

# **A Thomistic and Tocquevillean View of Strauss on Reason and Revelation**

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## A Thomistic and Tocquevillean View of Strauss on Reason and Revelation

There is little quarrel among scholars of Leo Strauss's philosophy that the question of reason and revelation, which he addresses as "the theologico-political problem" or the relationship between Jerusalem and Athens, is a central theme of his work. Some claim it is the central one, citing a remark Strauss made late in his career.<sup>1</sup> [1] It is striking that Strauss lectured and published on this question throughout his career, and not only in works that obviously addressed this theme — *Philosophy and Law* on Maimonides, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, "Progress or Return?" "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy," "Why We Remain Jews," "On the Interpretation of Genesis," his introduction to Maimonides's *The Guide of the Perplexed* — but also in works ostensibly on the history of Western political philosophy *per se*, such as *Thoughts on Machiavelli* and *Natural Right and History*. Fr. Schall rightly credits Strauss, along with Eric Voeglin, as being "the primary reason" in the modern academy and in political philosophy why the question of reason and revelation again has been

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1 [1] To select only books devoted to this theme, a sample includes *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voeglin, 1934-1964*, tr. and ed. by Peter Emberly and Barry Cooper (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Susan Orr, *Jerusalem and Athens: Reason and Revelation in the Works of Leo Strauss* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1995); Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (State University of New York Press, 1997); Kim A. Sorensen, *Discourses on Strauss: Revelation and Reason in Leo Strauss and His Critical Study of Machiavelli* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, translated by Marcus Brainard (Cambridge University Press, 2006 [German, 2003]); and Daniel Tanguay, *Leo Strauss: An Intellectual Biography*, translated by Christopher Nadon (Yale University Press, 2007 [French, 2003]).

taken seriously.<sup>2</sup> [2] There is less or little consensus, however, about what Strauss's own philosophic views were in response to a question that he claimed to be rediscovering rather than inventing. Moreover, there is much scholarly debate about Strauss's analysis of particular philosophers in the Western tradition regarding this question. Among the more controversial of these is his exegesis of and comments on Thomas Aquinas, and perhaps especially so his criticism of Aquinas in the central section of *Natural Right and History*, a work held by many scholars to be a central statement of Strauss's own political philosophy of Socratic skepticism or zeteticism or, as some refer to it, classical political rationalism. Further investigation of Strauss's account of Aquinas may illuminate and raise questions about Strauss's own views of reason and revelation, and hopefully contribute to some further understanding about the issue itself, given the significant stature of each philosopher.

To tackle the views of both Strauss and Thomas on the relationship of reason and revelation is more than enough for one essay; beyond the height and difficulty of the peaks to be scaled there is the serious scholarship that has analyzed and compared the two philosophers, which also deserves review.<sup>3</sup> [3] Nonetheless, having already rushed in where serious scholars fear to tread I will suggest further that these two peaks and the relation between them might be

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2 [2] James V. Schall, S.J., "A Latitude for Statesmanship? Strauss on St. Thomas," in *Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker*, ed. Kenneth L. Deutsch and Walter Nicgorski (Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 211-230, 213.

3 [3] Beyond the works cited in note 1 *supra* I have profited from, among others, Schall, "A Latitude for Statesmanship?"; Ernest L. Fortin, "Between Lines: Was Leo Strauss A Secret Enemy of the Truth?," *Crisis* 7 (December 1989), 19-26; Thomas Prufer, "Juxtapositions: Aristotle, Aquinas, Strauss," in *Leo Strauss's Thought: Toward A Critical Engagement*, ed. Alan Udoff (Boulder: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1991), 115-121; and James R. Stoner, Jr., "The Catholic Moment in the Political Philosophy of Leo Strauss," 2007, unpublished paper for Eric Voeglin Society panel.

better understood by standing on a third, namely, the reflections on this same issue by Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. I can only be suggestive rather than exhaustive, but since Strauss himself is so capacious in his discussion of reason and revelation, this synthetic approach seems necessary for discerning and assessing his thought. To wit, in the crucial passages in *Natural Right and History* where Strauss criticizes Aquinas for subordinating reason and classical natural right to revelation and thus setting up the modern reaction which repudiated classical natural right altogether, Strauss turns to the example of a third philosopher, Montesquieu, to clarify the issue between Aquinas and himself:

A work like Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws* is misunderstood if one disregards the fact that it is directed against the Thomistic view of natural right. Montesquieu tried to recover for statesmanship a latitude which had been considerably restricted by the Thomistic teaching. What Montesquieu's private thoughts were will always remain controversial. But it is safe to say that what he explicitly teaches, as a student of politics and as political sound and right, is nearer in spirit to the classics than to Thomas.<sup>4</sup> [4]

It is arguably more controversial or less safe than Strauss thought to claim that Montesquieu repudiates or seeks so great a distance from Christianity as to have more in common with Plato or Aristotle than Thomas, although many of Strauss's students have developed this view in their scholarship on Montesquieu. Having promised to briefly address Strauss and Thomas, however, the complexities of *The Spirit of Laws* cannot begin to be

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<sup>4</sup> [4] Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 164.

addressed here.<sup>5</sup> [5] Still, it is plausible to argue that, given Montesquieu's great influence on both the American framers and on Tocqueville, it is relatively easier to discern a Montesquieuan version of the balance between reason and revelation in Tocqueville's account of liberty and religion. Moreover, Tocqueville's Montesquieuan, moderate conception of revelation and reason and of an arrangement to address the theologico-political problem points toward greater closeness to Thomas than to Strauss and his conception of Plato and Aristotle. This is not to say that Montesquieu or Tocqueville are Thomistic thinkers. The claim of this essay is less bold (but bold enough), that the clearly rational or philosophic view of Tocqueville, who lost his Catholic faith before writing *Democracy in America* and never recovered it, adopts a view of the accommodation of reason and revelation than in its substance approximates Thomas's view, properly understood.

Schall correctly notes several problems with Strauss's reading of Aquinas on the issue of latitude for statesmanship, and my further development of those arguments seeks to sharpen the concern about Strauss's conception of philosophy. Strauss repudiates not just Thomas but seemingly any philosophical alternative to his own stance on reason and revelation as not just rationally mistaken but as unphilosophic, or as betraying and confusing the life activity of philosophy. The final section argues that because Strauss cites Montesquieu in support of his view of Thomas and natural law, the counter-example of Tocqueville is helpful for providing the basic themes of Montesquieu's approach to religion and politics but in a more easily accessible

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<sup>5</sup> [5] I have addressed some themes of Montesquieu's philosophy in *The Cloaking of Power: Montesquieu, Blackstone, and the Rise of Judicial Activism* (University of Chicago, 2003), "The Machiavellian Spirit of Montesquieu's Liberal Republic," in Paul Rahe, ed., *Machiavelli's Liberal Republican Legacy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 121-42, and "Montesquieu's Complex Natural Right and Moderate Liberalism: The Roots of American Moderation," *Polity* 36 (January 2004) 227-50.

mode. Tocqueville is widely read today for his defense of a proper balance between the spirit of liberty (to include philosophy) and the spirit of religion, and his stance raises significant questions about Strauss's view of both Aquinas and Montesquieu on these issues.

This is, admittedly, an unusual approach to addressing Strauss and Thomas on reason and revelation, and two brief points about Montesquieu and Tocqueville provide a preliminary justification. First, Montesquieu's approach to reason and revelation, and to politics and religion, surely is as complex as every other dimension of his philosophy, but it is interesting to note that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Dominican priest Lacordaire viewed it quite differently from the way most Straussian scholarship does, declaring the *Spirit of Laws* "the most beautiful defense of Christianity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>6</sup> [6] Further, Lacordaire's view makes sense of, or accords with, Montesquieu's own summation of his work, that the main theme and watchword of his political philosophy is moderation, finding the right point of balance between two extremes, whether of ideas or action (*Spirit*, bk. 29, ch. 1). The philosophical principle or approach of moderation contrasts with the dominant philosophic spirit of Strauss and his school, which tends to emphasize "either/or" distinctions and dualistic quarrels, rather than "both/and" conceptions and syntheses. This may explain why much Straussian scholarship on Montesquieu does not see

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6 [6] Cited in Rebecca E. Kingston, "Montesquieu on Religion and the Question of Toleration," in *Montesquieu's Science of Politics: Essays on The Spirit of Laws*, ed. Carrithers, Mosher, and Rahe (Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 375-408 at 399 n. 4. Straussian scholarship that discerns a disguised atheism and anti-religious spirit in Montesquieu includes Robert Bartlett, "On the Politics of Faith and Reason: The Project of Enlightenment in Pierre Bayle and Montesquieu," *Journal of Politics* 63 (2001): 1-28, and Diana Schaub, "Of Believers and Barbarians: Montesquieu's Enlightened Toleration" in *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*, ed. Levine (Lexington Books, 2001) 225-47, both of which draw upon the scholarship of Thomas Pangle, including *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1973).

moderation but rather sees a disguised yet intransigent modern and a religious skeptic. The larger point for consideration is that a philosophy of moderation, even in Montesquieu's version of balancing liberal and modern elements with classical and medieval ones, traces more clearly to Aristotle and Thomas than to Plato, Machiavelli, or Spinoza ♦ the latter being the main themes and foci of Strauss's philosophy.

This first preliminary point raises in turn the question of a challenge to Strauss's philosophy posed by Tocqueville's views on reason and revelation. This challenge arises in part from Tocqueville's debt to Montesquieu's spirit of moderation and synthesis but also from the fact that Tocqueville writes at the dawn of modern liberal democracy and sees a crisis of modern reason and of modern liberal democracy in a way that Strauss and many of his leading students appreciate. Tocqueville also sees that the question of reason and revelation and more broadly the question of religion and politics are central components of both of these crises. If there is such agreement between Strauss and Tocqueville then it is striking that Tocqueville does not find, as Strauss does, rational warrant for the complete incompatibility of reason and revelation such that they must always be left separate and opposed, each by definition doubting the other and necessarily pursuing only its own path. Tocqueville's synthetic mind is more like Montesquieu and Thomas in arguing that while the two are distinct modes of knowing and activity, an accommodation and proper balance between revelation and reason, religion and liberty, is central to the best available arrangement for coping with the modern crises in both thinking and in modern democratic politics.<sup>7</sup> [7]

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7 [7] For this general approach to Tocqueville ♦ although not for my precise formulation or conclusions ♦ I draw upon, among other recent scholarship, Pierre Manent, "Democracy and Religion, ♦ in *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, tr. Waggoner (Rowman & Littlefield,

## **Strauss, Metaphysics, and the Self-Sufficiency of Reason**

In *Natural Right and History* Strauss argues that Thomas aims to synthesize or harmonize reason and revelation and in the process subsumes the former in the latter, in a doctrinal or dogmatic conception of natural law. Moreover, we late moderns can discern reasonable evidence that this dominance of reason by revelation upsets the natural order of the whole given the reaction Thomism brought forth. For Strauss this reaction defines modernity itself, or at least its foundation. Modernity may have gone too far, throwing out the baby with the bath water by so radically emancipating reason from revelation as to repudiate metaphysics, eternity, and questions of ultimate meaning and of any limits to reason. Strauss argues for himself that a middle ground is more sober, by reviving the Socratic position of classical political philosophy, as well as the view of some medieval Islamic and Jewish minds, that neither reason nor revelation can refute or dominate the other but that the two must learn to respectfully interrogate the other. Moreover, a renewed understanding of classical philosophy can provide a moderate conception of natural right, one that largely governs human affairs, but which leaves latitude for statesmen to deviate from any general rules of right if necessity arises ♦ especially the extreme necessity that threatens the survival of a free political order that fosters reason.<sup>8</sup> [8]

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1996), 83-107; Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. and Delba Winthrop, "Tocqueville's New Political Science ♦ and Pierre Manent, "Tocqueville, Political Philosopher, ♦ both in *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, ed. Cheryl Welch (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81-107, 108 - 120.

<sup>8</sup> [8] *Natural Right and History*, 157-64.



Strauss claimed that, because of the extremism of the reaction against Thomism begotten by Thomism itself, he was rediscovering or resuscitating the question of reason and revelation, as well as of natural right, for a late modern philosophic era which had forgotten these issues and their importance. Philosophy or reason had forgotten the basic modes and dimensions of this question and therewith its importance for politics and political philosophy or all humanistic study. Strauss also argued, secondarily, that many schools of modern Jewish and Christian thought, the two traditions to which he referred most regularly, also had forgotten its modes thus its importance for faith, at least Biblical faith and theology. More particularly, Strauss argued that even if modern Western philosophy and social science, in its later stages, still referred to some decayed version of the theologico-political question, such as the conflict between religion and science or the separation of church and state, philosophy had forgotten that this issue was a question, a permanent problem that could not be definitively solved either by unassisted human reason working through philosophy or by any of several claimants to revelation from a divine source working through theology.

One odd quality of Strauss's severe critique of Thomas as not genuinely a philosopher ♦ given his stances on the fundamental questions of natural right and reason and revelation ♦ is that earlier in *Natural Right and History* Strauss cites Thomas several times as a valid instance of pre-modern philosophy on metaphysics, ethics, and natural right. He also cites Thomists as among the few moderns who take seriously these otherwise forgotten questions of eternity, ultimate meaning, and natural right. This echoes the striking respect for Thomas as a philosopher, or at least for his stance on the importance of philosophy, that Strauss offered in an earlier lecture, as Schall notes. "Nothing is more revealing ♦ argues Strauss in this 1944 lecture "than the difference between the beginnings of these two most representative works ♦ of

medieval philosophy, the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas and Maimonides' *The Guide of the Perplexed*:

The first article of Thomas's great *Summa* deals with the question as to whether theology is necessary apart from, and in addition to, the philosophic disciplines: Thomas defends theology before the tribunal of philosophy. Maimonides' *Guide*, on the other hand, is especially devoted to the science of the law . . . it opens as a defense of philosophy before the tribunal of traditional Jewish science . . . 9 [9]

However, Strauss's more fundamental point is that the obvious rigor of the Thomistic natural law teaching is alien to earlier conceptions of philosophy and suggests an influence from beyond philosophy. This strictness is evident in Thomism's emphasis on moral absolutes that restrict the latitude of political action, and in its equivalence of moral virtue and intellectual virtue which threatens the independence of philosophy as a way of life and instead emphasizes doctrine. Thus in a lecture on the choice of "Progress or Return?" for modernity and modern philosophy, delivered after *Natural Right and History*, Strauss argues that "philosophy was certainly in the Christian Middle Ages deprived of its character as a way of life and became a very important compartment of the quest for the right doctrines of "human self-realization. Philosophy properly understood, however, must have complete independence for doubt, and therefore theology can only be a rival, not a companion:

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9 [9] Strauss, "How to Begin to Study Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss: Essays and Lectures by Leo Strauss*, ed. Thomas Pangle (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 207-226 at 222.

No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian, nor, for that matter, some possibility which transcends the conflict between philosophy and theology, or pretends to be a synthesis of both. But every one of us can be and ought to be either one or the other, the philosopher open to the challenge of theology or the theologian open to the challenge of philosophy.<sup>10</sup> [10]

It is Strauss's conception of metaphysics and of philosophy that defines Thomas as only appearing to be philosophic while in fact distorting and radicalizing philosophy in the quest to make it compatible with theology. Following Plato Strauss argues that philosophy is zetetic or ever-searching, emphasizing permanent problems or questions rather than doctrines. This is Socratic skepticism rather than full-blown skepticism, since we can know enough to take seriously the search for a fuller understanding of the ideas of justice and natural right that we grasp in a dimmer mode.<sup>11</sup> [11] The Thomistic certainty about moral absolutes stems, he thinks, from an erroneous metaphysics that finds too much certainty in the fabric of nature, and with it too much moral certainty. The ultimate root of both of these modes of certainty must be faith about creation of nature by a divine mind or agent, a belief not attainable by unassisted philosophy.<sup>12</sup> [12]

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<sup>10</sup> [10] Strauss, "Progress or Return?," in *Rebirth of Classical Rationalism*, 227-270 at 259-60, 270.

<sup>11</sup> [11] See Strauss, "Restatement," in *On Tyranny, Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, ed. Gourevitch and Roth (University of Chicago Press, 1991), 196-202, 212, and "What is Political Philosophy?," in *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1959), 38-39, 10-11.

<sup>12</sup> [12] *Natural Right and History*, 122-27, 144-46; see Tanguay, "The Leap of Faith and the Zetetic Defense of the Philosophic Life," in *Strauss: An Intellectual Biography*, 177-192; also 193-215, on what can be called Strauss's weak metaphysics of a mere awareness of a whole beyond one's soul and of a teleology of natural inquisitiveness about the whole.

Thomistic philosophy can defend its metaphysics by responding that it is odd for Strauss's zeteticism to be so confident of its knowledge of the whole that it can rule out a robust analysis of the order or design evident in nature, and analysis of that to which that order may point. Thomas offers this kind of inductive argument for a divine mind, as ultimate cause of the order we see in the world, in his account early in the *Summa Theologiae* of the "five ways" to know that God, or the being "to which everyone gives the name God," exists.<sup>13</sup> [13] These arguments or proofs fall within the first twenty two questions of the *Summa*, about God as known by unassisted human reason rather than by revelation, as Thomas clearly states a crucial point for understanding Thomas as he understood himself.<sup>14</sup> [14] Thomas Prufer responds to Strauss's criticism by noting that there is nothing inherent in this kind of natural theology which compels doubt about Thomas's delineation between revealed and natural theology, or which can readily discern a necessary and illicit polluting of rational arguments by religious faith in the Thomistic investigations. Still, Prufer takes seriously Strauss's concerns and employs, in his epigrammatic or severely distilled analysis, the terms that Strauss used in his claim to revive classical philosophy: "Taking creation to be true is for philosophy not a repudiation of the primacy of nature over convention; much less is it a fall back from the difference between nature and convention into 'the ways' prior to the differentiation of nature and convention." Prufer argues that Aristotle's philosophy pointed toward a strong metaphysics that discerned by induction a first cause of the order and chains of causation evident in the world. Moreover, given Aristotle's queries about whether the god perhaps is not alone or, alternately,

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13 [13] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 2, a. 3, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Pegis (Random House, 1945), vol. 1, 21-24.

14 [14] See *Summa Theologiae* Ia q. 12 a. 12, also Ia q. 12 a. 13.

cares for what he causes, it is reasonable to ask whether the god might be distinct from the whole that he causes by being radically more perfect than it while also caring for it. While these Thomistic developments of Aristotle's metaphysics were prompted by the belief in creation taught by revelation, it is legitimate for reason to investigate any plausible answers proposed for unsolved puzzles.<sup>15</sup> [15]

To Prufer's defense we can add that Thomas defines a proper natural theology as employing the negative path of inquiry, which discerns by induction from the evident world what the first cause or God cannot be, and therefore indirectly both that and (to a limited degree) what God is.<sup>16</sup> [16] Given the evident limits of reason and the heights to be scaled in such a metaphysical inquiry, this indirect approach is more defensible and philosophically rigorous than alternatives such as the ontological arguments, which suggest that the existence of God is self-evident.<sup>17</sup> [17] The latter can be fairly criticized for presuming in the premises of the argument the conclusion sought (a radically perfect divinity). The more cautious approach is to discern by induction what cannot be true about the known world and the ultimate cause of it given what we clearly know about our world, for example that it cannot be true that no such ultimate cause exists. While Prufer does not state all of these premises of Thomas's natural theology, these

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<sup>15</sup> [15] Prufer, "Juxtapositions: Aristotle, Aquinas, Strauss," 115-121. One can add that Thomas held a peculiar view in the medieval disputes about creation and eternity that while reason could prove that a divine being had created the world as first cause, reason could not prove that God had done this in time, thus, that reason must be open to the possibility that the material world could be eternal (as Aristotle held) but still created, even if Christian faith held that the world was both created and had a beginning in time. See *Summa Theologiae* Ia q. 46 a. 2.

<sup>16</sup> [16] *Summa Theologiae*, Ia q. 2 a. 2 (immediately preceding the Five Ways); also Ia q. 12 a. 12.

<sup>17</sup> [17] *Summa*, Ia q. 2 a. 1.

undergird his response to Strauss that in the Five Ways , and in other arguments about created order and a creator, Thomas is not distorting reason but letting it do its thing:

Philosophy, as eros for nature and the whole, is not less itself (a) for moving from a less primary sense of nature [created nature, both necessity and self-sufficiency] to the most primary sense of nature, most primary because of its eternity and necessity, self-sufficiency and intelligibility, and (b) for moving from the whole to the principle of the whole, the principle that is not itself a part of the whole.<sup>18</sup> [18]

Put another way, philosophy might well take issue with the philosophic errors or incomplete quality of the natural theology of the Five Ways , as many subsequent philosophers have done. When Anthony Kenny (a well-known British convert from Catholicism to agnosticism) undertakes his classic analysis of Thomas's arguments for the existence of God he finds fault with Thomas at several points, but never questions the philosophical status of his endeavor given the self-evidently rigorous quality and depth of the reasoning.<sup>19</sup> [19] However, to claim that such natural theology by definition is not philosophy is to be dogmatic about the limits that must be placed on reason's freedom to inquire. This is not the middle ground that Strauss claimed to be holding, one that avoids both the dogmatic rationalism that claims to have refuted revelation (as with Lucretius and Spinoza) and the fideism that repudiates any robust

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<sup>18</sup> [18] Prufer, "Juxtapositions," 121; see also Schall, "Latitude," 211-227.

<sup>19</sup> [19] Anthony J.P. Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (London: Routledge, 1969).

reason that can consider ends (as with the Augustinian theologians from Bonaventure to Luther who condemned Aquinas).

## Natural Law and the Latitude of Prudence

Father Schall is not alone in challenging the criticism, made by Strauss and others, that Thomistic natural law is a categorical and abstract exercise.<sup>20</sup> [20] Schall focuses on Strauss's remark that for Thomas "the principles of the moral law, especially as formulated in the Second Table of the Decalogue, suffer no exception, unless possibly by divine intervention.❖ Preceding this pointed criticism is the more general characterization of Thomistic natural law as "free from hesitations and ambiguities,❖ as marked by "definiteness and noble simplicity,❖ and as harboring "[n]o doubt❖ about "the immutable character of the fundamental propositions of natural law.❖<sup>21</sup> [21] Schall demonstrates that Thomas's discussion of the Second Table, in a later part of what is now widely called the Treatise on Law in the *Summa Theologiae*, in fact allows that some acts are not easily judged by clear reference to first principles. For Aquinas such acts "require much consideration of diverse circumstances, the diligent consideration of

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20 [20] See Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), especially chapter 16, "Law and Prudence;❖ Jeremy Catto, "Ideas and Experience in the Political Thought of Aquinas,❖ 71 *Past and Present* (1976), 3-21; and Marc D. Guerra, "Beyond Natural Law Talk: Politics and Prudence in St. Thomas Aquinas's *On Kingship*,❖ 31 *Perspectives on Political Science* (2002), 9-14.

21 [21] Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 163.

which is not for everyone but for the wise, more specifically, the "philosophers."<sup>22</sup> [22]

One is tempted to say that Thomas sounds not Kantian or categorical (as Strauss would seem to portray him) but rather Straussian here, emphasizing inequality and the special abilities of philosophers, as well as the need for philosophers to recognize the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom and not only abstract, categorical principles in human affairs.

Indeed, Thomas includes discussions of prudence in the core of his account of natural law in the *Summa*, and again emphasizes the importance of prudence in a separate analysis of that intellectual virtue and its importance for moral action. When considering whether the natural law always prescribes all the virtues in human action, Thomas accommodates the variability and flux of human affairs: "it is owing to the various conditions of men that certain acts are virtuous for some as being proportionate and becoming to them, while they are vicious for others as being out of proportion to them."<sup>23</sup> [23] In considering whether the natural law is the same for all men, Thomas notes that "in matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all as to matters of detail but only as to the general principles, and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all." In the heart of his discussion of natural law Thomas states that he must address these complications or qualifications because "practical reason is concerned with "contingent matters including human action, and therefore "although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend into matters of detail,

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<sup>22</sup> [22] Schall, "Latitude," 227-28, citing *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 100, a. 1 (Schall's translation).

<sup>23</sup> [23] *Summa Theologiae*, I-II q. 94 a. 3, ad 3, in *Saint Thomas Aquinas on Law, Morality, and Politics*, ed. Baumgarth and Regan (Hackett, 1988), p. 50.



the more frequently we encounter deviations.❖24 [24] When discussing human law and its relation to natural law, Thomas notes that the "general principles of the natural law cannot be applied to all men in the same way on account of the great variety of human affairs, and hence arises the diversity of positive laws among various peoples.❖ He also approvingly refers to "decisions of rulers in determining particular points of the natural law, on which determinations the judgment of expert and prudent men is based as on its principles,❖ and cites Aristotle regarding respect for "the undemonstrated saying and opinions❖ of men renowned for their "prudence.❖25 [25] These and other similar remarks in the treatise on law do not warrant a characterization of Thomistic natural law as suffering no exceptions, or free from hesitations and ambiguities, or being the epitome of simplicity. Again, when discussing the practical import of the natural law in human government, specifically whether the human law should aim to direct the conduct of every individual and every individual case, Thomas quotes Aristotle's admonition about the limits of reason regarding human affairs and then elaborates on why there must be latitude for prudence:

"We must not seek the same degree of certainty in all things.❖ Consequently, in contingent matters such as natural and human things, it is enough for a thing to be certain

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24 [24] *Summa*, I-II q. 94 a 4, in *ibid.*, p. 51. Thomas repeats these point later in question 94 article 4, about exceptions arising at the level of actual judgment and action; he further discusses the case of the ancient Germans and their apparent endorsement of theft ❖ that the natural law can be thwarted by historical and cultural conditions, which in turn suggests the need for statesmanship in establishing and enforcing the proper legal and civic culture (see p. 52).

25 [25] I-II q. 95 a. 2 ad. 3 and 4, in *ibid.*, p. 60; citing *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. 6, ch. 11.

as being true in the greater number of instances, though at times and less frequently it fail.<sup>26</sup> [26]

The richness and complexity of Thomas's natural law philosophy and ethics includes elements of prudence and sobriety about the particularities of human action in balance with more abstract or doctrinal elements such as his argument that our nature is endowed with a habit of grasping basic moral principles for good, *synderesis*, which he argues is the cause or foundation of conscience.<sup>27</sup> [27] Strauss emphasizes only the abstract or doctrinal elements. Moreover, beyond the dimension of prudence within the treatise on law in the *Summa* Thomas devotes several questions in a later section to prudence itself, as one of the cardinal virtues.<sup>28</sup> [28]

This dimension of practical wisdom or prudence in Thomistic natural law, including its call for human judgment to apply the general principles to particular situations and actions, points in turn to the broader philosophical quality of this jurisprudence. The premise of natural law is that it is human reason's participation in the eternal law, this latter being the order evident in nature as affirmed by philosophy.<sup>29</sup> [29] Thomas teaches this not on the basis of revelation but as part of his affirmation of Aristotelian teleology in nature and in human nature. Early in

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<sup>26</sup> [26] I-II q. 96 a. 1, ad 3, in *ibid.*, p. 66; thus in the sequel Thomas argues that it does not belong to human law, based on the natural law, to seek to "repress all vices" but only the most grievous and public ones (I-II q. 96 a. 2).

<sup>27</sup> [27] See *Summa Theologiae* Ia q. 79 a.12 (*synderesis*) and a.13 (conscience); Thomas discusses *synderesis* in his question on natural law at I-II q. 94 a. 1.

<sup>28</sup> [28] *Summa Theologiae* II-II q. 47-56.

<sup>29</sup> [29] I-II q. 94 a. 2.

*Natural Right and History* Strauss notes the challenge posed by modern science and the theory of evolution to Aristotelian and Thomistic teleology, but he does not argue the merits of this concern.<sup>30</sup> [30] However, to understand Thomas as he understood himself requires that credit be given to the philosophic status of his teleological arguments about the whole and about the inclinations imbedded in human nature, given their evident rigor and also their debt to Aristotle. If it is not so clear that Strauss is correct to rule out of court any robust conception of natural theology or any strong metaphysics, then it is all the more important to note that Thomas's discussions in the *Summa* of eternal law and natural law point back to the natural theology of the Five Ways. Indeed, his conceptions of eternal law and natural law generally rely upon or presuppose crucial premises about the teleology evident in the design of the whole, and evident in human reason and its capacity to discern moral principles. More specifically, in his analysis of the eternal law Thomas cites his own discussion early in First Part of the divine mind as the cause of creation (Ia q. 14 a. 8), which itself is an extension of the arguments about contingency, necessity, and ultimate causation in the Five Ways (which lie twelve questions earlier in the First Part) (see I-II q. 93 a. 1). Another discussion of eternal law cites the same passage from the Bible about man's knowledge of God by induction from known reality that Thomas cites just before the Five Ways (see I-II q. 93 a. 2).<sup>31</sup> [31] Another discussion of the eternal law cites the analysis in the First Part, at the close of the section on natural theology, of the divine mind as first cause of the order of nature (I-II q. 93 a. 5, ad. 3, citing Ia q. 22 a. 2).

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<sup>30</sup> [30] *Natural Right and History*, 7-8.

<sup>31</sup> [31] The passage is *Romans*, 1:20 : "The invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; see Ia q. 2 a. 2.

Again, it is one thing to criticize Thomas about a particular point of reasoning in his teleological metaphysics and about its use as the foundation for his particular ethics and natural law jurisprudence. It is another, and requires that much more robust a criticism, to repudiate the entire Thomistic ethics and jurisprudence as not philosophy but as special pleading. It is beyond my powers to demonstrate that the Thomistic approach is certainly correct, but Strauss's criticism of it raises more questions than answers and does not so easily dislodge the Thomistic arguments for the proper balance of reason and revelation in philosophy generally and in ethics and jurisprudence more particularly.

### **Tocqueville on Moderation in Reason and Religion**

Viewing the disagreement between Strauss and Aquinas from the vantage point of Tocqueville's philosophy not only provides a brief and accessible way of considering whether the Montesquieuan view of reason and revelation in fact testifies for the Straussian view. Recourse to Tocqueville's widely read approach to religion and politics also pushes us to consider the practical consequences of the two rival views, in terms of the relations between religion and politics likely to occur in a constitutional order that adopted the Straussian separation of reason and revelation.

As noted, Tocqueville and Strauss largely share the view that modern reason and modern democracy are in a state of crisis ❖ which includes the failure to understand that they are in a crisis ❖ even though both philosophers consider themselves friends of democracy as a regime that is at least minimally just in itself, and, as the most just regime available in their eras. Both

worry that modern reason is self-destructive, descending into relativism and materialism because the emphasis on anti-metaphysical, pragmatic thinking leads toward dominance of the body, material equality, short-term thinking, and ultimately a destructive rebellion against this truncated conception of reason. These are the themes of Strauss's *Natural Right and History* and such important essays as "What Is Political Philosophy?" among his other books and essays; Tocqueville emphasizes these themes from his opening call in *Democracy* for a "new political science" that will "reanimate" the beliefs of democracy, "purify its mores," and provide it with genuine "knowledge of itself," to the work's closing warning about a new kind of soft despotism.<sup>32</sup> [32] Straus and Tocqueville differ, however, on the mode in which reason and revelation should relate in order to best address these crises and steer modern liberal democracy toward grasping eternal truths. Tocqueville follows Montesquieu and the American framers in arguing that a constitutional separation of church and state to include such principles as no religious test for office, no established state religion, and free exercise of religious belief does not entail a separation of religion and politics. Indeed, for Tocqueville the great strength of the American conception of modern democracy is its accommodation of the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion. In contrast, Strauss's separation of reason and revelation would seem to lead, whether he would intend this or not, to a separation of religion and politics and perhaps to a demand that reason remain in the private sphere as a private choice, so that rational politics and governance in a liberal democracy be dominated by secular thinking that is open to or does not discriminate against the private views of all citizens.

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32 [32] See *Democracy in America*, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (University of Chicago Press, 2000), Introduction, p. 7 and Vol. 2, Part 4.

As noted, Tocqueville's clear debt to Montesquieu is one justification for assessing his views in reference to Strauss's effort to appropriate Montesquieu as supporting the Socratic conception of reason and revelation. Tocqueville's debt becomes clear if one views the most famous works by each philosopher, *The Spirit of Laws* and *Democracy in America*, as complex works not of sociology but of grand political science, blending philosophical rigor with historical and poetic insight. Montesquieu's alternative brand of liberal philosophy informs the not-so-Lockean attention in Tocqueville's political science to geography, mores, complex constitutional forms, education, and, perhaps especially, religion. These topics also reflect the Montesquieuan emphasis in *Democracy* upon political and theoretical complexity, a trait evident in the work's structure and character. Both philosophers also offer ubiquitous advice about moderation, statesmanship, and prudence to achieve a decent modern politics, each incorporating elements of classical and aristocratic thought into a modern, liberal regime. Tocqueville's "new science of politics" ultimately questions, however, whether Montesquieu's largely negative view of politics and liberty can sustain either decent liberty or the human soul in the new age of equality. Thus, Tocqueville's advocacy of the benefits for liberal democracy of genuinely supporting, and taking guidance from, Biblical religion is a departure from Montesquieu's more cautious stance, and suggests that Tocqueville takes a step in the direction of the Thomistic synthesis of reason and revelation, politics and religion. Still, it is arguable that Tocqueville could see the arguments for this accommodation of religion and politics only because he had followed Montesquieu's departure from the more skeptical treatments of religion in the earlier liberalism of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke.

The question of Tocqueville's debt to Montesquieu also points to Tocqueville's remark to his cousin Kergolay, soon after finishing Volume One of *Democracy*, that there "are three men

with whom I commune a bit every day, Pascal, Montesquieu, and Rousseau.♦33 [33] Few scholars argue that Tocqueville maintained balance and an ultimate independence in his relationship with these predecessors; the effort typically is to explain which one influenced him the most. Recent studies that emphasize the Augustinian influence of Pascal might take this point too far, but this is nonetheless a welcome correction to the bulk of earlier studies that tended to reduce Tocqueville's thought to Rousseau, and less frequently, to Montesquieu. Among recent works that better characterize Tocqueville's philosophical pedigree as complex, a question arises as to how adequately they capture the Montesquieuan spirit of moderation that guides Tocqueville's blending and balancing of diverse intellectual sources ♦ a blend that in fact moderates Montesquieuan liberalism with a deep concern about the dangers to the human soul posed by modern liberal democracy.34 [34] Mansfield and Winthrop portray a Tocqueville for whom human greatness is essential to liberty; who finds democratic populism a grave threat to both liberty and humanity; and, who sees religion and philosophy, properly conceived, as allies in meliorating the worst tendencies of modernity. They find Tocqueville calling upon all three of his French predecessors while transcending a fundamental reliance upon any one, striving to balance these Augustinian and modern influences with Aristotelian concerns about magnanimity, political virtue, and moderation. In contrast, Wolin, Lawler, and Mitchell each improve upon

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33 [33] James Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville's Democracy in America* (North Carolina, 1980) 25-26, citing Tocqueville's letter to Kergolay, 10 November 1836; see ♦*Œuvres complètes*, ed. J.P. Mayer (Gallimard, 1951-61), t. 13, v. 1, 415-18.

34 [34] See Peter A. Lawler, *The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origins and Perpetuation of Human Liberty* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1993); Joshua Mitchell, *The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future* (Chicago, 1995); *Democracy in America*, ed. Mansfield and Winthrop, Editors' Introduction and Suggested Readings, xvii-lxxxi (especially xxx-xxxix); and Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds: The Making of a Political and Theoretical Life* (Princeton, 2001).

studies that fail to investigate the religious concerns informing Tocqueville's works, but each in their own way makes too much of an anti-modern, Augustinian or Pascalian strain in his analysis of democracy. While Lawler and Mitchell praise Tocqueville for this anti-modern and deeply Christian moment, Wolin is fiercely critical.<sup>35</sup> [35]

A deeper consideration of the philosophical principle of moderation suggests that Tocqueville may in fact have balanced and blended a range of influences on his philosophy to discern how best to abide by eternal truths in the conditions he found confronting humanity in the unprecedented era of democracy and modernity. Moderation as an effort at philosophical balance obviously has roots in Socratic dialectic, but moderation is not the hallmark of Plato's psychology, ethics, and politics ♦ as best as one can glean them from the dialogues. Plato and neo-Platonism emphasize dualistic antagonisms between the high and the low, and the need for the high to vanquish or dominate the low. Strauss's philosophy seems to epitomize this immoderate quality, and to the extent that Strauss calls upon moderation it is largely (or only? in an instrumental or prudential capacity. Equilibrium as a philosophical aim, including appreciation for the means of achieving moderation to reconcile extremes in theory and practice, are hallmarks rather of the Aristotelian tradition of thought. This includes, capaciously defined, a range of minds from Thomas Aquinas (who is more moderate than much Thomism) to Montesquieu and Tocqueville. This context for Tocqueville's philosophy suggests that Lawler and Mitchell may go too far in implying that Tocqueville is a fundamentally Augustinian thinker who largely adoptions Augustine's or Pascal's approach to anthropology, ethics, and politics.

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35 [35] Lawler praises moderation in Tocqueville in *Restless Mind*, 137-39, 142-43; for Mitchell on Tocqueville's moderation, see *Fragility of Freedom*, x-xi, 78-87, 132-140.



Both note that he departs from Pascal and neo-Platonism generally in his strong affirmation of the dignity of politics, but both undermine the significance of that departure by over-emphasizing Tocqueville's doubts about the spiritual impoverishment of the city of modern man.<sup>36</sup> [36]

Appreciation for the legacy of philosophical moderation informing Tocqueville suggests that his new political science seeks to translate the truths of ancient philosophy to an egalitarian world that those philosophers should have considered more sympathetically, while also calling that new world to recognize its need for amelioration and education. Tocqueville echoes not ancient or modern or Christian theory per se but offers a modern renovation of the Christian synthesis of philosophy and religion, a medieval sensibility recast for modern dilemmas and possibilities. Montesquieu's attempt to moderate modern liberal philosophy, employing elements of ancient philosophy and poetry and medieval political practice, and defending the benefits and naturalness of religion against modern irreligion, is a starting point for Tocqueville. *Democracy in America* further moderates Montesquieuan liberalism by warning the liberal democratic mind of the mixed blessings of equality, individual security, and prosperity, and on that basis it prescribes a moderate dose of the Aristotelian and Thomistic concern with the destiny of the soul. Comparing Montesquieu's more modest efforts at philosophical and political moderation with Tocqueville's distinctive conceptions of constitutionalism, liberty, and religion thus sheds light on the larger project of *Democracy*. Tocqueville sought to leaven liberal individualism and egalitarianism by restoring the higher potentiality of a politics and civil society gently guided by religious principles and practice. Nonetheless, he consciously departed from the strict teleology

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36 [36] See Lawler, *Restless Mind*, 78-87, 141-158; Mitchell, *Fragility of Freedom*, 3-11, 22-28, 78-87.

of ancient and medieval Christian political philosophy. Tocqueville's philosophy at once can chide the ancients for failing to see the basic natural equality of mankind ♦ "it was necessary that Jesus Christ come to earth ♦ to make this understood ♦ while recommending to an egalitarian and partly Christian, partly post-Christian era a rediscovery of the importance of pride, worldly ambition, and robust freedom of thought and action.<sup>37</sup> [37]

This characterization of Tocqueville's philosophical moderation about reason and revelation must confront, however, the scholarly debates about the true nature of his beliefs about religion and its role in modern democracy. Some scholars find him a genuine advocate of the true light that Biblical faith and theology shed upon the human condition, regardless of his personal trials of faith and personal doubt.<sup>38</sup> [38] Others find him a functionalist advocate of a civil religion, endorsing only utilitarian counsels either because of philosophic skepticism about faith or concern about the zealous, illiberal tendencies of religion.<sup>39</sup> [39] If Tocqueville defines

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37 [37] *Democracy*, Vol. 2, Part 1, ch. 3, p. 410; Vol 2, Part 3, ch. 19, p. 604 (see also 2.3 chapter 18, and 2.4 *passim*). Subsequent references will cite the Mansfield and Winthrop edition, by Volume, Part, chapter, and page.

38 [38] In addition to the works by Lawler and Mitchell noted above, see Doris Goldstein, *Trial of Faith: Religion and Politics in Tocqueville's Thought* (Elsevier, 1975); Ralph Hancock, "The Uses and Hazards of Christianity in Tocqueville's Attempt to Save Democratic Souls, ♦ in *Interpreting Tocqueville's Democracy in America*, ed. Ken Masugi (Rowman & Littlefield, 1991), 348-393; and Patrick Deneen, "The Only Permanent State: Tocqueville on Religion and Democracy, ♦ in *Democratic Faith* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 214-238.

39 [39] See Catherine Zuckert, "Not by Preaching: Tocqueville on the Role of Religion, ♦ *Review of Politics* 42 (1981) 259-80, and "The Role of Religion in Preserving American Liberty ♦ Tocqueville's Analysis 150 Years Later, ♦ in Lawler and Alulis, eds., *Tocqueville's Defense of Human Liberty: Current Essays* (Garland, 1993), 223-39; Sanford Kessler, *Tocqueville's Civil Religion* (State University of New York, 1994); and Aristide Tessitore, "Alexis de Tocqueville on the Natural State of Religion in the Age of Democracy, ♦ *Journal of Politics* 64 (2002) 1137-52.

philosophy in the spirit of Montesquieuan moderation, balancing and blending ancient, medieval, and modern elements, then this suggests his endorsement of religion would indeed be moderate, but in a way that transcends either skepticism, or functionalism, or a primary concern with the illiberal potential of faith. Moreover, it may be that the example of Washington and other American founders led Tocqueville to transcend Montesquieu's more cautious version of moderation about religion, given the evidence provided by America of the practical success of balancing liberty and religion.

Montesquieu's moderate political science departed from Hobbesian and Lockean liberalism to capture the full complexity of the physical, moral, and legal elements that together produce a certain political "spirit"❖. This partially restored the Aristotelian concept of regime (*politeia*), that rule involves both moral character and institutions, although Montesquieu employed it largely as a means to liberal security and tranquillity. Tocqueville's famous attention to mores (*mœurs*), capaciously defined as "the ensemble of moral and intellectual dispositions which men supply to the state of society,"❖ marks his Aristotelian development of Montesquieu's attention to mores, since now the beliefs and habits of religion are the primary component of mores (I.2.9, 275, 292, n. 8; see, more generally, 275-288, 298-302). In American terms, Tocqueville's moderate political science agrees with Washington's blend of the Federalist concern with the necessary powers and order of constitutional government and the Anti-Federalist concern with the moral presuppositions of self-government (see, e.g., 1.1.8, 129; 1.2.7, 241-2; 2.2.15, 518). In this synthesis he saw the American correction to Montesquieu's still largely negative liberalism, and *Democracy in America* more fully captures the American spirit by calling liberal democracy to appreciate those dimensions of the Biblical and Western traditions that moderate the quest for ever-greater equality and individual security. He moderates

Montesquieu with those resources in the Western tradition that further temper the modern and liberal conceptions of philosophy, humanity, religion, and politics.

Tocqueville discovered a difficulty, however, with religion's role in guiding democracy away from individualism, materialism, and apathy toward politics. He famously defines America's "point of departure" as the equilibrium or moderate relationship between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion (1.2), but by the close of Volume One he detects that this is unstable. The spirit of equality, and the materialism and restless activity it yields, have corroded religious faith and a balanced orientation between the transcendent and the earthly, and not only in Europe (1.2.6, 228; 1.2.9, 281, 299). Tocqueville deepens this concern and identifies its root cause in Volume Two: the spirit of Luther or Protestant reformation shares much with the spirit of modern skeptical philosophy embodied by Descartes, Bacon, and Voltaire (2.1.1-2).<sup>40</sup> [40] This defines a second point of departure for America, in which Protestantism cannot temper modern equality, materialism, and individualism due to its shared root with the modern skepticism that causes such ills. Tocqueville quietly suggests that the moderate mode of Catholicism evident in America might be one remedy for this dilemma (2.1.5-6), but later he proposes extraordinary remedies, including a role for government in indirectly fostering and buttressing religious faith (2.2, chapters 15, 17). He knows that it will be controversial to ask "the politicians" to "act every day as if they believed in the soul's immortality, conforming scrupulously to religious morality in great affairs" (2.2.15, 521). His model for this remedy may have been Washington, for in Volume One he emphatically praises both "this great man"

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40 [40] Joshua Mitchell discusses Tocqueville's diagnosis of the epistemology of reformed Christianity and American pragmatism in "Tocqueville on Democratic Religious Experience," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, 276-302 at 284-85.

and Marshall's biography of him, and quotes the Farewell Address (1.1.2, 30 n. 1; 1.1.8, 107; 1.2.5, 217-18, 220; 1.2.10, 320; see also 1.1.3, 46, 50, 52). Indeed, he names only two models of American politicians guiding their actions by fundamental ethical principles and resisting the clamor of majority opinion ♦ Governor John Winthrop among the Puritans, and Washington (1.1.2, 42; 1.2.6, 217-20). For both models he draws upon the analysis of these statesmen by another statesman, Marshall's *Life of Washington*. Winthrop, however, embodies the best and worst of America's first epoch, including the Puritan fusion of church and state and the "bizarre, tyrannical, ♦ and shameful excesses in enforcing Biblical morality through penal law, both of which Tocqueville rejects (1.1.2, 39; 1.2.9, 283). What is needed as America continues its experiment is the more moderate and indirect, but powerfully sincere, education in religious principle provided by Washington. Tocqueville warns that such "great characters are disappearing ♦ and that "the race of American statesmen has shrunk ♦ during America's third epoch (1.1.3, 50; 1.1.8, 130; 1.2.5, 188; 1.2.7, 246-7; 1.2.9, 265). His new political science calls for statesmen educated in religious and constitutional principle who can inculcate, in a temperate way, the moderate aims of ordered liberty and of the dignity of the soul's temporal and eternal destiny.

Tocqueville finds that modern reason alone will not save itself or modern democracy, and he calls for more than a dialogue between reason and revelation that is premised upon their mutual incompatibility and the distinct autonomy of each. He advocates the synthesis of reason and revelation found in the moderate accommodation of both reason or liberty, on the one hand, and revealed religion, on the other, in the true spirit of America's constitutional democracy, although he understands that American practice on occasion deviates from that spirit. This is clearly more than a utilitarian or sociological appreciation of religion. Again, by the second

volume of *Democracy* Tocqueville argues in succession that modern reason needs revelation and faith to temper it (Vol. 2, Part 1, chapters 1 and 2, "Philosophic Method" and "Source of Beliefs"), that it took divine revelation to show classical philosophy that all men are naturally alike and equal enough to deserve freedom and never to sanction slavery (Vol. 2, Part 1, ch. 3. "General Ideas"), and that philosophical advocates of moderate liberal democracy should see that modern scientific reason will destroy itself and destroy freedom unless all, the elite and the many, can be brought to rediscover and appreciate anew the basic divine truths about the immortality of a soul created by God (Vol. 2, Part 2, chaps 15 and 17, "Religious Beliefs" and "Equality and Doubt").

Tocqueville's conception of religion and politics and of the relation of revelation and reason is not a species of Thomism, but it does pull back from the dominant alternatives in modern thought — either skepticism toward religion or fideism blended with political quietism — toward a revised conception of the Thomistic balance between the two. His view is all the more striking for doing so given that he develops it clearly as a philosopher and not as an adherent to any revelation. There is no mention of natural law teaching per se, although his conception of self-interest properly understood and his defense of natural rights coupled with his praise for an inegalitarian prudence and statesmanship clearly borrows elements from the Aristotelian tradition. At the very least, it is evident that his conception of the proper balance between reason, revelation, prudence, and politics contrasts with Strauss's separation of reason and revelation. The latter view would seem to lead toward the Jeffersonian view of a strict separation of religion and politics, and a restriction of any appeals to revelation in public debate, even while espousing greater respect for revelation than is evident in much modern philosophy.

## Seeking Strauss, Confronting Athens and Jerusalem

These considerations on Strauss, Thomas, and Tocqueville do not claim to settle the question of Strauss's conception of reason and revelation, but they do raise doubts about a crucial component of the Straussian view. Further dimensions to Strauss's philosophy that require consideration would include his evident seriousness and respect regarding Maimonides and the Jewish tradition of thought more generally.<sup>41</sup> [41] There also is his subtle and Socratic defense of Jerusalem in relation to Athens and certainly in preference to the modern conception of philosophy, and his insistence that, if we are to begin to lead an examined life, we must confront not only the traditional conception of Athens and traditional metaphysics but also a traditional defense of Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup> [42] Schall rightly emphasizes that Strauss's critique of any modern efforts to synthesize reason and revelation is a crucial insight into the predicament of modern philosophy and modern life, and this clearly shares an orientation with both Tocqueville and Eric Voeglin. Nonetheless, Strauss of all modern philosophers would appreciate the tradition of *amicus Plato*. One can even hope that he might tolerate misunderstandings of his philosophy in the knowledge that at least successive generations in modernity took seriously the charge he made to rediscover the question of reason and revelation as one of utmost import.

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41 [41] See Green's essay "Editor's Introduction: Leo Strauss as a Modern Jewish Thinker," in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Green, 1-84, especially the section "Strauss's Maimonideanism," 36-45.

42 [42] See Sorenson, *Jerusalem and Athens*, especially her Conclusion (147-158), which argues that if Strauss "tips the scales at all" it is subtly toward a defense of Jerusalem (158); in this she draws upon Harry V. Jaffa, "Leo Strauss, the Bible, and Political Philosophy," in *Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker*, ed. Deutsch and Nicgorski.

