During the seventeenth century, religious wars devastated the lands of Central Europe. In their aftermath, the population of German cities was decimated by one third. The consequences were even worse in the countryside, where two fifths of the inhabitants were lost. All told, among the principalities of the Holy Roman Empire, the population declined from 20 million to 16 million inhabitants. The 1631 siege of Magdeburg, even judging by the standards of the day, was an event unprecedented in its brutality. The civilian population was brutally massacred by marauding Catholic troops. When the smoke cleared, a mere 5,000 of the original 30,000 inhabitants had survived. The effects of the terrible conflagration were felt for years to come. As one Swabian family, writing a year before the Peace of Westphalia, observed: “They say the terrible war is now over. But there is still no sign of peace. Everywhere there is envy, hatred and greed; that’s what the war has taught us . . . We live like animals, eating bark and grass.”

In the words of one prominent historian, “Morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading, confused in its causes, devious in its course, futile in its result, [the Thirty Years’ War] was the outstanding example in European history of meaningless conflict.”

For an analogue to these events, one must have recourse to the Armageddon-like ideological wars of the twentieth century.

The seventeenth-century wars of religion provide a perfect example of a negative learning process. In their wake, the nations of Europe moved fitfully in the direction of toleration. England took the lead following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which, owing to James II’s Roman Catholic leanings, possessed a profound religious undercurrent.

It was John Locke who, more than anyone else, attempted to distill philosophical consequences from these developments in his 1689 “Letter Concerning Toleration.” Here, we have for the first time a detailed moral argument concerning the imperative of separating secular and salvific ends. As Locke observes:

I affirm that the magistrate’s power extends not to the establishing of any articles of faith, or form of worship, by the force of his laws. . . . Any one may employ as many exhortations and arguments as he pleases, towards the promoting of another man’s salvation. But all force and compulsion are to be forborne. Nothing is to be done imperiously. Nobody is obliged in that matter to yield obedience unto the admonitions or injunctions of another, further than he himself is persuaded. Every man in that has the supreme and absolute authority of judging for himself. And the reason is because nobody else is concerned in it.

In the just-cited passage, Locke underlines the fact that questions of faith are, in the first instance, matters of conscience. Thereby, Locke sought to distill the ethical and political consequences of the antinomian spirit that had catalyzed the Protestant Reformation: the idea that salvation is a question of “faith,” or inner conviction, rather than “works.” In this respect, Locke, following Luther, realized that to prescribe politically what men and women should or should not believe concerning the ends of salvation is a contradictio in adjecto. Bluntly put: matters of faith cannot be legislated.

Via this insight Locke, who in his Essay Concerning the Human Understanding had set forth the terms of philosophical empiricism, took an important step toward defining
the contours of public reason. He recognized that, if religious belief was a matter of faith rather than knowledge, its ultimate bases were intellectually undemonstrable. To infuse politics with questions of salvation could therefore only prove divisive. It could only be a recipe for sowing dissension among the ranks of the body politic by appealing to reasons or grounds that transcended the limitations of the finite human understanding.

When Immanuel Kant, writing nearly a century later, declared in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that he “had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith,” he was following in Locke’s footsteps. In Kant’s view, to sully knowledge with supersensible claims – with specious assertions that transcended the “bounds of sense” – would only encourage dogmatism and invite confusion.

II

It would seem that today, with the possible exception of the lands of the European Union, around the globe religion is making a dramatic comeback. In the Middle East, the resurgence of fundamentalist Islam in the aftermath of Arab nationalism’s decline is perhaps the most visible manifestation of this tendency. In the United States, evangelical Christianity has enjoyed a remarkable resurgence. As a voting bloc, this group played a pivotal role in ensuring George Bush’s reelection in November 2004. As a result of these surprising developments, sociologists who monitor these trends have called into question the “secularization” thesis predicting religion’s growing marginality. Instead, they have begun to speak boldly of the “desecularization of the world,” thereby standing the secularization thesis on its head.

To contrast today’s global religious revival with the nineteenth-century critique of religion – which at the time became something of an ideational obsession – demonstrates how significantly commonplace assumptions about spirituality and belief have changed.

The nineteenth century was, of course, simultaneously the age of history and the age of positivism. Few epochs in human history have been so antithetically disposed toward the claims of religious truth. This was, after all, the era of Ludwig Feuerbach, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Mikhail Bakunin. All of these thinkers perceived religion as little more than, to employ Marx’s pet phrase, socially engendered “false consciousness.” Religion was viewed as, in essence, an atavism of superstition – the vestige of an earlier era when men and women believed in spirits and demons. Social theorists and the educated classes agreed that extirpating religious consciousness was an indispensable prerequisite for human emancipation.

In many ways, Feuerbach’s critical insights concerning religion in *The Essence of Christianity* set the tone for what was to come. For the German philosopher, theism was a perversion of consciousness. The more stock mankind placed in the Beyond, the more it devalued itself – *tertium non datur*. Theism and humanism stood in a relationship of irreconcilable, mutual exclusivity. As Feuerbach explains: “By negating God, I negate the negation of man. In place of the illusory, fantastic, and heavenly position of man, which in real life necessarily becomes the negation of man, I posit the sensuous, real, and, therefore, political and social position of man. The question of the Being or non-Being of God is really the question of the Being or Non-Being of man.”

It seems that, even when nineteenth-century thinkers sought to embrace religion, their efforts backfired. In the age of historicism, religion, too, was subjected to the scrutiny of systematic historical study. Scholars reasoned that they might be able to validate religion’s claims by employing the day’s most advanced empirical methods. They
believed that one could thereby bolster religion’s authenticity. Successful historical studies of Jesus’ life were written by David Friedrich Strauss and Ernst Renan. In the form of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Judaism, too, gave itself over to the new empirical scholarly approach.

But once sacred themes are subjected to profane methods of investigation, they risk disenchantment. They rapidly lose their halo. In the words of Walter Benjamin, they become *de-auraticized*. They succumb to profanation and are reduced to the status of mere “facts among facts.” Instead of mutually reinforcing one another, it would seem that Reason and Revelation operate at cross purposes.

In earlier epochs, when religion’s claims enjoyed a manifest self-evidence, there was no need of philosophy of religion to provide it with an epistemological guarantee or warrant. In the modern world, conversely, religion’s situation has changed drastically. The “sacred canopy” religion once provided – i.e., religion qua theodicy, or a cushion against worldly suffering and the injustice of fate – has been shredded. In the age of science, insight has increasingly triumphed over the claims of faith. Religion no longer functions as a self-evident, all-encompassing worldview. Ultimately, belief succumbed to the division of social labor. Religion continues to occupy a significant cultural niche. Yet, increasingly, it has forfeited its former cosmological centrality. Faced with the irredeemable “value pluralism” of the modern world, religion has shrunk to the status of one standpoint among others. Max Weber consummately articulated the stakes at issue when, discussing modernity’s value pluralism, he spoke of an age of “warring gods and demons.”

Weber’s French counterpart, Emile Durkheim, viewed religiosity’s decline with mixed emotions. On the one hand, Durkheim, a methodological positivist and anti-clericalist, was wholly committed to the values of republicanism and individualism. As a convinced secularist and champion of social evolution, he denied that religion contained any intrinsic content or meaning. For Durkheim, like Freud, religious claims were nothing but a form of “illusion.” However, viewed sociologically or in functional terms – that is, as a collective mind-set or *mentalité* – they were a form of *socially necessary* illusion. According to Durkheim, religion was a form of societal self-projection: a mechanism via which society worshipped itself. As a form of communal self-adoration or collective narcissism, among pre-modern societies religion played an essential role in ensuring social cohesion: it bound members ideationally to the community and thereby represented an indispensable source of affective solidarity. Its rites, rituals, and symbology were an indispensable means of preserving social cohesion. Thus, in Durkheim’s view, spirits and demons ultimately only made sense in worldly terms.

Yet, late in life, Durkheim displayed some surprising ambivalences about the developmental trajectory of modern individualistic societies. He recognized that the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* had been achieved at a high social cost: a fateful diminution of social solidarity. For whereas religion provided the “social cement” – the cultural incentive “to belong” – among pre-modern societies, the modern world had found no reliable affective equivalent. Modern societies were threatened by a variety of centrifugal tendencies or “anomie”: exponential increases in divorce, criminality, suicide and violence.

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, which appeared a few years before his death in 1918, Durkheim openly lamented the fact that modern societies had found no
functional equivalent for religion. They suffer in extremis from a paucity of higher ideals. By allowing base motivations such as egocentrism and self-interest to subsume all other motivations and concerns, they ran the risk of extreme fragmentation. At times, Durkheim displayed a marked nostalgia for the dimension of collective enthusiasm that members of traditional societies felt in the presence of the sacred – a sentiment that had become virtually unknown among secularized societies of the modern type, in thrall to the prosaic idols of “progress” and the division of labor. As his nephew, Marcel Mauss, put it in L’Année sociologique: in premodern societies, “the dances performed, the songs and shows, the dramatic representations given between camps or partners, the objects made, used, decorated, polished, amassed and transmitted with affection, received with joy, given away in triumph, the feasts in which everyone participates -- all these. .are the source of aesthetic emotions as well as emotions aroused by interest.”

III

It is doubtful whether the representatives of classical sociology would embrace “the return of the sacred” in the contemporary world. Yet, as I have tried to show, nor would they be entirely surprised. Both Durkheim and Weber realized that, in traditional societies, religions of salvation provided indispensable stores of value and meaning, not the least of which being theodicy: a rationalization of life’s multifarious injustices and inequities. Modernity, conversely, presents its denizens with a thoroughly disenchanted cosmos. Weber once despairingly characterized this normatively impoverished landscape as an “iron cage.” Only with great difficulty can one today find functional equivalents for the profound existential consolation religion once provided.

Still, “the return of the sacred” presents inhabitants of the modern world with a dilemma – one that is embodied in the value conflict between sacred and profane. In many cases, religious fundamentalism’s resurgence poses a challenge to the ethos of toleration that emerged following the seventeenth century’s religious wars. In a more general sense, religious fundamentalism’s jeremiads against modernity’s failings – none of which should be underestimated – engender a broader cynicism about the shortcomings of a secular-democratic political culture.

No one described the nature of the contrasting valuations at issue better than Weber via the well-known contrast between an “ethic of responsibility” (Verantwortungsethik) and an “ethic of ultimate ends” (Gesinnungsethik) with which his essay on “Politics as a Vocation” concludes. The two “ethics” described by Weber operate at cross purposes. An ethic of “ultimate ends” brooks no compromises. The stakes it raises are those of salvation or redemption. (It should be remembered that forms of political Messianism – communism, fascism, integral nationalism – also purvey a Gesinnungsethik.) In comparison, worldly ends pale in significance. There can be no “talking down” someone who has seen the light of salvation and whose very being has been convulsed by its promises. Unlike the Verantwortungsethik, or ethic of responsibility, it is a standpoint that does not admit of half-measures. It remains impervious to the give and take of rational argumentation. Therein lie its intoxications, its sublimity – but also its intractability from the standpoint of the methods and ends of public reason.

At times, Weber uses the term “virtuoso” to describe the charismatic leadership abilities of the great religious prophets. Nevertheless, to those who march to a different
drummer, their claims may seem portentous and devoid of sense. Thus, often it can be difficult to discriminate between genuinely inspired leadership, on the one hand, and false prophets or demagogues, on the other. Moreover, conventional secular criteria seem patently unsuited to making such judgments.

Today we realize the potential for abuse when governments, assuming the role of a “tutelary state,” employ “Comprehensive Doctrines” – be they religious, moral, or philosophical in nature – in order to proclaim a monopoly on truth and virtue. The democratic antidote to such authoritarian practices and habitudes – from Kant to John Rawls – has been a commitment to the norms of “public reason.” Since, as we have seen, modernity is inescapably an age of value pluralism, when debating considerations of justice, we tacitly agree to put aside or bracket our “Comprehensive Doctrines,” or conceptions of “the Good,” for the sake of arriving at what one might call a lesser order, “political truth.”

Given the entwinement of religious dogmatism and political absolutism in early modern Europe, it is not difficult to fathom the rationale behind the affirmation of public reason by the most gifted representatives of the liberal political tradition. Toward the end of the First Critique, Kant discusses the cultivation of public reason as an indispensable political imperative for successful republican government:

Reason must in all its undertaking subject itself to criticism; should it limit freedom of criticism by any prohibitions, it must harm itself, drawing upon itself a damaging suspicion. Nothing is so important through its usefulness, nothing so sacred, that it may be exempted from the searching examination, which knows no respect for persons. Reason depends on this freedom for its very existence. For reason has no dictatorial authority; its verdict is always simply the agreement of free citizens, of whom each one must be permitted to express, without let or hindrance, his objections or even his veto.

The standpoint of public reason upholds the ideal of a society of free and equal persons. It is subtended by an ethical standpoint that holds that a life deprived of moral autonomy (autonomia = self-rule) is a life devoid of fulfillment. As such, it is diametrically opposed to the fundamental assumption of classical political theory – from Plato to Nietzsche to Leo Strauss – that the majority of men and women are incapable of self-rule and, hence, require the tutelary guardianship of a paternalistic elite, as in Plato’s doctrine of “Philosopher-Kings.” For Plato, not only did this doctrine pertain to persons whom the Greeks viewed as morally inferior – e.g., women, slaves, and barbarians (non-Greeks) – but also to persons of dissolute character who were incapable of allowing reason or nous to triumph over their own appetites.

The tenets of public reason mandate that political reasons must be publicly accessible. This standpoint is merely consistent with basic ideals of equal citizenship and deliberative democracy. Such conceptions hold that, despite the time constraints and pragmatic limitations of the decision-making process, political will-formation should be open, public, and inclusive. Trust in public reason signifies a fundamental confidence in the reasoning capacities of average citizens. It means that we endow them with the ability to weigh evidence and evaluate reasons before arriving at intelligent political positions and conclusions.

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Successful democratic polities have long realized that political reasoning capacities are not innate. Instead, they must be consciously cultivated, bred, and nurtured. For this reason, such polities place a premium on the value of democratic education. Democratic education must aim at education toward “autonomous citizenship”: the cultivation of mature and self-reliant citizens. Historically, the encouragement of autonomous citizenship has been the most effective bulwark against the seductions of political authoritarianism.

Democratic decision-making is always subject to limitations. Citizens cannot will any decisions they choose. Instead the scope of popular sovereignty is always bounded by basic rights: a catalogue of fundamental, inalienable liberties. The stipulations of self-limitation are one of the defining features of modern democracy as opposed to “the liberty of the ancients.” Under normal conditions, citizens of democratic polities may not be sold into slavery, nor may they be denied the prerogatives of habeus corpus or due process. In many respects, this fundamental respect for the status of the individual is a secularized legacy of the Christian belief in the intrinsic worthiness of all persons. This same religious inheritance reverberates in the traces of civil religion: our attempts to sanctify the body politic by appealing to the tenets of “deism.” In their founding documents, modern democracies frequently claim that the social contract has been divinely sanctioned. (The American Declaration of Independence, for example, speaks both of “Nature’s God” and proposes that men have been endowed “by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.”) Deist catchphrases such as “God-given” or “in God we trust” are a way of signaling that the social contract, as the guarantor of our freedom, possesses a peculiar sanctity.

The ethos of public reason remains suspicious of political claims that are explicitly couched in or justified by an all-encompassing Gesinnungsethik. The case of religion poses a special dilemma, insofar as, for a great many persons, religion remains the source of their most deeply held values and convictions. Why, it is argued, should one’s most highly prized beliefs be extruded from the sphere of political decision-making? The problem is that a perspective grounded in an ethic of “ultimate ends” or “belief” transcends the Kantian “bounds of sense”: it is neither publicly demonstrable nor may it be rendered transparent via the time-honored methods of empirical accounting or rational argumentation. Moreover, the standpoint of “ultimate ends” violates one of the norms that the political philosopher John Rawls has identified as integral to the discourse of public reason: the norm of reciprocity.

Reciprocity speaks to the dignity of our interlocutors or public partners-in-dialogue. It presupposes that the perspectives one advances stand a plausible chance of acceptance among members of the reasoning public who may not partake of my particular comprehensive standpoint. As such, reciprocity embodies one of the crucial values of deliberative democracy – civility: treating the other as intrinsically worthy of respect even though he or she may not share the same comprehensive worldview. As Rawls puts it: “The criterion of reciprocity requires that when those terms are proposed as the most reasonable terms of fair cooperation, those proposing them must also think it at least reasonable for others to accept them, as free and equal citizens, and not as dominated or manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position.” On this basis, Rawls differentiates between “reasonable” and “unreasonable” belief systems. Reasonable belief systems admit of compromise with other such doctrines or
standpoints with an eye toward achieving the ends of justice. Conversely, unreasonable belief systems violate norms of tolerance by refusing to heed the validity of competing views or claims. Fundamentalist religious creeds, theories of divine right of kingship, as well as modern dictatorships – both left and right – are examples of belief systems that refuse to honor the criterion of reciprocity.

For these reasons, to merit political consideration religious perspectives must be capable of being “translated” into publicly accessible, secular forms of reasoning, a qualification that Rawls refers to as the “proviso.” As he states in “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited”: we are allowed “to introduce into political discussion at any time our Comprehensive Doctrine, religious or nonreligious, provided that, in due course, we give properly public reasons to support the principles and policies our comprehensive doctrine is said to support.”

By the same token, in most cases democratic polities welcome religious conviction as a crucial fount of ethical and political inspiration. After all, the strong conception of justice proper to redemption religions – e.g., the theological idea of the “Last Judgment,” according to which the righteous shall be saved and the wicked shall perish – stands as an important precursor to our modern secular doctrines of equity and fairness. In a recent interview, Jürgen Habermas has glossed this legacy as follows: “For the normative self-understanding of modernity, Christianity has functioned as more than just a precursor or a catalyst. Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love.”

Moreover, viewed historically, religious conceptions have played an indispensable role in twentieth-century emancipatory social and political movements. Three examples lend emphatic support to this claim:

1. the American civil rights movement of the 1960s, led by the Reverend Martin Luther King, would have been unthinkable had it not been for the active participation of the Southern churches
2. the delegitimation of Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe was in many cases spearheaded by church-based resistance movements: the Catholic church in Poland and the Evangelical church in East Germany
3. the poignant 1986 American Catholic bishops’ Pastoral Letter, “Economic Justice for All,” a paradigmatic fusion of traditional Christian religious teachings about love and charity with a contemporary concern for the gross economic injustices of laissez-faire capitalism.

Nevertheless, religion’s influence on public life has been far from unequivocally positive. Its deleterious aspects must also be highlighted. For redemption religions, by virtue of their focus on salvation or justice in the Hereafter, have typically turned a deaf ear to worldly justice. Gospel maxims such as “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” and “Should thy enemy smite thee, turn the other cheek” well express the nature of the dilemma at issue. Because of the dichotomy endemic to redemption religions between worldly existence, discounted as a “vale of tears,” and the Hereafter, glorified as a state of “eternal bliss,” they frequently devalue justice in the here-and-now as a matter of subaltern concern. In post-Reformation Europe, the effects of this worldly/other-worldly split was reflected in (1) the Lutheran/Protestant unquestioning
obedience to secular authority and (2) the Pietistic credo of “Inwardness” (*Innerlichkeit*), with its antinomian stress on the “Inner Self” and its correlative indifference to considerations of worldly success. In many respects, the deformations of German political culture, formerly described in terms of the *Sonderweg* (special path) problem, are directly traceable to the aforementioned religious legacy. Historical experience has shown that, in times of political crisis, the doctrine of “Inwardness” translates into a dearth of *Zivilcourage*.

For these reasons, when all is said and done, the nineteenth-century critique of religion has retained some of its cogency and relevance. The problems at issue are endemic to the dialectic of religion and theodicy: the theological rationalization of injustice and social suffering. To be sure, in the West, where the value spheres of science, morality, and art have separated, religion must compete with other value orientations. Hence, it is no longer hegemonic. Correspondingly, theodicy’s seductions pose less of an immediate threat. In the developing world, conversely, where religion’s influence remains preponderant, the situation is different. The “opiate character” of religion, against which the nineteenth-century materialists vehemently polemicized, remains an ideological force – a primary source of socially engendered “false consciousness.”

Writing during the 1920s, Walter Benjamin, who knew something about theology’s temptations, formulated the doctrine of “profane illumination” in order to remedy theodicy’s enticements. He thereby sought to push the tension between theology and Enlightenment to the point of an immanent resolution. Benjamin firmly believed that the stars must be brought down to earth: in order to become meaningful, the epiphanies and visions formerly associated with religious experience must be alchemically transformed on a secular and immanent basis. His main point of reference was Surrealism, which had sought to poetically transfigure the detritus of everyday life into the “marvelous”: an experiential passport to transcendence that could be found within the proverbial “bounds of sense.” In Benjamin’s eyes, André Breton and his followers were proponents of an *immanent mysticism*: “No one before these visionaries and augurs [the Surrealists] perceived how destitution -- not only social but architectonic, the poverty of interiors, enslaved and enslaving objects -- can be suddenly transformed into *revolutionary nihilism*.22 Accordingly, Surrealism sought to produce illuminations that, unlike the religious variety, were *secular* and *exoteric*. By studying Benjamin’s work, we realize that, in the modern age, religion’s redemptory promises have suffused not only the claims of moral egalitarianism but also the *promesse de bonheur* of avant-garde art.

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Footnotes:


4. See the discussion of Locke in Rainer Forst, *Toleranz im Konflikt: Geschichte, Gehalt und Gegenwart eines umstrittenen Begriffs* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003), 276-311.


11. “Comprehensive doctrine” is the term used by John Rawls in *Political Liberalism* and other works to indicate a worldview that entails a determinate conception of “the good” or human excellence. According to Rawls, one of the virtues of political liberalism or “justice as fairness” is that it is (or so Rawls claims) agnostic about conceptions of the good. Instead, it merely aims at a conception of justice that allows for a plurality of conceptions of human excellence. I do not believe Rawls’ effort to separate political
liberalism from liberal moral doctrine, as articulated, for example, by Kant and Mill, is successful. For political liberalism implies a distinct conception of autonomous personhood. Rawls hesitates to embrace such associations insofar as he fears that his theory could thereby be construed as embracing a “comprehensive doctrine.” I don’t see any way around the problem.

12. At the same time, as a Kantian, Rawls insists that the political philosophy underlying his “theory of justice,” far from constituting a series of compromises, is highly principled.

13. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith (XXX), A 738, B 766. See the complementary remarks in his justly famous article, “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”. In this connection, one should note that in *A Theory of Justice* and other works, Rawls proposes a highly circumscribed definition of public reason. In Rawls’ view, it applies only to “constitutional essentials” and “basic liberties.” It does not pertain to the so-called “background culture” of civil society in general – the “public sphere” in Habermas’s definition – where a variety of other reasons apply. The idea of public reason advanced by Kant in the passage just cited is in its generality much closer to the Habermasian conception.


16. For a spirited debate on this question, see Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Conviction in Political Debate* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997).

17. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (With “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited”), (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 136-37. In an unpublished lecture, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” Habermas makes an analogous point: “The self-understanding of the constitutional state has developed within the framework of a contractualist tradition that relies on ‘natural reason,’ in other words solely on public arguments to which all persons are supposed to have equal access . . . If the principle of tolerance is to be above any suspicion of oppression in view of the limits of tolerance, then compelling reasons must be found for the definition of what can just about be tolerated and what cannot, reasons that all sides can equally accept.”
18. Ibid., 144. In *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, second paperback edition, 1996), li-lii. Rawls makes a similar point: “in due course public reasons, given by a reasonable political conception, [must be] presented sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines are introduced to support.” See also Charles Larmore’s comments on the problem of the role of comprehensive doctrines in public debate in *The Cambridge Companion* to Rawls, ed. S. Freeman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 386-87: “The mutual reassurance which comes from citizens disclosing to one another the comprehensive roots of their commitment to justice really has no place in the deliberations by which they decide what shall have the force of law. But it does have a point in the different sort of public debate I have called ‘open discussion.’”


20. For a good discussion of this document, see Jeremy Waldron, “Religious Contributions to Public Deliberation,” *San Diego Law Review* 817 (Fall 1993). The document recommends, “the creation of an order that guarantees the minimum conditions of human dignity in the economic sphere for every person.” It urges the nation “to make a major new commitment to achieve full employment . . . with expansion of job-training and apprenticeship programs in the private sector . . .” It endorses “a thorough reform of the nation’s welfare and income support programs,” including an increase of AFDIC aid (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) so that the level of assistance at least reaches the poverty level.”
