A Struggle for Authority: Government, Religion, and Hume's Support for an Established Church

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Abstract

A Struggle for Authority: Government, Religion, and Hume's Support for an Established Church

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Through a comprehensive analysis of David Hume's political writings, this thesis examines Hume's support of an established church on the basis of its political utility for maintaining the authority of civil government. Hume argues that government's most essential function is to provide for the safety of its people, but that in order to do so it must first have authority sufficient to secure its own continued existence. Government's authority rests not on force, but on the perceived self-interest and opinions of its people. Factions, which represent rival perceived interests and opinions, threaten government authority, and religious sects are among the most threatening factions of all. While many methods have been advocated to allay the detrimental political effects of religion, such as those of persecution and the institution of a separation of church and state, Hume suggests that only an established church can quell the flames of religious zeal and preserve government's authority to rule.

A Note on the Citations

Given the frequency with which I cite the following respective works of David Hume and Adam Smith, I have used the abbreviations listed below when citing them in order to improve the ease of reading.

Abbreviations for Works of David Hume

EMPL — *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, [1741-77] 1987).

EPM — Hume, David. *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, in *Hume's Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1748] 1975.

HE — *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in1688*, Vol. 1-6 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, [1754-62] 1983).

NHR — *The Natural History of Religion*, in *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion*, ed. J.C.A. Gaskin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1757] 2009.

Work of Adam Smith

WN — *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, two volumes (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund [1776], 1981).

Introduction

Separation of church and state is today considered a hallmark of western liberal democratic values,[1] and has served as a foundation for "modern politically liberal approaches to government."[2] Its defenders fear that a marriage of church and state would lead to religious inequality, and have appealed to man's "inherent dignity"[3] and "the intrinsic worth of individual autonomy"[4] to validate the maintenance of a strict separation of church and state. However, these arguments ultimately beg the question of the political utility of such a principle. While some thinkers, notably Adam Smith, do defend the political utility of separating church and state, it is ultimately on this basis that David Hume supports its opposite—an established church in which government confers political and legal advantages and disadvantages on religious leaders and adherents alike based upon their religious membership.

Hume argues for the necessity of an established church not only because he believes it to contribute to religious freedom by preventing religious persecution, but also because it is essential for government to fulfill its most basic duties. He views government's obligations to uphold abstract principles such as equality, freedom, or justice as being contingent on their being compatible with that which is in the best interests of society and helps "to preserve peace among

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[1]While some liberal democracies, such as Denmark, Finland, Greece, and the United Kingdom, continue to maintain a constitutionally established official state religion, generally speaking a strict separation prevails among liberal democratic countries. Moreover, even in these countries many of the defining characteristics of an established faith, such as legally established political advantages garnered by adherence to the state religion, are disregarded or not legally upheld. In fact, in some countries, such as France and Turkey, a somewhat stricter version of the principle of church-state separation exists, known as *laïcité*.

[2]Deen K. Chatterjee, *Encyclopedia of Global Justice*, Vol. 2, s.v. "Separation of Church and State" (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011),995. The First Amendment to the US Constitution echoes this sentiment of the necessity of a strict separation between church and state ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…").

[3] UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), Preamble.

[4] Andrew Sabl, "The Last Artificial Virtue: Hume on Toleration and Its Lessons," *Political Theory*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2009), 512.

mankind" (EMPL, 489). Similarly, Hume believes that government's chief obligation, or "supreme law," is to provide for "the safety of the people" (EMPL, 489), and that the political utility of the religio-political arrangement that he proposes lies above all in its tendency to buttress such an effort.

Hume also argues that absent church establishment, the authority of civil government would quickly be eroded by that of zealous religious groups, perhaps to the extent of even threatening government's existence and consequently inhibiting its ability to protect its people (EMPL, 38). In order to provide for the peace and security of its people, government must first safeguard its authority over them because without such authority, the rule of law, which Hume deems a source of "security and happiness" (EMPL, 124), would be rendered useless. By essentially making clergy into civil servants, an established church allows government to gain a considerable amount of control over religious leaders and can influence their previously zealous doctrines to become more moderate and tolerating. Such a mutual toleration among sects would serve to decrease further religious zealotry as sects are free to exist unthreatened by their neighbors. Additionally, being less zealous, such doctrines would carry less authority among the people and would become less of a threat to the authority of government.

Hume suggests that church establishment is not only compatible with "good government," but is critical for the subsistence of any stable government at all given the factional disputes that arise without it.[5] In fact, Hume notes that the intractable fighting occasioned by factions can not only change a good government into a bad one, but lead to the dissolution of government altogether (EMPL, 31; EMPL, 55). Therefore, in order even to maintain at least a

[5]Mark G. Spencer, "Hume and Madison on Faction," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October 2002), 892.

stable government, let alone a good government, it is necessary to mollify the factions that so threaten government's existence.

Hume treats religious factions as possessing the same fundamental characteristics as any other factions, even if he does see those of religion as particularly hazardous to government. As noted by Jennifer Herdt, Hume fears religious factions in particular because they pervade social life within a society and are, politically speaking, "the most zealous and violent and the most difficult to reconcile with one another."[6] Hume describes religion as a combination of the subtypes of factions that he terms "parties from principle" and "parties from interest" (EMPL, 59).In other words, religious leaders have an interest in increasing the number of their followers and their own authority in order to augment their revenues. Meanwhile, adherents to a given religion share a common set of religious principles in the form of the doctrines espoused by their leaders.

Given this formulation of religious faction, Hume argues that the most effective way to deal with such factions is to appeal to the interests of their leaders by supporting them financially and institutionally in order to influence them to espouse doctrines that do not undermine the authority of the civil government, from which they derive their subsistence. As will be discussed, this is not possible in all cases because some religions are more rigid in their principles than others, as in the case of Catholicism vis-à-vis Protestantism, and so government must simply do its best to minimize the influence of the former by promoting the latter.

To some, Hume might be viewed as an unlikely supporter of an established church owing to the contempt for religious institutions and general skepticism that he demonstrates throughout

[6]Jennifer Herdt, *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 14.

his written works, which famously earned him the appellation of "the Great Infidel."[7]Some scholars, such as Richard Dees, have even argued that Hume's support of religious toleration may be founded, at least in part, on his "contempt for organized religion" insofar as he believed all religions to be founded on equally ridiculous principles.[8] Hume also perceives many of the traits deemed virtues by most religions, such as abstinence and humility, to be vices that serve no purpose and even have a degenerative effect on individuals' moral and physical well-being. He attaches to these traits the pejorative of "monkish virtues:"

> Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues; for what reason are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment? We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these desirable ends; stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper. We justly, therefore, transfer them to the opposite column, and place them in the catalogue of vices (EMP 270).[9]

Nonetheless, Hume affirms that "the union of the civil and ecclesiastical power serves extremely, in every civilized government, to the maintenance of peace and order" (HE, 1.311) and that "there must be an ecclesiastical order, and a public establishment of religion in every civilized community" (HE 3.134-135).[10]

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[7]This nickname was prominently attributed to Hume by James Boswell. See: Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 289-290, 325-326, 585, 587-588, 606. For more on Hume's relationship with James Boswell, see: Roderick Graham, *The Great Infidel: A Life of David Hume* (Berlin: Birlinn Limited, 2004), 301, 337. Hume's atheism is described further in: A.J. Ayer, *Hume* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 22-23; and David Fate Norton, "Hume, Atheism, and the Autonomy of Morals," in*Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Anthony Flew (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Press, 1986), 110.

[8]Richard H. Dees, "The Paradoxical Principle and Salutary Practice: Hume on Toleration," *Hume Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (April 2005), 146. See also: EPM,131.

[9]For more on Hume description of the Monkish virtues, see: William Davie, "Hume on Monkish Virtue," *Hume Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 & 2 (April/November,1999) 139-154.

[10] See also: Dennis Rasmussen, *The Pragmatic Enlightenment: Recovering the Liberalism of Hume, Smith, Montesquieu, and Voltaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 188.

While Hume's argument is unique, throughout Western political thought there have been a number of arguments presented in favor of an established church, as Frederick Whelan details in his article "Church Establishments, Liberty & Competition in Religion."[11] The first is the necessity of maintaining religious uniformity throughout society, and is found in the work of the English Anglican priest and theologian Richard Hooker. Hooker argues that a society, specifically that of 17th century England, is composed not only of "civil politic" elements, but also of "ecclesiastical politic" elements as well.[12] Consequently, the authority of the church, like that of the state, is obligatory on all members of the national society.[13] Other defenders of religious uniformity, such as Francis Bacon, held that it was necessary to maintain civil peace because religious divisions would increase religious zeal and conflict.[14]

Although these arguments for compulsory membership in an established church were influential in the 17th century, support for religious uniformity waned among the liberal thinkers of the 18th century. There did, however, continue to be a steady stream of support for a more tolerant established church, mostly on the grounds that a religious establishment was desirable because of its ability to promote social order by inculcating morality.[15] For example, Bishop Butler argues that if civil government do not provide for any religious establishment, they leave their people "without guide and instruction," and cause religion to be "sunk and forgotton

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[11]Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty &Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990).The following arguments regarding church establishment made by Hooker, Bacon, Butler, Franklin, and Burke that I will present in brief may be found in greater detail in this article.

[12] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. A. S. McGrade and Brian Vickers (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), Book 1, Chapter 10 & Book8, Chapter 1.

[13]Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty &Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), 160.

[14] See Francis Bacon, "Of Unity in Religion," in *Francis Bacon's Essays* (London: Dent, 1968). Whelan notes that Bacon later amended his views in his essay "Of Atheism," and asserted that while a single division of religion in society increases religious fervor and conflict, many such divisions lead to religious indifference and eventually to atheism. See: Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty &Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter 1990), 162.

[15]Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty &Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), 163.

amongst them."[16] Without such a moral guide, Butler believes that the people could adopt a disposition of "excessive zeal" that could threaten the state.[17]

Benjamin Franklin similarly asserts that an established church helps "to secure and improve the morals of the people,"[18] and William Warburton argues that an established church can counteract defects in human nature and make peoples more governable by inculcating a religious morality that, among other things, supports obedience to the law.[19] Finally, as Whelan describes, Edmund Burke argued that an established church "perpetuates the moral heritage on which society is founded," and provides an independent standard of morality that helps to reinforce the notion amongst both the rulers and the ruled that those exercising political authority "act in trust" and do not set "the standard of right and wrong."[20]

Unlike those of his predecessors and peers, Hume's argument for an established church does not rely upon such reasoning. Indeed, Hume consistently refutes the idea that religion can have any kind of a salutary moral effect on a populace or that religious uniformity is either necessary or even possible.[21]Although Hume's corpus is littered with examples of his belief in the morally deleterious effects of religion, or at least those of modern theistic religions, perhaps the most prominent example of this is the penultimate chapter of *The Natural History of Religion*, which he titles "Bad Influences of Popular Religions on Morality."[22] He writes that

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[16] Joseph Butler, *The Works of Joseph Butler*, ed. W. E. Gladstone (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), vol. 2, 366.
[17]Ibid., 326.
[18] Benjamin Franklin, "Toleration in Old and New England," (1772) in *The Political Thought of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Ralph L. Ketcham (Indianapolis: BobbsMerrill,1965), 248.
[19]A.W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), chapter3.
[20] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1793), 138. See also: Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty &Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), 167.
[21] This is in contrast to the assertions of at least one scholar, who claims that Hume advocates an established church because of its positive moral effects. See: Will R. Jordan, "Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration of David Hume and Religious Establishment," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Fall 2002).
[22] David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, in *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion*, ed. J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 14.

> the greatest crimes have been found, in many instances, compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion; Hence, it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of a man's morals, from the fervour or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincere…*Those who undertake the most criminal and most dangerous enterprizes are commonly the most superstitious* (NHR, 182).[23]

Similarly, Hume demonstrates the irrationality of the notion that religious uniformity is either desirable or possible by showing the fruitlessness of attempts to instituting it using religious persecution throughout his *History of England*.[24] Characters in his *History* support persecution on grounds similar to the 17th century thinkers described above, reasoning that religious uniformity would dispel all religious differences and disputes in society because there would be only one religious sect. Thus, at the least conflict between religious sects would be prevented. Additionally, this uniformity would moderate zealotry because the single remaining sect would not have to compete for followers or support, being the "only game in town" as it were.

Hume argues in response that the possibility of eliminating all religious faction is a demonstrably Sisyphean task, having eluded man throughout history. In fact, persecution commonly proves not only ineffectual to the purpose for which it is intended, but often proves counter-productive. As Hume states in his *History of England*, using persecution to pursue a uniformity of religion "serves only to make men more obstinate in their persuasion" (HE, 3.433). It not only fails to prevent conflict between sects, but also serves to increase religious zealotry as sects fight for their survival against their persecutors, ironically making the cure of persecution

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[23] For more on Hume's view of the morally corrupting influences of religion, see Frederick G. Whelan, *Order and Artifice in Hume's Political Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 106; J.C.A. Gaskin, "Hume on Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993),332-35; and Norton, "Hume, Atheism, and the Autonomy of Morals," in *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Anthony Flew (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Press, 1986), 112.

[24]David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, Vol. 1-6 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, [1754-62] 1983).

more dangerous than the poison of religious zealotry. Moreover, the countless instances of devastation and loss of life resulting from persecutory efforts in pursuit of a uniformity of religion that is never achieved in the *History of England* serve as evidence of the destruction and fruitlessness of such a "perpetual war for perpetual peace."[25]

Hume's description of how an established church should be manifested in society in order to promote religious toleration and the specific end at which it is directed (i.e. maintaining government's authority over its people) is found chiefly in his *Essays*,[26]*History of England*, and *Natural History of Religion* (his "political works," as I will call them).[27] The exact brand of church establishment that Hume advocates, and the type of toleration that he hopes it will support, are important for his argument. For Hume, toleration implies a clear superiority of one faith over another, with the former merely permitting the latter to exist free of persecution. Such a conception of religious toleration belongs to a tradition of philosophers who understood the term to signify "no more than forbearance and the permission given by the adherents of a

[25]As an example of this devastation cause by religion, Hume describes a genocide perpetrated by Irish Catholics against English Protestants in his *History of England* in which between 40,000 and 200,000 were killed (HE, 5.345-349). Regarding the phrase "perpetual war for perpetual peace," although it was being used to describe the foreign policy of Presidents Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt, this famous phrase and the context in which it was used accurately reflects the impossibility that Hume describes of ever achieving the forcible elimination of all religious diversity. The phrase was used by American historian Charles Beard (1874-1948) in a conversation with Harry Elmer Barnes in 1947, as described in Harry Elmer Barnes, ed., *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), viii.

[26] Chiefly, the essays that are utilized in this thesis are *That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science*, *Of the First Principles of Government*, *Of the Independency of Parliament*, *Whether the British Government Inclines More to Absolute Monarchy or Republic*, *Of Parties In General*, *Of the Parties of Great Britain*, *Of Remarkable Customs*, *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, *Of the Original Contract*, *Of the Coalition of Parties*, and *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth*.

[27] These works are generally viewed as containing Hume's "main insights into politics, as opposed to morality or law," as described in Andrew Sabl, *Hume's Politics: Coordination and Crisis in the History of England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 5. See also: Neil McArthur, *David Hume's Political Theory: Law, Commerce, and the Constitution of Government* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), 14.

dominant religion for other religions to exist, even though the latter are looked upon with disapproval as inferior, mistaken, or harmful."[28]

In his advocacy of an established church, Hume distinguishes between various types of religion based upon their fundamental principles, and suggests that some are more destructive of government's authority to rule over its people. Specifically, he says that "superstitious" religions are more harmful to government's authority while "enthusiastic" sects can be made less so over time by way of an established church. Hume also deems church establishment necessary only insofar as it serves to guarantee religious toleration, which he says helps to moderate religious zeal, thereby preventing religious challenges to government authority and ultimately serving to avert civil and religious conflict.

Of course, as Andrew Sabl suggests, while toleration and church establishment are "treatments" for the problems of religion and faction, they are not necessarily "cures" since in Hume's view all governments inevitably fall prey to factions.[29]Even the most perfect government could never hope to subsist permanently, owing to the tendency of "present interest" to make men "forgetful of their posterity," as well as the natural impermanence of any human institution. However, by using toleration and church establishment to combat the divisive effects of faction and religion, Hume deems it possible that "a government would flourish for many ages" (EMPL, 529).[30]

Analysis of Hume's advocacy of an established church holds a rather minimal place in the Hume literature. Although the fact that Hume argues for an established church is well-

[28] Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5.
[29] Sable (2012), 55.
[30]David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, [1741-77] 1987).

documented in Hume literature, it is usually considered ancillary to Hume's advocacy of religious toleration and not placed within the larger context of his political thought.[31] Commentaries on Hume's political theory of church establishment are generally limited to brief analyses of small portions of Hume's *History of England* that are utilized by authors for a variety of purposes.[32]

There are of course some exceptions to this, such as the work of Will Jordan, who considers the topic directly in his "Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration of David Hume and Religious Establishment."[33] However, he argues that Hume's defense of an established church is ultimately motivated by religion's "ability to strengthen society and to improve morality,"[34]with which I disagree considering the negative moral effects that Hume himself ascribes to religion (See above). Richard Dees also places the role of an established

[31] Examples of scholars relegating Hume's theory of church establishment strictly as a minor aspect of his overall advocacy of religious toleration are: Andrew Sabl, "The Last Artificial Virtue: Hume on Toleration and Its Lessons," *Political Theory*,Vol. 37, No. 4 (2009), 9-11; and Greg Conti, "Hume's Low Road to Toleration (paper presented at the Political Theory Workshop, University of Chicago, January 13, 2014), 16-17.

[32]The topic is often presented briefly in books discussing Hume's more general political thought. See, for example, Annette C. Baier, *Death and Character: Further Reflections on Hume* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 92;andDennis Rasmussen, *The Pragmatic Enlightenment: Recovering the Liberalism of Hume, Smith, Montesquieu, and Voltaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 188-189. However, the topic of Hume on religious establishment has also been utilized for relating Hume's views to those of the American Founders. See Samuel Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception among the American Founders, 1776-1790," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 4(October, 2002),907; and Mark G. Spencer, *David Hume and Eighteenth Century America* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 182-185. Economic theorists also utilize Hume's theory of church establishment, usually as a comparison to the market economic approach of Adam Smith toward religion. For example, see: Gary M. Anderson, "Mr. Smith and the Preachers: The Economics of Religion in the *Wealth of Nations*," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (1988), 1073, 1078; Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of 'Fundamentalism,'" Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics, Vol. 153, No. 1 (1997), 111;Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Introduction to the Economic of Religion," *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 36 (September, 1998), 1489; Richard A. Posner, Michael W. McConnell, "An Economic Approach to Issues of Religious Freedom," *University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter, 1989),54.

[33] Will R. Jordan, "Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration of David Hume and Religious Establishment," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Fall 2002).

[34] Ibid., 687.

church in the context of Hume's larger political thought, but does so essentially as a footnote to Hume's advocacy of religious toleration.[35]

Moreover, a number of questions remain without definitive answer: *why* does Hume argue for an established church? What exactly does the established church that Hume has in mind look like? Is the strength of his argument limited to the few oft-quote passages of his *History of England* (for example, see: HE, 3.136, 6.40), or can a more comprehensive argument be gleaned by taking Hume's political writings as a whole? I hope to answer these questions and provide a more definitive answer as to why Hume advocates an established church, and exactly what kind of established church he intends to support.

Part I of the thesis will describe the factors upon which Hume believes government is necessarily founded and maintained. Because the ruled are much more numerous than their rulers in any government, force alone cannot confer authority upon them. It is only the perceived self-interest and opinions of the ruled that cause them to submit voluntarily to be governed, and it is therefore from such perceived self-interest and opinions of the governed that government derives its authority over them.[36] However, these perceptions of self-interest and opinions are not impervious to change. As I will show, factions represent rival interests and opinions that threaten government authority, and religious sects are particularly dangerous types of factions. Without such authority, government could never hope to subsist, and Hume fears that in its absence there would be violent struggles for power amongst competing factions.

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[35]Richard H. Dees, "The Paradoxical Principle and Salutary Practice: Hume on Toleration," *Hume Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (April 2005), 160-161.

[36] While government is in this sense "based on opinion," that does not mean that it is based upon the active consent of the people for the government to rule, or that it ever was. In other words, government need not be popular. Rather these opinions that I describe are a kind of default in the absence of a better political alternative. For more on this, see EMPL, 481-487.

While there are many types of factions, the one that Hume treats most extensively is religion. Throughout his political works, Hume describes the persecutory and factious tendencies of "theistic" (or "monotheistic") religions, and how they were not present in the polytheistic religions of the ancients. The religion that Hume describes most extensively in this regard is Christianity. Using the example of Christianity, I will demonstrate how Hume believes that certain religious sects can be more conducive to stable political order than others, with the implication that those less detrimental to maintaining government authority should be favored above the others, and, more expansively, that a marriage of church and state can serve a useful political purpose.

In order to do this, I will examine Hume's political thought regarding the origins and fundamental properties of religion. I will then describe how monotheistic religions (or theistic religions as he calls them) such as Christianity came to exist, and how their melding of theistic religious beliefs with political elements led to the formation of religious factions. Importantly, I note that Hume perceives the political implications of Christianity's two major divisions, Protestantism and Catholicism, to be quite different. I suggest that ultimately certain religions may be less detrimental to the authority of government than others, and that Hume's argument for an established church consists in the necessity of allowing such religions to predominate those that are a greater threat to government.

In Part II, I will begin by discussing two notable methods suggested throughout the history of political thought for addressing the problems of religion. The first is persecution, which Hume refutes in the manner previously described. The second, which is advanced by

Hume's close friend Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*,[37]favors separation of church and state.[38]Smith argues that although relying upon the voluntary contributions of their adherents for their subsistence will, as Hume says, cause them to be very zealous and relentlessly seek to increase their own authority at the expense of the government, absent government support religious authority would also be dispersed among hundreds, even thousands, of religious sects whose individual influence would consequently be very much reduced (WN, 788). He also says that by receiving government money, an established clergy would become less able to defend itself against the attacks of more zealous rival leaders, whose doctrines would be viewed as more sacrosanct in the eyes of the people (WN, 789). Moreover, Smith asserts that the great objective of religious leaders is to maintain their own authority, not that of their sovereign, and so by promoting a religious sect government simply increases the strength of a rival to its own authority (WN, 797).

Although Hume does not respond directly to Smith, having died during the same year in which Smith published his thoughts on religion in his *Wealth of Nations*, Hume's disagreement with his arguments may be gleaned from his political works. Smith's claim that there would somehow be hundreds, or even thousands, of insignificant sects rather than a small number of powerful sects in the absence of government support implicitly assumes that there are not already religions in society that are particularly dominant. Moreover, he does not address precisely how such a process would work.

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[37]Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, two volumes (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund [1776], 1981).

[38] Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.Aside from Mossner's account of Hume and Smith's friendship, there was also much amicable written correspondence between the two men, which can be found in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932) and the *New Letters of David Hume*, ed. R. Klibansky and E. C. Mossner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).

Smith also ignores the inherent advantages that some sects have over others, such as foreign support from the Pope in the case of Catholicism. Leaving a powerful faith such as this to its own devices would not necessarily guarantee a devolution of its authority and moderation of its zealotry. Moreover, being unthreatened by the clergy of the much less powerful sects that surround them, the clergy of such a faith would continue to proselytize in an effort to increase its own influence. By having an established church, government can have more control over which religious sects are allowed to grow in influence, and can promote those that better support their own authority instead of leaving them to fall prey to their rivals.

Notably, while Hume advocates the establishment of a state-administered religious hierarchy, I argue that he does not advocate for the establishment of one particular sect (Anglicanism, Lutheranism, etc.), but rather believes that any "enthusiastic" sect will do. At the same time, he seeks to minimize the influence of more "superstitious" sects. In the example of Christianity that he discusses at length, Hume divides Christianity into two major denominations—Catholicism (superstitious) and Protestantism (enthusiastic)—and claims that they are fundamentally different in terms of their political effects. That is, Hume deems Catholicism to be at odds with the authority of civil government to a greater extent than Protestantism for reasons that will be discussed in Part I.

Such a Protestant establishment consists of a religious hierarchy overseen by civil magistrates that brings religious matters under government's purview, pays salaries to the clergy using public funds rather than allowing for a separate, "fixed establishment for the priests" (HE, 3.136), and politically excludes Catholics from government in favor of Protestant sects.[39] The

[39] Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty &Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter 1990), 157-160. Notably, newly formed Protestant sects may also be excluded by Hume's formulation, as can be

implication of this in terms of Hume overarching advocacy of an established church is that it suggests that there are some religious sects that are more detrimental to government authority than others, and should have their political influence minimized to prevent them from fomenting faction.

In sum, it is on the basis of political utility that Hume supports an established church. In order for government to perform its chief function, i.e. to provide for the safety of its people, it must first exist and have the authority necessary to do so. Government's authority rests not on force, but on the perceived self-interest and opinions of its people. Factions, which represent rival perceived interests and opinions, threaten government authority, and religious sects are among the most threatening factions of all. While many methods have been advocated to allay the detrimental effects of religion, such as persecution and the institution of a separation of church and state, Hume suggests that instead the erection of an established church can moderate zealous religious doctrines best serves to preserve government's authority. This thread of argumentation will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

Part I: Faction, Religion, and Government

Although Hume believes that "government binds us to obedience only on account of its tendency to public utility" (EMPL, 489), he emphasizes that an imperfect government is better than no government at all because government's existence is the prerequisite for all its other

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seen in his essay *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm*, in which he says "enthusiastic religions," i.e. Protestant faiths, are more moderate than "superstitious religions," i.e. Catholicism, in the long-run, but can be just as destructive in the short-run when they are first introduced. See: EMPL, 74-78.

benefits (EMPL, 41), chiefly that of preserving peace and order.[40]In a way, this fruit of government's existence should be sufficient to compel obedience to it because "men's happiness consists not so much in an abundance of [the commodities and enjoyments of life], as in the peace and security with which they possess them." Thus, laws and institutions serve to "secure the peace, happiness, and liberty of future generations" (EMPL 54-55). It is perhaps because laws and institutions are so essential for peace and security that Hume affords "the first place of honour…to legislators and founders of states" without making his praise contingent upon the quality of their laws or the mode of their rule (Ibid.).

Even when Hume lays out his idea of a perfect commonwealth, he is quick to qualify his attempts to do so by disavowing "any attempts to substitute a political Utopia for the common botched and inaccurate governments which seemed to serve imperfect men so well."[41]Indeed, because Hume believes that "government is instituted, in order to restrain the fury and injustice of the people," he is very cautious in his espousal of the people's right to rebel against their government (HE, 5.544).[42] Thus, while good government is of course desirable, the continued existence of at least some kind of government is essential, and so Hume concerns himself far more with the latter than with the former.

Given the importance that Hume places on the maintenance of stable government, among his chief concerns throughout his political writings is to identify the most destabilizing influences on government and to suggest solutions to ameliorate them. To address this, Hume

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[40] Marc Arkin, "The Intractable Principle: David Hume, James Madison, Religion, and the Tenth Federalist," *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 39, No.2 (April, 1995), 150.
[41] Douglass Adair, "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science: David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (August, 1957), 349
[42] For an extensive treatment of Hume's treatment of the relationship between the established government and the right of the people to rebel under certain circumstances, see Thomas Merrill, "The Rhetoric of Rebellion in Hume's Constitutional Thought," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), 257-282.

writes extensively about political factions, which he says greatly undermine government authority and threaten the peace and security that government provides. He goes so far as to say that "as much as legislators and founders of states ought to be honoured and respected among men, as much ought the founders of sects and factions to be detested and hated; because the influence of faction is directly contrary to that of laws" (EMPL, 55). Moreover, "factions subvert government, render laws impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities among men of the same nation," and "seldom end but by the total dissolution of that government, in which they are sown" (Ibid.).Before one can fully comprehend why Hume deems factions to be so dangerous and destructive of government, it is first necessary to understand the fundamental characteristics that Hume ascribes to both government and factions.

Government & Faction

While Hume does not endorse the idea that government was founded upon an "original contract," he does believe that owing to the general equality of faculties that all men possess, they must have at first consented to give up their natural liberty and receive laws from one of their equals for the sake of peace and order (EMPL, 468). Originally, he says, government must have been consented to for the advantages that people perceived that they would derive from it.[43] The first chieftain, he says, would have therefore ruled more by persuasion than by command, given the tenuous state of his authority, and would have eliminated those who did not support his authority to rule (Ibid.).

[43] Hume does not imply that such consent is expressed in the form of some kind of conscious, contractual agreement. Rather, this process can be gradual and unconscious, closer to the concept of "tacit consent" proposed by John Locke. See: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 63-64.

According to Hume, all governments, whether they are "the most despotic and most military governments" or "the most free and most popular," are founded not on force, but rather upon a number of fundamental opinions (EMPL, 32). As evidence, Hume points to the fact that in any government the rulers are far less numerous than the ruled, suggesting that governments cannot be imposed and maintained by the physical force of their governors because "FORCE is always on the side of the governed." Therefore, Hume asserts, "governors have nothing to support them but opinion." That is not to say that governments are based on general appeal, since there will always be large segments of the population that dislike the current government (EMPL, 486). Rather, there must be an "implicit submission" on the part of the ruled, who, despite possessing a preponderance of force, "resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers" (EMPL, 32). This "implicit submission" takes the form of a kind of "passive obedience" that Hume presents as the default attitude of people toward their government until their opinions are challenged by factions, such as religious sects (EMPL, 490).

There are two types of opinion that Hume identifies as essential for government: "opinion of INTEREST" and "opinion of RIGHT" (EMPL, 33). Opinion of interest is "the sense of the general advantage which is reaped from government" as well as the sense that "the particular government, which is established, is equally advantageous with any other that could be easily settled" (EMPL, 33). In other words, this opinion consists in calculations of personal, and usually material, self-interest in which the ruled support the established government because ofthe advantages that they perceive themselves to derive under its purview relative to the benefits that they could hope to reap under any other viable regime. For example, if one owns property and

lives under a government that guarantees that property, then it would makes sense to support the current government since in its absence the security of one's property might not be guaranteed.[44]

Predictably, when such an opinion takes hold of "the generality of a state or among those who have the force in their hands, it gives great security to any government" (Ibid.). As Christopher Finlay notes, such a consensus of opinions, or at least an "implicit submission" to them, is for Hume "generally salutary, tending to support the institution of government whose stability [is] essential to the health…of society."[45] For this reason, governments should seek to reconcile the separate interests of "each court, and each order" in society with those of the public in general (EMPL, 43). However, if separate interests are not checked and not directed toward the public interest, "we ought to look for nothing but faction, disorder, and tyranny from such a government"(Ibid.).

Although opinions of interest help to support government, a foundation of private interest alone cannot maintain it, for "the least shock or convulsion must break all these interests to pieces" and the government "will immediately dissolve" (EMPL, 51). Instead, the civil power must also be buttressed by another kind of opinion, that of "right," in order to maintain its authority, especially during times of crisis and disaster. Opinions of right, or "principles," as Hume often refers to them (EMPL, 33-34), consist in conceptions of the "public *interest*" and the legitimacy of the distribution of power and property under a given government (EMPL, 34).

Ultimately, such opinions are more crucial to supporting governmental authority than any actual self-interest because "though men be much governed by interest; yet even interest itself,

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[44] In the case of this example, Hume states that "men's happiness consists not so much in an abundance of [commodities], as in the peace and security with which they possess them" (EMPL, 55).

[45] Christopher Finlay, "Hume's Theory of Civil Society," *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (2004), 383-384.

and all human affairs, are entirely governed by *opinion*" (EMPL, 51). In other words, even perceived self-interest is subjective, malleable, and may be at odds with the opinions of others. Factions embody such dissenting interests and opinions that compete with those sustaining government's authority to rule.

When men act as a faction, they go to great lengths, even neglecting honor and morality, in order to serve their party. While factions take many forms, Hume concerned himself mostly with "*real* factions," or those "founded on some real difference of sentiment or interest" (EMPL, 56). These he divides into three subtypes: "those from *interest,* from *principle,* and from *affection*" (EMPL, 59), the former two of which figure prominently in Hume's political thought and are the types of faction most germane to Hume's discussion of religion and politics.[46]

According to Hume, factions founded on interest are the most reasonable, excusable, and natural (EMPL, 59). Because societies are generally unequal, the various competing orders of society (e.g. nobles vs. commoners; rich vs. poor) "naturally follow a distinct interest." In other words, factions of interest, like their concomitant "opinions of interest," are based entirely on individuals' or groups' conceptions of self-interest. Given the "degree of selfishness implanted in human nature," it is nearly impossible to prevent the formation of factions of interest, prompting Hume to liken such a pursuit to that of other chimerical goals, such as "*perpetual motion*" or the "*grand elixir*" (EMPL, 59-60).It is presumably because factions of interest are so inevitable that Hume does not address in any depth how they might be prevented.

[46] Hume offers little explanation for what he means by "factions from affection," other than describing it as "an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power." At times, he even seems to deem it a kind of "imaginary interest" (EMPL, 63) that is a subtype of factions of principle (EMPL, 34), and uses it mostly to describe the Scottish Jacobites. See: F.J. McLynn, "Jacobitism and David Hume: The Ideological Backlash Foiled," *Hume Studies*, Vol.9, No. 2 (November, 1983),178.

Factions of principle, on the other hand, are much less natural than those of interest, and Hume even says that they are "known only to modern times" (EMPL, 60).[47] They are also much more intractable, for when a faction is formed "on a point of right or principle, there is no occasion, where men discover a greater obstinacy, and a more determined sense of justice and equity" (*EMPL*, 33).Moreover, Hume says that in modern times they are also much more prevalent than factions of interest because no party "can well support itself, without a philosophical or speculative system of principles" (EMPL, 465).

Although Hume recognizes the ability of factions to undermine government, he recognizes that some are inherent in certain constitutions of government, and so does not advocate attempting to eradicate them altogether.[48] Rather, he suggests that it is essential to minimize their influence in order to preserve the concurrence of opinions of right that are essential for the maintenance of stable government (EMPL, 65).Viewing religious sects as factions, Hume seeks likewise to minimize their destructive power, and proposes religious toleration and church establishment as a mean by which to do so. This point will be elaborated on in Part II.

In order to illustrate this conception of factions, one may consider Hume's description of the English constitution, which has factions of principle and interest imbedded in its very nature. Because England was a constitutional monarchy, Hume denominates these factions "those of

[47] For reasons that will be seen later in the discussion of religion, when Hume speaks of the "modern times" here, he is probably referring to the period from the fall of paganism in Western Europe to the present.

[48] For example, in a dictatorship, there would naturally be two factions: the dictator and everyone else. Likewise, in a constitutional monarchy, there are at least natural factions: that of the court, i.e. the royal family and its supporters, and the country, i.e. the parliament and its supporters. This point is expanded upon in the following paragraphs. See EMPL, 65. This is contrary to the assertions of some scholars that "Hume desired a homogenous state and wished that *all* factions be eliminated," as described in Mark Spencer, "Hume and Madison on Faction," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October, 2002), 874; see also Edmund Morgan, "Safety in Numbers: Madison, Hume, and the Tenth Federalist," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 49 (1986), 95-112.

COURT and COUNTRY." The former was composed of the supporters of the established monarchy and the latter were those who opposed it in favor of more republican principles, with men being attached to either party entirely "by interest or principle" (EMPL, 72).The king "ruled by a faction, and the lesser faction, all those on whom he conferred offices, sensible that they owed everything to his protection, were willing to support his power, though at the expense of justice and national privileges" (HE, 3.73-74). Thus opinions of interest helped to support the English government.

Yet there remained intractable factions of principle that undermined the opinions of right that are so crucial for government to maintain its authority to rule. So much instability was there in the absence of these opinions of right to buttress the established government thatHume predicted that the "strength and violence of each of these parties will much depend upon the particular administration," with "bad administrations" throwing "a great majority into the opposition" of the Country and "good administrations" reconciling many of the country faction to that of the Court (EMPL, 65). Indeed, his predictions were supported by history since this oscillation of interest based upon the quality of individual administrations, combined with the constant friction caused by the Court and Country factions' differing principles of government, had repeatedly led to civil wars throughout English history.[49]Ultimately, however, Hume says that although "the nation may fluctuate between them, the parties themselves will always subsist," at least as long as England is governed by its established government (EMPL, 65).

Not all factions, however, are so imbedded into the constitutions of government. Perhaps the most prominent types of factions are those of religion, which subvert opinions of both

[49] Hume details a number of cases of civil wars caused by faction through his *History of England*, such as that under Edward III (HE, 2.330-331) and the Wars of the Roses from 1455-1485, which were finally ended by Henry VII (HE, 3.72-74).

interest and principle (EMPL, 62). Religion resists the authority of the civil government, "whose power, being founded on opinion, can never subvert other opinions, equally rooted with that of his title to dominion" (EMPL, 40). In other words, religion represents a threat to the civil authority because it is founded upon the same opinions of interest and principle that sustain government. In order to understand Hume's conception of religious faction, the danger of which ultimately necessitates religious toleration and church establishment, one must first understand the fundamental attributes that he ascribes to religion. Ultimately, it is these basic characteristics that make religious factions so destructive and intractable, and therefore necessitate the mollifying treatments of toleration and church establishment that Hume advocates.

Religion

Although Hume deems modern religion to be factious and detrimental to civil authority, he does not believe that all religion has such virulent societal effects. In his *Natural History of Religion*, Hume divides religion into two basic types, polytheism and theism,[50]both of which are built upon irrational and superstitious principles (NHR, 154) and are prone to the "greatest absurdities and contradictions" (NHR,156).Hume says that "superstition" naturally prevailed everywhere in barbarous ages because of the widespread timidity that resulted from man's inability to understand or control the world around him (NHR, 144).Such weakness caused men to go on a desperate search for "those invisible powers, who dispose of their happiness and

[50] Polytheism is defined as the belief or worship of more than one god. Although the meaning of "theism" in its broadest sense is the belief that at least one deity exists, Hume uses the term in its more specific sense to refer to monotheistic doctrines. Notably, in his discussions of theism, Hume engages in extensive discussion of Christianity and its division between Protestantism and Catholicism. He does not, however, discuss other monotheistic religions, such as Judaism and Islam (whose followers he calls "mahometans;" see, for example, EMPL, 247), in any depth throughout his political works.

misery" (NHR, 142). Because of its importance as the primary tenet of all religion, the concept of superstition holds central importance in Hume's discussion of religion and politics.

As Martin Bell notes, "superstitions are, in this context, religious beliefs and practices, but ones which are corrupt and false."[51]In his formulation of superstition, Hume describes how man's imagination and search for causation in the world causes him to be "subject to certain unaccountable terrors and apprehensions," and how "in such a state of mind, infinite unknown evils are dreaded from unknown agents; and where real objects of terror are wanting, the soul, active to its own prejudice, and fostering its predominant inclination, finds imaginary ones, to whose power and malevolence it sets no limits." Man's resulting "weakness, fear, melancholy, [and] ignorance" cause him to pursue certain superstitious activities, such as religious ceremonies and observances, in order to rid himself of enemies that are "entirely invisible and unknown" (EMPL, 73-74; see also NHR, 144). The excessive influence of such superstition on a people's religious principles serves to exacerbate the most factious elements of religion. Moreover, it was this superstition that ultimately resulted in the first formations of religion and the initial proliferation of polytheism, which Hume asserts must necessarily have preceded theism (NHR, 135, 143).

According to Hume, polytheism originated from the hopes, fears, wishes, and apprehensions of men, who were uneasy about the abstract conception of objects and used their imagination to superimpose traits onto deities that they could understand. Consequently, under polytheism, gods are believed to have human characteristics, and so men personify them as idols in order "to clothe them in shape more suitable to [their] natural comprehension" (NHR,

[51] Martin Bell, "Hume on Superstition," in *Religion and Hume's Legacy*, ed. D.Z. Philips and Timothy Tessin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 153.

159).Therefore, Hume says, polytheistic adherents are essentially "pretended religionists" and "superstitious atheists, "for although they called the beings that they worshiped "gods," these deities were ultimately no better than themselves (NHR, 145).Moreover, in polytheists' conception of the gods there is "no first principle of mind or thought: No supreme government and administration: No divine contrivance or intention in the fabric of the world" (Ibid.), and in order to appease the gods, they perpetuated barbaric superstitious practices such as human sacrifices(NHR, 163).

While these polytheistic and idolatrous characteristics perhaps detract from polytheism's spiritual value in the eyes of theists, they are useful insofar as they prevented polytheistic faiths from producing faction and undermining societal order. This is because while polytheistic worship, embodied by the pagan religions of the ancients and modern "uncivilized" peoples, is founded entirely on such "vulgar" superstitious traditions, these superstitions do not cause its adherents to try to elevate their religions above others (NHR, 165). Instead, their idolatry "is attended with this evident advantage, that, by limiting the powers and functions of its deities, it naturally admits the gods of other sects and nations to a share of divinity, and renders all the various deities, as well as rites, ceremonies, or traditions, compatible with each other" (NHR, 160).Such is the indifference of polytheistic sects to the practices of other faiths that even "the utmost fierceness and antipathy which it meets in an opposite religion, is scarcely able to disgust it" (NHR, 162). Because such toleration is inherent in polytheism, polytheistic religions do not serve as politically-dilatory religious factions because they do not seek predomination over other authorities. However, another type of religion, i.e. theism, is not so tolerant.

Theism, which predominates in the modern world, was formed as an outgrowth of polytheism largely because men's fears and imagination led them to posit a "perfect being" and creator of the world (NHR, 154). With the ascendance of such a conception of God, there was a perceived contradiction between God as "the creator of heaven and earth" and his degradation "to the level with human creatures in his power and faculties" by polytheistic faiths (NHR, 157).Upon conceiving of a single, all-powerful God, men rejected the notion that he could admit of the same infirmities and moral failings as themselves (NHR, 157). Rather, men adulated and feared that deity, leading them to confine themselves to his worship alone. Therefore, like polytheism, theism is founded upon a foundation of the most irrational and "vulgar" superstitious principles (NHR, 154-155).

Notably, however, theism did not retain polytheism's toleration of dissenting opinions. Because it "supposes one sole deity, the perfect of reason and goodness," it banishes "everything frivolous, unreasonable, or inhuman [i.e. idolatry] from religious worship," and so "the worship of other deities is regarded as absurd and impious" (NHR, 160-161).Concomitantly, theistic faiths demand a "unity of faiths and ceremonies," and as such have a pretense for representing members of other faiths as "profane, and the objects of divine as well as human vengeance. As each sect is positive that its own faith and worship are entirely acceptable to the deity, and as no one can conceive that the same being should be pleased with different and opposite rites and principles, the several sects fall naturally into animosity, and mutually discharge on each other that sacred zeal and rancour, the most furious and implacable of all human passions" (Ibid.).Thus, "the intolerance of almost all religions, which have maintained the unity of God,

[i.e. theistic religions] is as remarkable as the contrary principle [i.e. toleration] of polytheists" (NHR, 162). Hume illustrates his point in the form of a brief fable:

> Two men travelling on the highway, the one east, the other west, can easily pass each other, if the way be broad enough: But two men, reasoning upon opposite principles of religion, cannot so easily pass, without shocking; though one should think, that the way were also, in that case, sufficiently broad, and that each might proceed, without interruption, in his own course…This principle, however frivolous it may appear, seems to have been the origin of all religious wars and divisions (EMPL, 60-61).

Similarly, if religious principles dictate, as in the case of most theistic religion, that the authority of one's God and his apostles supersedes that of one's civil government, then conflicts of authority between religion and government are almost inevitable. The influence of theistic religions on politics is greater and just as universal in modernity as that of polytheistic religions was in ancient times (NHR, 172), making such pervasive religious factions a ubiquitous challenge to civil authority. Throughout his political writings Hume addresses the case of the most prevalent theistic religion in both his own time and modernity, Christianity, whose sects have consistently served to undermine civil government and produced the worst kind of political factions.[52]

Religious Faction& Christianity

In discussing theistic religion, Hume describes it as "the source of the most inveterate factions in every government" (EMPL, 62) because its politically factious effects are not only

[52] It should be noted that although Hume addresses Christianity specifically, presumably his arguments apply to any religion that is, by nature, theistic. Consequently, while Hume does not address Islam and Judaism specifically, presumably much of Hume's discussion of Christianity would, to some extent, apply to those religions as well since they too are theistic. For example, like the theistic brand of religion that Hume describes, Islam and Judaism banned idolatry and worshiped the same type of jealous, intolerant God that Hume ascribes to the Christian faith (NHR, 160). That being said, some caution should be exercised in extending Hume's theories to other faiths because he himself asserts that "all general maxims in politics ought to be established with great caution (EMPL, 366).

pervasive and violent, but also multifaceted. That is, the zealous sects that it spawns are factions of both interest and principle. For this reason, its authority presents a serious challenge to that of civil government. According to Hume, this factious tendency of theistic religious zeal stems largely from the means by which such religions were founded, as Hume shows by presenting Christianity as an example.

When Christianity first arose, its self-interested teachers, like those of any theistic religion, were "obliged to form a system of speculative opinions; to divide, with some accuracy, their articles of faith;" and to buttress them with arguments and science so that they could more effectively promulgate and defend them (EMPL, 62). This ultimately aided religious leaders in furthering their own influence through "begetting a mutual hatred and antipathy among their deluded followers" (EMPL, 63), with the consequence that modern religious parties are "more furious and enraged than the most cruel factions that ever arose from interest and ambition" (Ibid.). Therefore, while Christianity first arose from factions of interested clergy members, it ultimately inspired factions of principle among its zealous followers: "Such divisions…on the part of the people, may justly be esteemed factions of *principle;* but, on the part of the priests, who are the prime movers, they are really factions of *interest*" (EMPL, 63).Thus, in contrast to the tolerant, faction-free polytheistic faiths of the ancients, modern theistic religious sects serve as factions of both interest and principle simultaneously.

Despite his apparent pessimism regarding the sustainability of maintaining civil government in light of the modern theistic paradigm, Hume does not end his discussion of Christianity here. Rather, he views Christianity as more politically complex than this and finds hope in the markedly divergent political effects of the two major branches of Christianity,

Catholicism and Protestantism, the former of which he describes as fundamentally "superstitious" in nature and the latter of which he deems essentially "enthusiastic." Although, as previously noted, Hume describes superstition as a necessary prerequisite for any religious belief at all, he emphasizes that Catholicism manifests superstition more acutely than Protestantism. Conversely, while Protestantism does contain a degree of superstition it also contains a much larger degree of enthusiasm. While Hume does view both superstition and enthusiasm as politically pernicious, he says that the effects of superstition are far worse (EMPL, 75). Superstition being more prevalent in Catholicism, Hume argues that the more enthusiastic Protestant faith poses less of a threat to the authority of government.

In his most concise statement of the role of superstition, Hume describes superstition as arising from "melancholy" and being favorable to priestly power (EMPL, 75).[53] That is, superstition makes people feel unworthy of approaching God themselves, and compels them to have recourse to priests as intermediaries between themselves and their deity. So although superstition is a "considerable ingredient" in all religions, even the most "enthusiastic," the greater a religion's superstition, "the higher is the authority of the priesthood," as in the case of Catholicism (EMPL, 75).

In contrast, enthusiasm does not arise from melancholy, but rather has more exultant origins. Hume cites "hope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance" as "the true sources of enthusiasm" (EMPL, 74).He says that "in such a state of mind, the imagination swells with great, but confused conceptions," and continues that "the inspired person comes to regard himself as a distinguished favorite of the divinity." Consequently, "human

[53] For Hume's most in-depth discussion of the roles of superstition and enthusiasm in Protestantism and Catholicism respectively, see his essay, *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm* (EMPL, 73-79).

reason, and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides: And the fanatic madman delivers himself over, blindly, and without reserve, to the supposed illapses of the spirit, and to inspiration from above" (Ibid.). Moreover, adherents of enthusiastic faiths are even more zealous in their beliefs than those of superstitious religions. However, unlike followers of superstitious faiths (e.g. Catholics), those of enthusiastic sects (e.g. Protestants) are free from "priestly bondage" (EMPL, 75-76), and as a result have some redeeming characteristics.

Although they are the catalyst of great religious fanaticism and produce "the most cruel disorders in human society" as they struggle to propagate their doctrines, enthusiastic faiths are in fact much less dangerous to government authority in the long term than superstitious ones. Their "fury is like that of thunder and tempest, which exhaust themselves in a little time, and leave the air more calm and serene than before" (EMPL, 77). This is largely a result of the absence of a central religious hierarchy with the power and authority to reinforce this initial religious zealotry over time in enthusiastic religions and the presence of such a body in superstitious ones. In other words, Protestant faiths do not have a zealous central governing body similar to that of the Catholic Church's Holy See in the Vatican.[54]The existence of this central governing religious hierarchy on the part of Catholicism, and the lack thereof on the part of Protestantism, is explained, according to Hume, by the influence of superstition and enthusiasm on each respective religion. As Hume puts it:

> When the first fire of enthusiasm is spent, men naturally, in all fanatical sects, sink into the greatest remissness and coolness in sacred matters; there being no body of men among them, endowed with sufficient authority, whose interest is concerned to support the religious spirit: No rites, no ceremonies, no holy observances, which may enter into the common train of life, and preserve the

[54] This is not to say that established church gives Protestant sects a central governing body of the Catholic type. As described above, because of its structure the religious hierarchy that government establishes acts to reduce religious zeal rather than reinforce it.

> sacred principles from oblivion. Superstition, on the contrary, steals in gradually and insensibly; renders men tame and submissive; is acceptable to the magistrate, and seems inoffensive to the people: Till at last the priest, having firmly established his authority, becomes the tyrant and disturber of human society, by his endless contentions, persecutions, and religious wars. How smoothly did the Romish church advance in her acquisition of power? But into what dismal convulsions did she throw all EUROPE, in order to maintain it? On the other hand, our sectaries [i.e. Protestants], who were formerly such dangerous bigots, are now become very free reasoners (EMPL, 77-78).

Because enthusiastic theistic, unlike superstitious ones, can have their religious zeal moderated over time, Hume views the former as possessing greater appeal as an established faith. Protestant sects still constitute factions, but factions that are less detrimental to government authority than those of Catholic sects because ultimately they do not have a self-interested religious hierarchy able to perpetuate self-serving religious factions of principle. Moreover, because the religious leaders would have an interest in preserving the authority of government, being entirely dependent on the government for their subsistence, they would not perpetuate doctrines detrimental to government authority.

On the other hand, Hume discusses at length the disadvantages of a Catholic establishment of religion, observing that "few ecclesiastical establishments have been fixed upon a worse foundation than that of the church of Rome, or have been attended with circumstances more hurtful to the peace and happiness of mankind" (HE, 3.136). Hume emphasizes that among the chief pitfalls of Catholicism is that its supreme head supersedes national boundaries and is "a foreign potentate, guided by interests, always different from those of the community, sometimes contrary to them" (Ibid.). He says that the Catholic establishments that dominated much of Medieval Europe were enemies of liberty, and under their purview "violent persecutions, or what was worse, a stupid and abject credulity, took place every where" (HE, 136-137).

Ultimately, Hume bases his condemnation of Catholicism on its favorability to priestly power and consequent long-term intolerance of opinions conducive to the subservience of religion to the civil authority. His support of Protestantism, on the other hand, is the result of its lack of priestly ties, which allows its fanatical intolerance to fade and allow for the administration of a civil authority. Protestantism does not have the central religious authority of Catholicism (i.e. the Holy See) to act as a faction of principle, and since in Catholicism it is the priests that cause factions of principle to emerge as they propagate intolerant doctrines, such factions of principle also do not emerge. Thus, Protestant factions are ultimately capable of moderation, making their sects less of a challenge to government's political authority.

Part II: Establishing Religion

Having established that Hume deems some religious sects to be politically preferable because they are less of a threat to the authority of the civil government than others, I will now discuss why Hume believes the institution of an established church to be superior to other methods for tempering the effects of religious factions. I will first consider persecution, which was a frequent tool of government directed toward this purpose for much of modern European history, as Hume describes in his *History of England*. I will then consider the argument for separation of church and state, a principle that is widely accepted in modernity, an influential argument for which is presented by Adam Smith. After expressing the reasons for Hume disagreement with both methods, I will present his argument for toleration and church establishment, which he believes would better minimize the political impact of more factious sects.

Perhaps the most prevalent method by which to secure the predominance of one faith over another has historically been, as Hume describes in his *History of England*, the persecution of members of dissenting faiths. However, as Hume's own *History* serves to illustrate, this method never works, and actually serves to worsen the dangers posed by religious factions. Another prominent method by which states have attempted to quell the dangers of religious faction, and perhaps the most popular one in the modern day, is that posited by Adam Smith, among others: complete, unalloyed religious liberty. However, according to Hume this too will not suffice. Rather, he argues, a Protestant, public establishment of religion, in conjunction with a type of "unlimited toleration" is necessary.

The second part of this thesis will describes the reasons why Hume regards persecution and complete religious liberty as inferior treatments for religious factions and instead favors toleration and public establishment of religion. The first section of Part 2 will present prominent arguments that have been made by Hume's contemporaries in support of persecution and religious liberty as a cure for religious faction, and Hume's response to them. The second section will describe the advantages that Hume instead ascribes to religious toleration, which helps to maintain the opinions of interest and principle that are essential for sustaining civil government. The final section will address the necessity of establishing the Protestant religion and politically handicapping Catholicism in order to provide for religious toleration.

Hume on Persecution

Although arguments in favor of government-sponsored religious persecution and the predomination of one set of religious values do not, perhaps, conform to the established liberal

paradigm of freedom of conscience, such arguments have had an enduring presence throughout history. They were not, for example, uncommon in Europe as theistic faiths became more prevalent, and even in the modern United States, there exist large segments of society that support the promotion of a single set of religious (mostly Judeo-Christian) values.[55] Thus, Hume devotes much of his political writings to addressing the question of persecution's utility in preventing religious faction, and though he ultimately does not believe it to be useful in this regard, the manner in which he disavows it helps to bring us closer to uncovering the optimal remedy for religious factions' challenge to government authority.

Hume's most concise formulation of the persecution argument and the pursuit of society-wide uniformity of religion appears in his *History of England* through the medium of Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester during the Protestant reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I (or "Bloody Mary").[56]Gardiner argues before Queen Mary and King Philip of Spain, both of whom hope to reinstitute Catholicism as the state religion, that Catholicism should be promoted throughout England by persecuting Protestants. At first glance, the version of Gardiner's argument that Hume presents appears to be an exercise in irrational religious zealotry, given that Gardiner appeals to religious principles rather than to political expediency when he advocates a policy of persecution on the grounds that it is "absurd, in opposition to

[55] According to a recent poll conducted by The Barna Group, 34% of American adults do not believe that "No one set of values should dominate the country," with higher percentages among Evangelicals and Born Again Christians and lower percentages among "Skeptics." Additionally, 23% of those surveyed believed that "traditional Judeo-Christian values should be given preference in the U.S.," with higher percentages among Evangelicals and Born Again Christians and lower percentages among "Skeptics." See: "Religious Freedom By Faith Segment," Barna Group, Omnipoll, January 18, 2013, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/601-most-americans-are-concerned-about-restrictions-in-religious-freedom#.UtRSb_SzOSo.

[56] The 300 or so Protestants executed during Mary's reign are today generally referred to as the "Marian Martyrs," and many of the worst travesties of this period are noted in John Foxes' *Book of Martyrs*. Notably, the Holy See also recognizes a similar number of Roman Catholic martyrs that were executed during the English Reformation and its aftermath, many of which occurred under the reign of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. For an examination of these atrocities in greater detail, see Henry Bowden, *Mementoes of the Martyrs and Confessors of England & Wales*, ed. Donald Attwater (London: Burns & Oates, 1962).

considerations of such unspeakable importance, to plead the temporal and frivolous interests of society" (*HE*, 3.37.434). However, when one considers his argument in conjunction with Hume's formulation of theism in his *Essays* and *Natural History of Religion*, one can see that Gardiner's position is less absurd than it at first appears.[57] In the absence of the ultimate treatment for religious faction that Hume later postulates, i.e. a Protestant religious establishment that can allow for religious toleration, such a state of persecution is more a natural outgrowth of theism's fundamental intolerance than a perversion of reason and theology, and Gardiner's comments reflect this.

Bishop Gardiner begins his discourse by asserting that liberty of conscience is, in principle, incompatible with the Christian faith because it implies an equality among all religions that obscures theological doctrines and renders "the church and magistrate incapable of distinguishing, with certainty, the dictates of Heaven from the mere fictions of human imagination." Gardiner even likens a ruler who allows the free transmission and propagation of all religious doctrines to a criminal who gives "permission for the vending of poison, under the shape of food, to all his subjects" (HE, 3.433). Notably, Gardiner comments on the inherent intolerance of Christian faiths, as does Hume in his other works, and the dangers that they pose to society if left unchecked. He says that "where sects arise, whose fundamental principle on all sides is to execrate, and abhor, and damn, and extirpate each other; what choice has the magistrate left but to take part, and by rendering one sect entirely prevalent, restore, at least for a time, the public tranquility…and an affected neutrality in the prince, or even a cool preference,

[57] That is not to say that Bishop Gardiner himself would necessarily have seen his own argument in such a light, especially since he was in fact a devoted Machiavellian, which Hume did not know as he recounted Gardiner's views. Moreover, although he nominally appeals to religion, he is in reality making an argument that conforms to the preferences of the ruling monarch at the time (Mary I), who hoped to reestablish the Catholic faith as the state religion. The significance of Gardiner's study of Machiavelli is addressed further in Frederick G. Whelan, *Hume and Machiavelli: Political Realism and Liberal Thought* (New York: Lexington Books, 2004), 270-272.

may serve only to encourage the hopes of all the sects, and keep alive their animosity" (HE, 3.434).

Gardiner's advice, in sum, is that in order to prevent religious conflict from erupting and enveloping society, it is necessary to utilize "the stake, the wheel, and the gibbet" in order to effect the "extirpation or banishment of all the heretics, inclined to give disturbance, and in the entire silence and submission of the rest" (Ibid.).That is not to say, however, that Gardiner believes all Protestants can be disposed of or converted by such methods since he himself admits that persecution is "better calculated to make hypocrites than converts." However, he hopes that through consistent reinforcement this hypocrisy will eventually rub off on the next generation, who, "ignorant of the dissimulation of their parents, may happily be educated in more orthodox tenets" (HE, 3.433).

As described in the previous section, Hume agrees with Bishop Gardiner regarding the inherent intolerance and jealousy of theistic religions (in this case Christianity). Yet at the same time he attributes Queen Mary's eventual usage of persecution not to the merits of such a policy, but rather to its conforming to the "cruel bigotry" of her religious principles. He says that Mary "was determined to let loose the laws in their full vigour against the reformed religion." Indeed in the horrific scenes that follow in the *History*, Hume makes clear how misguided such persecutions really were as "England was soon filled with scenes of horror, which have ever since rendered the catholic religion the object of general detestation, and which prove, that no human depravity can equal revenge and cruelty, covered with the mantle of religion" (HE, 3.435).

Aside from the general depravity that followed from persecuting Protestants, it is also notable that the policy proved completely ineffective for achieving political tranquility as "Gardiner, who had vainly expected, that a few examples would strike terror into the reformers, [found] the work daily multiply upon him" (HE, 3.437). Despite bringing "the methods of proceeding in England still nearer to the practice of the inquisition" (HE, 3.441) by enlisting the help of men of "brutal character," who committed horrible acts of violence in their efforts to persecute the populace into conversion, Gardiner's efforts came to naught.

As Hume describes through the medium of Cardinal Reginald Pole, with whom he juxtaposes Gardiner, the practice of persecution also simply make the threat posed by religion to government even worse. He calls persecution "the scandal of all religion" because it only encourages superstition and "exposes forever the people to all the abject terrors of superstition, and the magistrate to the endless encroachments of ecclesiastics" (HE, 3.431-432). Moreover, persecution serves to entrench further superstition because "it commonly proves ineffectual to the purpose intended; and serves only to make men more obstinate in their persuasion." That is, "the prospect of eternal rewards, when brought near, overpowers the dread of temporal punishments: The glory of martyrdom stimulates all the more furious zealots, especially the leaders and preachers" (HE, 3.433).

Thus, as Cardinal Pole suggests, persecution serves only to increase religious zealotry and the influence of the religious factions that are such a challenge to government authority. It succeeds only in creating martyrs and further inflaming religious tensions. As Hume describes, all religion is beholden to the same "zeal for speculative opinions," which is the cause of both martyrdom and persecution alike, and drives the violent fury of religious faction. Thus, "the

progress of new opinions, instead of being checked, was rather forwarded by these persecutions" (HE, 3.440). Hume recounts such instances of the failure of persecution to achieve its desired results throughout his *History of England*, and hopes that the historical record may serve to "warn zealous bigots, for ever to avoid such odious and such fruitless barbarity" (HE, 3.437).

Given the inability of persecution to aid in preventing religious factions' challenge to government authority, one may naturally inquire if there is an alternative model that may better allay the dangers of religious fervor, rather than amplify them. Adam Smith suggests in his *Wealth of Nations* that such a solution may be to separate church and state all together. While Smith believes that this arrangement would not extinguish the flame of religious zeal altogether, he says that it would instead cause sects to multiply to the extent that their individual influence is insignificant, thereby rendering their zeal innocuous. Smith concludes that by enhancing the power of one religion through providing government support, government actually hastens the development of political factions and conflict rather than forestalling it.

Smith's Case for Separation of Church and State & Hume's Response

Adam Smith's reflection on religion and politics in his *Wealth of Nations*, while much less extensive than that of Hume throughout his corpus, has the same purpose in mind: to identify a religio-political arrangement that would prevent the political faction and intra-societal conflict occasioned by religious controversy (WN, 791). Like Hume, Smith accepts that government cannot be sustained by force alone, and so must rely on interest and principle, from which they derive their authority (WN, 798). Likewise, he admits that religious zeal constitutes a threat to government's authority if not addressed properly (WN, 792).Unlike Hume, however,

Smith believes that religious zeal is rendered innocuous when no sect is made powerful enough to dominate its rivals and pose a serious threat to government.

As he constructs his argument for separation of church and state, Smith begins by discussing the two distinct ways in which religious leaders may earn their subsistence. That is, he says they can either be financially supported by government, or they can simply rely upon their followers for voluntary contributions. While he acknowledges that the clergy's religious zeal would be very great if they are required to get voluntary contributions, since they would thus have a vested interest in proselytizing, it is in fact the better option of the two. This is because absent government support, religious authority would be dispersed among hundreds, even thousands, of religious sects whose individual influence would consequently be very much reduced:

> The interested and active zeal of religious teachers can be dangerous and troublesome only where there is either but one sect tolerated in the society, or where the whole of a large society is divided into two or three great sects; the teachers of each acting by concert, and under a regular discipline and subordination. But that zeal must be altogether innocent where the society is divided into two or three hundred, or perhaps into as many thousand small sects, of which no one could be considerable enough to disturb the public tranquility (WN, 792-793).[58]

Given that a multiplicity of equally powerful sects renders religious zeal innocuous to political order, Smith argues that government's most effective way to address the threat of zealous religious sects is to deny all of them government support, thereby preventing any from gaining an advantage over its rivals (WN, 793). Perceiving enemies on all sides, and finding themselves alone with no hope of government support, the teachers of these smaller sects would find it mutually beneficial to moderate their doctrines and coexist peacefully. They would be

[58]Notably, Smith also viewed religious zeal as being detrimental to morality, which is why he advocates government promotion of the arts and sciences to counteract these effects (WN, 796).

"obliged to learn that candour and moderation which is so seldom to be found among the teachers of those great sects whose tenets, being supported by the civil magistrate, are held in veneration by almost all the inhabitants of extensive kingdoms and empires," and thus would limit the zealotry of their own doctrines (WN, 793). Therefore, Smith says, government should not concern itself with religion at all, except insofar as it keeps the peace among religions, just as it does for all its citizens. That is, government's policy in regard to religious sects should simply be to "hinder them from persecuting, abusing, or oppressing one another" (WN, 797).

On the other hand, if government were to support an established church and thus increase the influence of one particular sect, it would "never be secure, unless [it] has the means of influencing in a considerable degree the greater part of the teachers of that religion" (WN, 797). Contrary to Hume's assumption that by financially supporting the established clergy government would be able to greatly influence religious doctrines, Smith asserts that religious leaders would not be willing to cede their authority so easily:

> Their great objective is to maintain their authority with the people; and this authority depends upon the supposed certainty and importance of the whole doctrine which they inculcate, and upon the supposed necessity of adopting every part of it with the most implicit faith, in order to avoid eternal misery (WN, 797).

If government tries to control religion, questions even its most frivolous of its doctrines, or tries to protect religious dissenters from its wrath, the clergy would "employ all the terrors of religion in order to oblige the people to transfer their allegiance to some more orthodox and obedient prince" (Ibid.). Moreover, Smith says that by establishing a church government creates a problem that cannot be easily undone. This is because if government were to try to punish the clergy by depriving it of its financial support, it would "only render, by such persecution, both

them and their doctrine ten times more popular, and therefore ten times more troublesome and dangerous, than they had been before" (WN, 789). In this way, if government were to act on its implicit threat of withdrawing the financial support from an established clergy, it would have much the same effect on religious zeal as the religious persecution against which Hume himself argues so fervently. Moreover, Smith says that the authority of religion is naturally superior to that of the civil government because of the stygiophobic terrors that their doctrines can inspire. In other words, people are simply more scared of eternal damnation than they are of any government's temporal punishment:

> The authority of religion is superior to every other authority. The fears which it suggests conquer all other fears. When the authorised teachers of religion propagate through the great body of the people doctrines subversive of the authority of the sovereign, it is by violence only, or by the force of a standing army, that he can maintain his authority (WN, 797-798).

Thus, the government's authority "can seldom be sufficient to counterbalance the united authority of the clergy of the established church" (WN, 789), and by increasing the influence of a particular sect through erecting a religious establishment, government simply enables religious sectaries that were previously dispersed to act "as if they were under the direction of one man" to pursue their own interest, which is seldom in line with that of the civil government (WN, 797).

Smith's final critique of an established church is that even if it were to succeed in its goal of moderating the formerly zealous doctrines of the established religion, it would thereby eventually render the established clergy incapable of maintaining their religious clout among the people, who would no longer view their doctrines as sacrosanct. Consequently, the clergy would become incapable of defending themselves against the encroachment of the zealous religious doctrines of their rivals. This is especially likely since "in general every religious sect, when it

has enjoyed for a century or two the security of a legal establishment, has found itself incapable of making any vigorous defense against any new sect which chose to attack its doctrine or discipline" (WN, 789).

Ultimately, this could lead to a serious threat to peace and security as the government faces a choice between either allowing zealous sects to inculcate their doctrines at the expense of the established church, or answering the desperate calls of their clerics "to persecute, destroy, or drive out their adversaries, as disturbers of the peace" (Ibid.). Smith says that such a development is not unprecedented since it has occurred before in the case of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant establishment in England: "it was thus that the Roman catholic clergy called upon the civil magistrate to persecute the protestants; and the church of England, to persecute the dissenters (Ibid.).

While Smith presents a compelling case for government to maintain a strict separation of church and state, Hume's findings regarding the nature of religion and its effects on politics suggest that this would in fact be counterproductive.[59] As described in the above sections religion and faction, leaders of modern theistic religions seek to spread their authority, often at the expense of that of the civil government since the former's interests rarely coincide with those of the latter. Smith's claim that there would somehow be hundreds, or even thousands, of insignificant sects rather than a small number of powerful sects in the absence of government support implicitly assumes that there are not already religions in society that are particularly dominant. Moreover, he does not address precisely how such a process would work.

[59] Note: Hume does not directly respond to Smith, since the *Wealth of Nations* was published the same year as his own death. However, a potential response that Hume would give may be formulated based upon his body of political writings.

He also ignores the inherent advantages that some sects have over others, such as foreign support from the Pope in the case of Catholicism. Leaving a powerful faith such as this to its own devices would not necessarily guarantee a devolution of its authority and moderation of its zealotry. Moreover, being unthreatened by the clergy of the much less powerful sects that surround them, the clergy of such a faith would be left free to preach "the most violent abhorrence of all other sects" (HE, 3.136) and continue to proselytize in an effort to increase its own authority. By having an established church, government can have more control over which religious sects are allowed to grow in influence, and can promote those that better support their own authority instead of leaving them to fall prey to their rivals.

Further, Smith's assertion that religions would moderate their doctrines in the absence of government interference is suspect because he does not recognize the differences of enthusiasm and superstition between them. As described in Part I, while enthusiastic sects moderate themselves over time, superstitious sects do not. In fact, over time the latter tend to grow in terms of their zealotry, and would therefore come to dominate the former. If society were entirely composed of enthusiastic sects that did not pose so serious a threat to government authority, Smith's strategy would perhaps have merit. However, society is generally more heterogeneous than this, and there is often the presence of both enthusiastic and superstitious.

In regard to Smith's assertion that an established church causes the clergy to be unable to defend itself against the doctrines of newer, more zealous religious sects, Hume admits that new religions always have an advantage over established ones. This is because the novelty of a new sect "excites such a ferment, and is opposed and defended with such vehemence, that it always spreads faster, and multiplies its partizans with greater rapidity, than any established opinion,

recommended by the sanction of the laws and of antiquity" (EMPL 51). However, this is why Hume leaves the door open for government to nip new sects in the bud when he says that governments needs only to grant "an unlimited *toleration*, after sects have diffused themselves and are strongly rooted" (HE, 6.322). Moreover, the type of new, zealous sects that Smith views as such a threat to the established church are presumably the same kind of enthusiastic sects that Hume says government should co-opt through such an established church in the first place.

The real threat to the established clergy is rather from the same Superstitious (e.g. Catholic) sects that pose a problem even in the system of separation of church and state that Smith advocates. However, by offering political incentives to the people to adhere to the doctrines of the established church, as I will describe in further detail in the following section, even the challenge of superstitious religious sects can be overcome. Moreover, by decreasing the religious zeal of the people through preaching moderate, tolerating doctrines, the established church helps to weaken the authority of religion.

Therefore, although Hume recognizes the ineffectiveness of persecution for maintaining the authority of government in the face of the threat of religion, he does not believe that the opposite extreme, i.e. separation of church and state, would be any more useful for this purpose. His solution rather lies somewhere in between in the form of an established church. Through instituting an established church that promotes the desirable, enthusiastic sects rather than the more intractable superstitious ones, Hume believes that government can help to instill moderation into established religious doctrines and prevent religious faction from usurping government authority.

Toleration and Church Establishment

Hume belongs to a tradition of political thinkers who use the term religious toleration to signify "no more than forbearance and the permission given by the adherents of a dominant religion for other religions to exist, even though the latter are looked upon with disapproval as inferior, mistaken, or harmful."[60] In other words, for Hume, toleration implies only that there is a religious hierarchy in which the dominant religion does not persecute members of other sects. It does not, however, guarantee the equal treatment of all religious sects. In fact, the type of religious toleration that Hume most admires is that of the United Provinces, in which civil offices were restricted to members of a particular religion (HE, 6.500).

While Hume's definition of religious toleration is fairly minimalist insofar as it conveys no more than the guarantee for all religious sects to exist free from religious persecution, and does not necessarily imply any protection against political discrimination, he does believe that toleration should be "unlimited." That is, all sects should enjoy this toleration no matter the contents of their doctrines: "An unlimited *toleration*…is the only expedient, which can allay their fervour, and make the civil union acquire a superiority above religious distinctions" (HE, 6.322-323).[61]

The ultimate advantage that Hume attributes to toleration is its ability to moderate religious zeal. By allowing for religious toleration, religious sects are no longer required to fight for their own survival or perceive themselves as being surrounded by enemies. Their right to

[60] Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5. While Zagorin does not speak of Hume directly in the passage from which this quote is taken, Hume's formulation of toleration does conform to that professed by the group of thinkers of which he speaks.

[61] Although Hume describes an "unlimited toleration," it is not entirely clear what government's policy should be toward newly formed sects, since while he advocates an unlimited toleration only after "sects have diffused themselves and are strongly rooted" (HE, 6.322), he says nothing of sects that are newly formed, making it an open question as to whether they should be granted such unlimited toleration, or whether they should be treated in some alternative manner.

exist being guaranteed, their religious zeal becomes more moderate over time, reducing religion's concomitant intolerance toward rival religions.

> Open the door to toleration, mutual hatred relaxes among the sectaries; their attachment to their particular modes of religion decays; the common occupations and pleasures of life succeed to the acrimony of disputation; and the same man, who, in other circumstances, would have braved flames and tortures, is induced to change his sect from the smallest prospect of favour and advancement, or even from the frivolous hope of becoming more fashionable in his principles (HE, 3.433).

However, not all religions will become more moderate over time. As Hume describes in his discussion of superstition and enthusiasm, while enthusiastic sects can become more moderate as their zeal wears off, especially if the process is expedited by toleration, superstitious sects instead become more dangerous over time. As superstitious sects become more established, priestly power is enhanced and the clergy of such sects continues to propagate intolerant doctrines that make men more violent and immoderate (EMPL, 78). Superstitious sects like those of Catholicism are especially problematic because they are subservient to no authority other than that of the Pope. Therefore, no matter government's treatment of them, they will always be the enemy of government authority. For this reason, all governments can hope to do is minimize their influence.

While religious toleration is advantageous to society, instituting it is not straightforward. As described above, while the polytheistic religions of the ancients did not challenge government authority and coexisted easily with one another, the modern theistic sects that predominate in the modern world are by nature intolerant because they worship jealous gods. Theistic religion has always had a tendency toward "calling down the fatal vengeance of inquisitors" (EMPL, 163), and has led to all kinds of violence and mass killings. From the Spanish inquisition to the

Crusades, Hume details in his *History of England* theistic religion's struggle to propagate its influence at the expense of the authority of rival sects and the civil government alike. For this reason, Hume also views religious toleration as an active process that must proceed from the determined effort of civil magistrates (EMPL, 162), and it is only through such efforts that government can maintain the superiority of its authority over that of religion. Indeed, as Hume describes in his *History of England*, attempts to institute religious toleration under King James II would prove fruitless absent a legislative act of government (in this case Parliament) to ensure its perpetuity (HE, 6.497-498).

It is also necessary to address the interests of religious leaders, who ultimately communicate zealous religious doctrines to their followers. As described in Part I, religion is a faction of both interest and principle, the former being the self-interest that priests have in propagating their doctrines and the latter being the doctrines that they communicate to their adherents, which enhance their authority in the eyes of their followers. Toleration is unlikely to take hold so long as clerics continue to depend upon proselytizing and voluntary contributions for their subsistence. Under such a system, religious leaders have a material interest in promoting their sect as the only true religion and their God as the only true authority while denouncing other religions as blasphemers and all other sources of authority as pretenders. As Whelan notes, "'superstition, folly, and delusion' will be the result of competing ministers' attempts to outdo one another in their zeal, trying to attract new 'customers' by playing on their 'passions and credulity:'"[62] "And in the end, the civil magistrate will find, that he has dearly paid for his pretended frugality, in saving a fixed establishment for the priests" (HE, 3.136).

[62]Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty & Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), 169.

In order to lessen the zeal with which they propagate such intolerant doctrines, government must address the material interests of the clergy, and by paying them salaries, government can essentially "bribe their indolence" (HE, 3.136). Thus government can sap the zeal of their religious doctrines in three ways. The first is a self-moderation on the part of religious leaders. Because they have become an employee of the government, the clergy, like any employees, would not want to endanger their subsistence. By paying them a salary, government thereby gives them a stake in its own existence, since it is their patron. Therefore, they lose all interest in eroding the authority of government. Moreover, if government maintains a policy of strict toleration, preaching intolerant doctrines could likewise result in their dismissal.

The second way that paying salaries to the clergy is salutary is the effect that it has on their authority in the eyes of their followers. By increasing the wealth of the clergy, they would begin to act as rich men, which would destroy their sanctity of character in the eyes of the people. As Smith himself admits,

> A man of a large revenue, whatever may be his profession, thinks he ought to live like other men of large revenues, and to spend a great part of his time in festivity, in vanity, and in dissipation. But in a clergyman this train of life not only consumes the time which ought to be employed in the duties of his function, but in the eyes of the common people destroys almost entirely that sanctity of character which can alone enable him to perform those duties with proper weight and authority (WN, 814).

The third advantage derived from paying salaries to the clergy is that religious leaders no longer need to compete to attract followers by "rendering it superfluous for them to be farther active, than merely to prevent their flock from straying in quest of new pastures" (HE, 3.136).

While such indolence of the clergy is a source of worry for Smith, for Hume it is ideal. For Hume, if the clergy neglect their duties as preachers and religious teachers, it is so much the

better. He wants only for them to be sufficiently zealous as to prevent their followers from being attracted to other sources of religious fulfillment, but not so zealous as to render the authority of religion greater than that of government. In fact, Hume wants the clergy to have essentially no interest in increasing their own influence above that of government, stating that "this interested diligence of the clergy is what every wise legislator will study to prevent" (HE, 3.135). In this way, Hume even believes that religion can be made to serve a positive societal function by inculcating a moderate religion that is not only sterilized of its zealous intolerance, but that also binds large segments of the population and prevents them from being easily swayed by other, more factious religions:

> the most decent and advantageous composition, which [government] can make with the spiritual guides, is to bribe their indolence, by assigning stated salaries to their profession, and rendering it superfluous for them to be farther active, than merely to prevent their flock from straying in quest of new pastures. And in this manner ecclesiastical establishments, though commonly they arose at first from religious views, prove in the end advantageous to the political interests of society" (HE, 3.136).

That is not to say that government should materially support all religious leaders. As previously noted, some religions are inherently more factious and are unlikely to moderate their zeal. Specifically, this is the case with religions that are predominantly superstitious. If government were to promote such sects, it would succeed only in hastening its own decline. Therefore, in order to institute the practice of religious toleration that Hume believes is "the true secret for managing religious factions" (HE, 4.352), government must establish an established church in which those faiths capable of toleration predominate and those that are not have their power and influence minimized. Hume argues that "without the dependence of the clergy on the

civil magistrate…it is vain to think that any free government will ever have security or stability" (EMPL, 525).

In order for toleration to have its desired effect, an established church is essential because without it government is essentially removed from the religious sphere. As an example, Hume draws on the experience of England under the dominion of the Independents, an English Protestant religious sect led by Oliver Cromwell. He says that they were misguided to "leave every one, without any guidance of the magistrate, to embrace whatever sect, and to support whatever clergy, were most agreeable to him" (HE, 6.40). Although Hume praises the Commonwealth government of the Independents for the tolerating principles that they espoused (HE, 5.442), he says that without anything to moderate their zeal, the Independents "lost all morality" (HE, 5.492), and sought vengeance on their enemies (HE, 5.529). After infecting the military, such unbridled religious zeal caused the army to claim the right of remolding the whole government. Further, they sought to eliminate their enemies while overthrowing the established order and resettling the nation (HE, 5.501-503).

The case of the Independents also serves to demonstrate the danger of allowing government's authority to be eroded by zealous religion, culminating in its overthrow by that religious order. In the end, they simply replaced one despot in the English monarchy with another in Cromwell as the religious authority encroached greatly on that of the civil government (HE, 5.520-521). Thus the "dangerous principles, by which the church is totally severed from the state" serve only to erode government authority, and perhaps lead to bloody civil war (HE, 1.161). Rather, government should provide incentives both for religious leaders to preach tolerant doctrines and for the people to adhere to the maxims disseminated by those clergy in

government's employ. In the case of the clergy, this takes the form of a financial dependency on government, and in the case of the people it takes the form of political advantages that come with adhering to established religious doctrines.

The primary reason for providing clergy of suitable sects with government salaries is to establish a clear hierarchical relationship between church and state in which the former is clearly subordinate to the latter. That is, the civil authority must always maintain predominance above the ecclesiastical, and the best way to do this is to make the clergy dependent upon the government. As Will Jordan suggests, "financial dependence is one sure method of keeping the clergy subservient to civil authority."[63] Through such support, "the established clergy thus enjoys income that is not dependent on the voluntary contributions of church members."[64]

Hume suggests that the people can also be encouraged to change their religion by appealing to their interest (HE, 3.354). Therefore, in order to ensure that large segments of the population adhere to the doctrines of the established religion, Hume suggests that government should also offer political incentives for doing so and political disadvantages for dissenting. As in the case of the Dutch model that Hume praises, the English established church that Hume advocated did just this by requiring holders of civil office to be members of the established faith. Frederick Whelan describes these political incentives:

> Non-members of the established church suffer civil or professional disabilities; conversely, certain desirable positions in state and society are reserved for church members. In England this condition was embodied in the Test and Corporation Acts, which imposed a religious test as a condition of eligibility for holding any salaried office under the Crown or for membership in certain important corporate

[63] Will R. Jordan, "Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration of David Hume and Religious Establishment," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Fall 2002), 702.
[64]Frederick Whelan, "Church Establishments, Liberty & Competition in Religion," *Polity*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), 157.

> bodies, including the universities, chartered mercantile companies, and municipal government corporations.[65]

Thus, through providing for toleration by establishing a state religion, government may rob religion of its ability, or even its desire, to propagate its authority at the expense of the civil government. By bribing the indolence of the clergy, government can deprive the ecclesiastics of any incentive to increase their authority. In fact, they even gain a vested interest in disseminating tolerating doctrines of subservience to government's purview. Moreover, the people also gain an incentive to adhere to the moderate doctrines of the established clergy, as doing so serves as a vehicle for career advancement and political influence, and refraining from doing so serves only as a handicap. In this way, it is an established church that best serves the political utility of preventing religion from undermining government authority. Thus, it helps to safeguard the peace and security for which government was first instituted.

Conclusion

Although separation of church and state is prized by many modern peoples and institutions as an essential aspect of western liberal society, the political utility of such a principle is questionable. Through an analysis of Hume's political works, we find that Hume presents a compelling case for instead maintaining an established church if one begins with certain assumptions about the the desired end of such religio-political principles and the role of government. The force of Hume's argument is grounded in his political thought regarding the nature of government and religion.

[65]Ibid., 158.

Hume deems government's primary responsibility to be to provide for "the safety of the people" (EMPL, 489), a prerequisite for which is that government exists at all. Government's existence is predicated upon the authority that it possesses over its people, which itself is founded not upon force, but rather upon the perceived self-interest and opinions of those under government's administration. Factions, by Hume's definition, constitute a challenge to those opinions and perceptions that undergird government authority, and among the factions most detrimental to government's authority are religious sects.

In describing religion, Hume describes how it was not always so inimical to political order. He differentiates between the tolerant polytheistic religion of the ancients and the zealous theistic religions of modernity, deeming the latter a much greater threat to political order. However, among these theistic religions, Hume recognizes a difference between those that are mostly "superstitious" and those that are "enthusiastic." The religious fervor of enthusiastic religions, he says, dissipates over time given the proper conditions, whereas that of superstitious religions only become more pronounced as they inculcate their doctrines among the people and become increasingly more pervasive. Hume uses the example of Christianity to demonstrate the differences between such faiths, deeming Catholicism to be superstitious and Protestantism enthusiastic.

Finally, Hume proposes that only an established church can ensure the predominance of those religions that are less destructive of government authority, i.e. enthusiastic sects, over those that are more so, i.e. superstitious sects. Through such an institution, government can appeal to the interests of the clergy by "bribing their indolence" with government salaries, and thus making them dependent on government for their subsistence. Consequently, the opinions of the

people, whose principles are influenced by religious doctrines, may thereby be made conducive to the authority of the civil government as the established clergy preach more moderate doctrines. Government can also influence the people to adhere to the doctrines of the established faith by offering political advantages to those that follow them. Ultimately, such an arrangement is "the only expedient, which can allay [religious] fervour, and make the civil union acquire a superiority above religious distinctions" (HE, 6.322).

The implications of Hume's theory of church establishment is that some principles that are today considered essential components of modern liberal society are worthy of reexamination. While justifications for maintaining a system of separation of church and state appeal to man's "inherent dignity" and his natural, or human, rights, it is perhaps better consider the importance of this principle on the basis of its political utility, as Hume does. Of course, separation of church and state has had its defenders in this regard, such as Adam Smith who reasoned along similar assumptions to those of Hume yet drew the opposite conclusion regarding the ideal religio-political framework. However, as demonstrated above, Hume's established church proves more compelling in terms of its political utility than Smith's free marketplace of religions in light of the nature of government, faction, and religion that Hume describes throughout his corpus.

Although in his advocacy of religious establishment Hume appeals primarily to the history of England in and before the 17th century, religious challenges to political authority are not simply a phenomenon relegated to the annuls of the past, but rather a very real point of controversy in modern society. For this reason, it is essential to reconsider the norms and principles upon which our religio-political frameworks are constructed with the aim of

preserving the liberal societies and systems of government that are valued so highly in the modern day. Indeed, it is at least in part to the erection of an established church in England that Hume attributes the development and preservation of "if not the best system of government, at least the most entire system of liberty, that ever was known amongst mankind" (HE, 6.531). Similarly, through identifying the religio-political principles most politically useful to buttress modern liberal political systems, contemporary peoples may preserve for posterity if not the best system of government, then at least that which represents mankind's current progress toward such an ideal commonwealth.

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