes a more tangible form of acceptance in America. It has integrated itself into the political environment and is able to actively influence decisions through political parties. It is here in America that religion has attained its highest function. As previously noted, the ability to define morals is a similar function between religion and political order. In relation to the Azande tribe, religion defines the universal morals. In ancient Greece religion, in coalition with logic, also defines universal morals. Not until we get to America does religion attain the ability to define both universal and personal morals. So while religion certainly faces the most opposition in America of any of the societies that we have examined, it is also on the way to fulfilling its highest function: the entire enveloping of the moral system. Religion has matured to adulthood. It is malleable to the most extreme. Religion is able to survive in spite of the potential for personal doctrine to differ from universal doctrine. Fragmentation of the universal doctrine should spell doom for religion in America. Yet the universal doctrine of religion survives through coexistence with the personal doctrine.

Now that we have examined religion's function within these three different societies we can pose this question: does religion have a positive or negative effect on society's development? We believe that religion has a mostly positive effect on society. We could obviously begin by stating that it gives direction to those who are searching for it, as we saw with the Azande. Yet one might be tempted to ask, regardless of this positive, we have seen religion be used consistently as a tool for manipulation across culture and time. How could it be a positive force in society? We could provide the simple cliché that nothing is bad at its core; it

is the people that use it that corrupt it, but that would not be satisfying, and it would be an oversimplification. The real reason that religion is a positive force is because it is open to evolution in parallel with human thought. This is best observed in the United States. We saw in the United States that religion faces a large amount of manipulation from politicians trying to get their policies across, but that hope still exists. The fact that religion has an extremely personal aspect to it provides room for evolution. While a universal doctrine may support discriminatory, negative practices it is ultimately up to the individual to identify which parts of the policy they wish to follow. This allows for the adjustment of personal morals in tandem with religiously defined morals. The Quakers are a great example of this concept. They felt morally wrong about slavery and defied their initial religious beliefs by taking a stand against it. Religion can evolve because personal beliefs have the ability to trump universal ones. Nothing stagnant can have a positive force on our society. The Founders knew this when they included the amendment process, and, ironically, religion knows that it must be open to the idea of evolution if it hopes to last.

In conclusion, we must talk about the danger of manipulation that religion presents us with. As we saw in the examples presented in our research, the initial assumptions that we had regarding the societies most likely to manipulate religion seem to have been proven completely false. We initially postulated that because the primitive man was engulfed with religion, it would be very easy for him to manipulate it. If one controls religion in primitive society then he or she simultaneously controls the idiom of thought. Although prophets theoretically possess this power, this did not seem to be the case amongst primitive peoples. In fact, the prevalence of religion seemed to contribute to a very healthy lifestyle. We saw that the Azande embraced religion and were able to set up an entire legal system around it. Furthermore, religion acted not

only as a legal deterrent for committing certain actions, but was also able to establish a certain moral code for the Azande to follow. The only sense of manipulation that seemed to be there was an internal manipulation when their witchcraft failed. We saw that they manipulated, or more so contorted, religion in order to pass off the failings of their system onto another factor in order for the system to remain infallible. Personal manipulation did not seem to be exercised to a large extent. Religion provided the rules to live by, and those rules were followed.

We then had the ancient Greeks who were the innovators of logic and the potential destroyers of religion. Yet while the introduction of logic did cause some things to change, such as a change from religiously sanctioned decrees to politically sanctioned ones, paradoxically it also opened them up to a whole new world of religious manipulation. They realized the power that religion held for personal use, and this realization was carried over into the court system where personal motives were backed by religious evidence. Socrates, a devotee to logic, exemplifies this conundrum. Even he, perhaps the purest logician that the ancient Greeks knew, succumbed to the temptation of religious manipulation.

In spite of this evidence, we could theoretically explain away the manipulation the ancient Greeks practiced. One might argue that because they were still religious at their core, the ancient Greeks were using justified arguing strategies that they *truly* believed in. Perhaps they were not using them purely for manipulative purposes. In light of the prevalence and severity of manipulation practiced by the ancient Greeks, we do not buy this argument. But if we were to accept this argument, the initial postulate we made about the United States being devoid of religious manipulation should theoretically be true. The United States shows the highest deference to logic out of any society we examined, even including provisions against a federal

religion in the Establishment Clause. But again we see the exact opposite of our initial prediction. The United States is a country well versed in religious manipulation.

So why is it that the introduction of logic paradoxically causes religious arguments and themes to increase in prevalence within a society? Even more specifically, how is it that the United States, a country where religious manipulation and arguments should theoretically be nonexistent, is so full of them? The problem begins with a consequence that the introduction of logic has. Logic wants to assign the titles of “right” and “wrong” to things. When it is injected into a society it polarizes everything by classifying them into these categories. The polarization between right and wrong that logic causes infects not only the conceptions that logic wants, but those of religion as well. While it may cause those who are initially against religion to further label it as a “wrong” way to describe the world, it also causes those who already strongly adhere to religious principles to do the exact opposite and label them as “right.” The next step that the logical idiom of thought wants to take is to eliminate the “wrong” and make prevalent the “right.” It attempted to do this in the Constitution with the Establishment Clause. We recognize that the Establishment Clause was also meant to put in to protect individual religious freedom, but it has some unintended consequences that help explain how religious manipulation increases as the logical idiom of thought becomes more present. The Establishment Clause theoretically takes away religion’s ability to act as a definer of universal values, nullifying one of its purposes. As an idiom of thought religion naturally attempts to define universal values. It *needs* to be able to define them in order to survive on a universal level. The Establishment Clause prevents this and it puts the idioms of logic and religion in conflict. Religion must keep pushing back against logic if it wishes to survive.



The nature of our political system lets religion do just this: push back. While religion cannot be federally declared and challenge logic's control over the idiom of thought that way, it can through our political order. People have a natural tendency to associate with various identities. Religion is one of these identities. It provides definitions of what is right and wrong for people to identify with and prescribe too. Politicians then manipulate this natural identifying tendency with religious arguments in the political sphere under the intention of garnering support. The politicians who preach these religious views, once elected, must then follow through on them and attempt to turn the religious arguments that they made into law in order to retain their constituency for future elections. Unbeknownst at the time of its introduction, the commitment to logic that the United States made during its founding consigned religion to a lifetime of manipulation. The political system is the United States' method for producing laws and defining morals. With the existence of the Establishment Clause the only way that religion can alter the universal idiom of thought is by perpetrating this system. To maintain its moral defining function religion must let itself be manipulated. Religion is the politicians' tool for election, and politicians are religion's tools for controlling the idiom of thought. So in summary, the introduction of logic as an idiom of thought in the United States hindered religion from directly affecting the universal idiom of thought. However it still found a way to do this through the political system of the United States. An increase in logic alienates religion from its function meaning that the only way for it to fulfill its function as an idiom of thought is to do so through subversive, manipulative means.

In conclusion, one last question remains: is there a way to decrease religious manipulation? We believe that this is not possible in the current system that we have established. Because religion is an idiom of thought it strives to be all encompassing. It cannot

do this with the Establishment Clause in place. As long as the Establishment Clause remains religion is consigned to live a symbiotic relationship with the politicians. It cannot truly fulfill its function as an idiom of thought if it cannot be openly declared as such. Yet this is also something that cannot be done. The removal of the Establishment Clause would shake the foundations of democracy and lead to increased discrimination. This would give religion too much power. Because of the fragmentation of religion, personal religion has become much more prevalent in relation to universal religion. Removal of the Establishment Clause would allow for personal religion to be universalized by the elected. While the fragmentation is great for religion on the personal level, it is just that: great for religion on the personal level. Attempting to apply universal control founded by purely personal beliefs would be an ill-advised strategy. If this were to happen, you would have the views of the few being applied to the entire populous. That would be one of the most antidemocratic actions that could happen. Luckily, the current political system, while forcing religion to act as a manipulative tool, safeguards against this. Because politicians are attempting to get the most votes possible they must appeal to universal values, and not fringe discriminatory ones. This is not to say that some universal values do not discriminate. They just have less potential to discriminate against an entire populous when compared to personal values. So while religious manipulation certainly has increased proportionally with the strength of the logical idiom of thought, it is necessary for it to continue to operate in the way it does. Right now we function as a society valuing multiple idioms of thought. The attempt to increase the directness with which any of these idioms of thought influence our moral code could have drastic consequences. We would exist in a world where the views of the few are exercised on the many. While this consigns religion to a lifetime of manipulation it is a necessary step in order to preserve the tenants of democracy.