

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PAR-6
Republicanism and Religion--1

American Research Institute in Turkey
Serencebey Yokuşu 61-63/10-11
Beşiktaş Istanbul
TURKEY

27 April 1985

Mr. Peter Bird Martin
Institute of Current World Affairs
Wheelock House
4 West Wheelock Street
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755
USA

Dear Peter,

The longer I am here, the more I suspect that it is incumbent on the student of contemporary Turkish politics to keep one fact always in mind: less than a three-quarters of a century ago, and for centuries before that, the region now a nation-state called Turkey was under the rule of a theocracy more singleminded and less ambivalent, because unchallenged, than that now ruling the Ayatoullah Khomeini's Iran. That earlier theocracy lacked the apparatus of modern tyranny. It was not accompanied by repression on the scale now long made familiar by the Italy of Mussolini; the Germany of Hitler; the Soviet Union of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and their successors; the China of Mao; the Vietnam of Ho Chi Minh; the Cuba of Castro; and the less familiar regimes now taking shape in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Nicaragua. It lacked the instruments of totalitarian domination--in part, no doubt, because it had little need for them. The simple piety of the Anatolian peasant was more than enough to guarantee stability of rule. In any case, before 1688, all rulers (princes, aristocrats, and democrats alike) had based their claim to rule on divine right. And, even in that year, the men who carried out the Glorious Revolution stopped well short of announcing their new principles to a candid world. It was only in the last quarter of the 18th century that revolutionaries began openly attempting to found republics on entirely new principles, and vigorously trying to export those principles to other lands.

The Ottoman Sultans and the ministers who governed a great empire in their name were hardly averse to seeing Christendom rent by civil strife. When those they still called "the Franks" squabbled over religion, it

Paul A. Rahe is a fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs, studying the contemporary culture, social development, and politics of the Eastern Mediterranean with an eye to the earlier history of the region.

generally meant that these Christians would leave the House of Islam in peace. But, despite the general tendency to look with favor on Frankish quarrels, at least one of the Sultan's ministers recognized in remarkably short order the gravity of the threat that the late 18th-century revolutions posed to the traditional Islamic order. His name was Ahmed Atif Efendi; and, in the Spring of 1798, he composed a remarkable memorandum that deserves to be read through once and then re-read again and again. "It is one of the things known to all well-informed persons," the man wrote,

that the conflagration of sedition and wickedness that broke out a few years ago in France, scattering sparks and shooting flames of mischief and tumult in all directions, had been conceived many years previously in the minds of certain accursed heretics, and had been a quiescent evil which they sought an opportunity to waken. In this way: the known and famous atheists Voltaire and Rousseau, and other materialists like them, had printed and published various works, consisting, God preserve us, of insults and vilification against the pure prophets and great kings, of the removal and abolition of all religion, and of allusions to the sweetness of equality and republicanism, all expressed in easily intelligible words and phrases, in the form of mockery, in the language of the common people. Finding the pleasure of novelty in these writings, most of the people, even youths and women, inclined towards them and paid close attention to them, so that heresy and wickedness spread like syphilis to the arteries of their brains and corrupted their beliefs. When the revolution became more intense, none took offense at the closing of churches, the killing and expulsion of monks, and the abolition of religion and doctrine: they set their hearts on equality and freedom, through which they hoped to attain perfect bliss in this world, in accordance with the lying teachings increasingly disseminated among the common people by this pernicious crew, who stirred up sedition and evil because of selfishness or self-interest. It is well known that the ultimate basis of the order and cohesion of every state is a firm grasp of the roots and branches of holy law, religion, and doctrine; that the tranquillity of the land and the control of the subjects cannot be encompassed by political means alone; that the necessity for the fear of God and the regard for retribution in the hearts of God's slaves is one of the unshakeably established divine decrees; that in both ancient and modern times every state and people has had its own religion, whether true or false. Nevertheless, the leaders of the sedition and evil appearing in France, in a manner without precedent, in order to facilitate the accomplishment of their evil purposes, and in utter disregard of the fearsome consequences, have removed the fear of God and the regard for retribution from the common people, made lawful all kinds of abominable deeds, utterly obliterated all shame and decency, and thus prepared the way for the reduction of the people of France to the state of cattle. Nor were they satisfied with this alone, but, finding supporters like themselves in every place, in order to keep other states busy with the

protection of their own regimes and thus to forestall an attack on themselves, they had their rebellious declaration which they call 'The Rights of Man' translated into all languages and published in all parts, and strove to incite the common people of the nations and religions to rebel against the kings to which they were subject.

Ahmed Etif Efendi can be criticized for conflating the thought of Voltaire and Rousseau; he can justly be charged with simplifying the process by which the French Revolution came about; but these are relatively minor faults. Few of the man's contemporaries, apart from Edmund Burke, betrayed so complete a grasp of the historical importance of that revolution. Ahmed Etif Efendi appears to have recognized that its success would sound the death knell for the Ottoman regime. Which, of course, it did.

To the heirs of the modern republican revolutions, the shrill tone of Ahmed Etif Efendi's report may be off-putting at first; but it is, in fact, a useful reminder of the novel and strange character of the secular world in which we now live. The Sultan's minister was angry because he feared that everything might soon be lost that he held dear. It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of religion in Ottoman times. There was, of course, ample hypocrisy to spread around; there always is. But it is vital to remember that virtually every act of state had to be justified in religious terms. It is no accident that, while the Christian era begins with the birth of Christ, the Islamic epoch starts with Muhammad's seizure of power through the establishment of the Muslim community in Medina. As one Turkish scholar puts it in a recent book, "In comparison with other major religions of the world, Islam is a political religion par excellence which defines for the believer the totality of his spiritual and temporal existence."²

Put simply, Islam is not a religion of private conscience, and it cannot easily be transformed into one; above all else, it is a religion of public action. There are private duties, to be sure. The Muslim is expected to give thanks daily to God in prayer. But he has a public duty as well--to wage war against infidels (Jihad), to make a pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), to fast during the month of Ramadan, and to give alms to the poor. And, of course, this is just the beginning. Islam bridges the gap between sacred and profane by directing this-worldly activity towards the establishment of a political order based upon principles divinely ordained. One might say that it recognizes no distinction between church and state, but it might be more precise to say that it restores the unity between the political assembly (ecclesia) and the

1. For this extraordinary report, see Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey (London 1979) 66-67.

2. Binnaz Toprak, Islam and Political Development in Turkey (Leiden 1981) 22.

religious ecclesia characteristic of ancient Greece. Within the Muslim dispensation, the political community is the religious community (umma) of true believers; when measured against the claim exercised by the umma, no other loyalty can count. For this reason, there is and can be no distinction in Islamic thought between the temporal and the spiritual power. The Ottoman Sultan was Caliph as well; the Islamic Emperor was the Islamic Pope. His rule could be justified only by his enforcement of the holy law (Shari'ah) and by his successful defense and, where possible, extension of the House of Islam in its never-ending struggle with the infidel House of War. Americans puzzled by the intransigent, never ceasing hostility of the Arabs to Israel would do well to ponder the religious significance of the surrender of territory once consecrated to Islam.

In the Ottoman Empire, the law was determined not by the Sultan and his ministers, and it was not interpreted by secular judges beholden to the political authorities. The Shari'ah was the law; it was handed down by Allah; and its interpretation was the responsibility of a body of religious experts called the ulema. Drawing on the Koran and the corpus of traditional lore concerning the Prophet (Sunna), ever mindful of the consensus reached by the community in the past (ijima), and reasoning by analogy (qiyas) when confronted with the unexpected, the divers mufti held court, each in his local bailiwick, and handed down judgment after hearing the various parties of each case. Islam recognized no priesthood; no one mediated between Allah and his believers; and so there was no institutional church and no religious hierarchy per se. But, under the Ottoman Sultans, the ulema was organized in a hierarchical fashion--with the Şeyhü'l-Islam in Istanbul overseeing the lot, issuing judgments (fetvas) sanctioning or condemning the political acts of the Sultan and those in his service. In principle, when the Shari'ah was in danger, the Şeyhü'l-Islam could depose the Sultan himself. Sometimes, when the military corps of the Janissaries rebelled or the Sultan's ministers conspired, the great religious judge gave divine sanction to their revolt.

Within the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic understanding of political order was deeply felt. The Europeans might speak of Turkey, and they might think of the inhabitants of Anatolia as Turks; those resident in that region never spoke of Turkey, and they thought of themselves as Muslims. Within the umma, the distinction between Arab, Kurd, and Turk was not recognized. The term Türk existed, but it was reserved for nomads or for peasants of a particularly uncivilized sort. Thus, when a handful of highly educated Ottoman citizens began referring to themselves and to their countrymen as Turks, they were adopting a European outlook, and they were deliberately and openly rejecting their Muslim heritage. Even then, however, one may justly doubt whether many of these intellectuals would have welcomed what Mustafa Kemal accomplished in the 1920s when he first deposed the Sultan, the Caliph, and the Şeyhü'l-Islam, and then abolished the offices they held--all in preparation for the establishment of a secular republic with a name borrowed from the parlance of

the despised Frank. At first, even the great man's closest followers found the disestablishment of Islam hard to stomach.³ It was only fitting that the founder of the republic eventually chose as his surname Atatürk--"Father of the Turks." Before his time, not one of the world's peoples called themselves the Turks; and, even now, while there are Jews, Armenians, and Greeks holding Turkish citizenship, no one would call one of these Jews or Christians a Turk. In this important regard, Atatürk's revolution remains incomplete. To begin to grasp the importance of this fact, one needs first to ponder the results of a revolution somewhat more familiar in the West.

I

Not long before the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the American Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson received an invitation, asking that he journey to Washington, D.C. to join in the festivities honoring the event in which he had long before played so prominent a part. He was unable to attend. In fact, like John Adams, he died on the day of the great celebration, and he was already quite ill when he wrote to decline the invitation. In what, he knew, would be his last surviving letter, he wrote of the choice made on the 4th of July, 1776,

May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.

As Jefferson's carefully contrived, final political testament indicates, religion--or, rather, the rejection of religion as a standard for politics--was the cornerstone of the world's first modern republic. It is no wonder, then, that the great statesman wanted to be remembered not just as

3. See Lord Kinross, Atatürk: The Rebirth of a Nation (Nicosia 1981) 377-404.

4. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York 1892-1899) X 390-392; Letter to Roger C. Weightman on 24 June 1826.

"Author of the Declaration of Independence" and as "Father of the University of Virginia," but also as "Author of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom."⁵ Where a particular religion was firmly and legally established, it would have been difficult, if not impossible to found a limited government--restricted to the end of protecting the citizens' inalienable, natural right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As the history of sectarian strife and religious persecution makes clear, Christianity has not always been a religion of private conscience. Within the Christian dispensation, all temporal power was justified by the temporal ruler's support for those propagating the true faith. No temporal concern was as important as the saving of souls. In that respect, Christianity was a political religion no different from Islam.

It is, then, a bit surprising that religion is hardly mentioned in The Federalist. In 1787, James Madison was among Thomas Jefferson's most intimate friends, and he was certainly the man's principle ally. His near silence and that of his collaborators Alexander Hamilton and John Jay--in a work in which the problems of faction and civil strife are major themes--should give rise to reflection. Here, Jefferson suggests a way out. In praising Madison's contributions to The Federalist, he noted that "in some parts it is discoverable that the author means only to say what may best be said in defence of opinions in which he did not concur."⁶ Madison's lack of complete frankness is a serious obstacle to understanding--for a man who finds it necessary to say what he does not believe may also discover that prudence dictates his silence or near silence on matters of great import and even greater delicacy.

In fact, Madison does mention sectarian strife in The Federalist, but only in passing. He openly acknowledges that "the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions" can generate faction, and he specifically mentions that "a zeal for different opinions concerning religion" has at times "divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to co-operate for their common good."⁷ This much he says, but he lays little stress on the point and quickly moves on. One might be tempted to suppose that for Madison the religious

5. See Thomas Jefferson, Writings, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York 1984) 706; Epitaph [1826].

6. The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton 1950-) XIV 188; Letter to James Madison on 18 November 1788.

7. I cite Jacob E. Cooke's edition of The Federalist by number and page: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, The Federalist (Middletown, Conn. 1961) 10:58-59.

issue was of minor concern.

That would be an error. On the floor of the Constitutional Convention, where the delegates conducted their discussions in private, the Virginian could afford to be a bit more frank than in a newspaper series specifically designed to promote the Constitution's ratification in a state dominated by its opponents. When contemplating the role played by "conscience" in restraining men from injustice, he observed that it "is known to be inadequate in individuals" and that "in large numbers little is to be expected from it." "Besides," he added, "Religion itself may become a motive to persecution & oppression."⁸ This remark, though telling, might still lead one to underestimate the depths of Madison's concern. Fortunately for us, he could afford to be perfectly blunt in a letter to Thomas Jefferson. In one such letter, Madison rehearsed once again the arguments he had made in the Convention, emphasizing the weakness of religious conscience as a restraint. "[E]nthusiasm" might sometimes give to conscience greater strength, he noted, but this was "only a temporary state of Religion." And, in any case, he concluded, such enthusiasm "will hardly be seen with pleasure at the helm. Even in its coolest state, it has been much oftener a motive to oppression than a restraint from it."⁹

Regarding a matter this delicate, prudence generally dictated reticence in public--but not always. Just two years before the Federal Convention, under circumstances demanding candor, Madison had found occasion to confront the problem posed by religious enthusiasm without much need for indirection. At that time, he had circulated a petition throughout his native Virginia advocating the disestablishment of the Episcopalian Church. That petition spoke boldly of the "torrents of blood" that had been "spilt in the old world, by the vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish religious discords, by proscribing all difference in religious opinion."¹⁰ Without question, Madison was as fully aware and as deeply concerned as the best informed of his contemporaries regarding the wars of religion that had convulsed both England and the continent less than a century before. But, in fact, the chief architect of the American Constitution does seem to have supposed that the United States would be relatively free from the peril of sectarian strife. In

8. The Records of the Federal Convention, ed. Max Farrand (New Haven 1911-1937) I 135: 6 June 1787.

9. The Papers of James Madison, ed. William T. Hutchinson, William M. E. Rachal, et al., (Chicago 1962-1977, Charlottesville 1977-) X 213-214: Letter to Thomas Jefferson on 24 October 1787.

10. The Papers of James Madison VIII 302: "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments" of 20 June 1785.

this subject, as in others, David Hume had been among his instructors.

II

Hume had pointed out that "parties from principle, especially abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times," and he had traced that "extraordinary and unaccountable phenomenon" to the peculiar character of the Christian faith: to the independent authority that it vested in the clergy, and to the systematic theology--born of the awkward marriage of revelation with philosophy--that distinguished it from all other religions, even from Islam.¹¹ Throughout much of Europe, factions of this sort might still pose the gravest of difficulties--but, fortunately, in England, the force of sectarian zeal had gradually abated. In that happy island, Hume was pleased to report, time had all but eliminated what he called the "ecclesiastical parties." As he put it, "Liberty of thinking, and of expressing our thoughts, is always fatal to priestly power, and to those pious frauds, on which it is always founded."¹² As a consequence, "the progress of learning and liberty" in the first half-century following the Glorious Revolution had brought "a sudden and sensible change in the opinions of men."

Most people, in this island, have divested themselves of all superstitious reverence to names and authority: The clergy have much lost their credit: Their pretensions and doctrines have been ridiculed; and even religion can scarcely support itself in the world. The mere name of king commands little respect; and to talk of a king as GOD's viceregent on earth, or to give him any of those magnificent titles, which formerly dazzled mankind, would but excite laughter in every one. Though the crown, by means of its large revenue, may maintain its authority in times of tranquillity, upon private interest and influence; yet, as the least shock or convulsion must break all these interests to pieces, the royal power, being no longer supported by the settled

11. David Hume, "Of Parties in General," The Philosophical Works, ed. Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose (Aalen 1964) III: Essays Moral, Political, and Literary I 127-133.

12. Hume, "The Parties of Great Britain," Essays Moral, Political, and Literary I 133-144, esp. 135. Cf. the observation that Edmund Burke registered in 1770 in his pamphlet Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents that "the great parties which formerly divided and agitated the kingdom are known to be in a manner entirely dissolved." I cite the Bohn edition: The Works of Edmund Burke (London 1893) I 308. See also Tocqueville, Democracy in America I.ii.2, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. J. P. Mayer (Paris 1961-) I:1 178-184.

principles and opinions of men, will immediately dissolve. Had men been in the same disposition at the revolution, as they are at present, monarchy would have run a great risque of being entirely lost in this island.¹³

At the time when the Revolution took place in America, the citizens of the thirteen colonies were in the very disposition that Hume had mentioned, and that fact (as much as any other) helped account for their adoption of republican government--and for Madison's sanguine outlook regarding religious convulsions as well. Just three weeks before the Continental Congress approved Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, James Madison (already an intellectual force at the tender age of twenty-five) had succeeded in persuading the Virginia Convention to add to its Bill of Rights a clause acknowledging that "all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience."¹⁴ With regard to sectarian conflict, he had reason to be hopeful.

Madison even had grounds for optimism of a sort that Hume might well have disputed. In his magisterial History of England, the Scottish philosopher had argued that "the interested diligence of the clergy" was a condition that "every wise legislator will study to prevent." Where the civil magistrate was absolutely neutral in sectarian matters, the competition of the preachers would inevitably infuse into religion "a strong mixture of superstition, folly, and delusion."

Each ghostly practitioner, in order to render himself more precious and sacred in the eyes of his retainers, will inspire them with the most violent abhorrence of all other sects, and continually endeavor, by some novelty to excite the languid devotion of his audience. No regard will be paid to truth, morals, or decency, in the doctrines inculcated. Every tenet will be adopted that best suits the disorderly affections of the human frame.

Only where there was an official religious establishment would the zeal of the clergy be greatly reduced. "The most decent and advantageous composition" that the authorities can make "with the spiritual guides is to bribe their indolence, by assigning stated salaries to their profession."¹⁵

13. Hume, "Whether the British Government inclines more to Absolute Monarchy, or to a Republic," Essays Moral, Political, and Literary I 122-126, esp. 125.

14. The Papers of James Madison I 170-179. See also Irving Brant, James Madison (1941-1961) I 234-251.

15. David Hume, The History of England (New York 1878) III 129: Chapter XXIX (near the beginning).

Madison disagreed. As a recent Princeton graduate, still very much under the influence of the pious Dr. Witherspoon, he had distrusted "encourage[r]s of free enquiry." In a letter to a close friend, he had called them destroyers of "the most essential Truths" and "Enemies to serious religion." Yet, even then, Madison had openly wondered whether the support of civil society required "an Ecclesiastical Establishment" or whether this might not, in fact, be "hurtful to a dependant State";¹⁶ and, within a matter of weeks, he wrote back to that same friend to suggest that if his own sect

the Church of England had been the established and general Religion in all the Northern Colonies . . . , slavery and Subjection might and would have been gradually insinuated among us. Union of Religious Sentiments begets a surprizing confidence and Ecclesiastical Establishments tend to great ignorance and Corruption [--] all of¹⁷ which facilitate the Execution of mischievous Projects.

This conviction, firmly held and vigorously defended, explains why Madison expended great effort at the Virginia Convention in a futile attempt to write disestablishment into that fledgling state's Declaration of Rights.¹⁸ A decade later, he would finally succeed, this time by steering Jefferson's Bill Establishing Religious Freedom through the Virginia legislature;¹⁹ and, in 1788, he was prepared to argue that the very presence of a great "multiplicity of sects" was "the best and only security for religious liberty in any

16. The Papers of James Madison I 101: Letter to William Bradford on 1 December 1773.

17. The Papers of James Madison I 105: Letter to William Bradford on 24 January 1774. See also I 112-113, 160-161: Letters to William Bradford on 1 April 1774 and 28 July 1775.

18. Above, note 14. The original draft of Madison's amendment included the stipulation "that no man or class of men ought, on account of religion to be invested with peculiar emoluments or privileges; nor subjected to any penalties or disabilities unless under colour of religion, any man disturb the peace, the happiness, or safety of society."

19. For a brief history of the struggle for disestablishment, see Brant, James Madison I 298-300, II 343-355. See also The Papers of Thomas Jefferson I 525-558: Notes and Proceedings on Discontinuing the Establishment of the Church of England, 11 October-9 December 1776, and The Papers of James Madison VIII 295-306, 473-474: "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments" of 20 June 1785 and Letter to Thomas Jefferson on 22 January 1786. Madison ends his discussion of religious matters in the latter with the comment that "the enacting clauses past without a single alteration, and I flatter myself have in this Country extinguished for ever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind."

society."²⁰ This argument Madison owed to Hume's close friend and disciple Adam Smith.²¹

In The Wealth of Nations, Smith had quoted Hume's discussion of this problem at length. In making his reply, he readily confessed that "the interested and active zeal of religious teachers can be dangerous and troublesome," but he argued that this condition would obtain "only where there is, either but one sect tolerated in the society, or where the whole of a large society is divided into two or three great sects."

That zeal must be altogether innocent where the society is divided into two or three hundred, or perhaps into as many [as a] thousand sects, of which no one could be considerable enough to disturb the publick tranquillity. The teachers of each sect, seeing themselves surrounded on all sides with more adversaries than friends, would be obliged to learn that candour and moderation which is so seldom to be found among the teachers of those great sects, whose tenets being supported by the civil magistrate, are held in veneration by almost all the inhabitants of extensive kingdoms and empires, and who therefore see nothing round them but followers, disciples, and humble admirers. The teachers of each little sect, finding themselves almost alone, would be obliged to respect those of almost every other sect, and the concessions which they would mutually find it both convenient and agreeable to make to one another, might in time probably reduce the doctrine of the greater part of them to that pure and rational religion, free from every mixture of absurdity, imposture, or fanaticism, such as wise men have in all ages of the world wished to see established.

To support his argument, Smith pointed to Pennsylvania where the establishment of full religious freedom had been "productive of this philosophical good temper and moderation."²²

20. Cf. The Debates in the Several State Conventions, 2nd edition, ed. Jonathan Elliot (Philadelphia 1876) III 330: 12 June 1788, with The Federalist 51:351-352 where Madison advances the same argument.

21. The Wealth of Nations was first published in 1776. At some point during the decade that followed, Madison read the work with evident care. See The Papers of James Madison VIII 266: Letter to Thomas Jefferson on 27 April 1785.

22. See Adam Smith, An Inquiry into The Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations V.i.g.3-8. I employ The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith (Oxford 1976). In citing specific works by Smith, I have followed the admirable practice adopted by the editors--who initially numbered the author's paragraphs and then consistently referred to specific passages by mentioning the particular work, the divisions employed by Smith, and the paragraph enumeration within those divisions. The remaining paragraphs of Smith's remarkably frank discussion deserve attention as well.

Smith's argument had a considerable effect on the young Virginian. According to his neighbor and biographer William Cabell Rives, Madison was accustomed in his later years to quote often and "with great approbation" Voltaire's claim that "if one religion only were allowed in England, the government would possibly be arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut each other's throats; but, as there are a multitude, they all live happy and in peace."²³ In 1787, prudence dictated that the Virginian be more reticent than Hume, Smith, and Voltaire. By that time, Madison had already himself become an encourager "of free inquiry" and an enemy to what the majority of his contemporaries would have considered "serious religion." Political action required discretion. The divines influential in the various states would not have looked kindly on the proposed Constitution had they recognized that it embodied a strategy for reducing the various sects to a "pure and rational religion" of the sort favored by "wise men"--even in wholly pagan times. His reticence notwithstanding, Madison's purpose and that evidenced by Hume, Smith, and Voltaire were one and the same.

On the question of religion, Thomas Jefferson was fully in agreement with his friend James Madison. Where all sects were in the minority, all would have an interest in defending religious toleration; and, in such a situation, the very competition between sects would favor an amalgamation of doctrine and a moderation of the religious passions that had all too often in the past given rise to political dissension. In his view, then, it made good sense to exclude theology from the curriculum of the University of Virginia; and, when this stirred opposition in religious circles, he added an amendment to his original plan, inviting the various sects to establish schools of divinity on the confines of the university, so that the candidates for the clergy could mingle with one another and draw sustenance from an aggressively secular curriculum informed by the rational precepts of the Enlightenment.²⁴ As he put it in a letter to a prominent advocate of Unitarianism (which was, not

Cf. The Papers of James Madison I 106, 109, 112: Exchange of Letters with William Bradford on 24 January, 4 March, and 1 April 1774; VIII 301-303: "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments" of 20 June 1785, Articles 8 and 11. Note Smith's debt to Montesquieu. In accord with the divisions employed by the author, I cite The Spirit of the Laws by book and by chapter: XIX.27. For Montesquieu, I have employed the Pléiade edition: Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Roger Caillois (Paris 1949-1951) II 580-581.

23. William Cabell Rives, History of the Life and Times of James Madison (New York 1859-1868) II 220-221.

24. See The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D. C. 1907) XIX 414-416: An Exact Transcript of the Minutes of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia during the Rectorship of Thomas Jefferson, 7 October 1822.

surprisingly, the one sect he looked on with favor), "[B]y bringing the sects together, and mixing them with the mass of other students, we shall soften their asperities, liberalize and neutralize their prejudices, and make the general religion a religion of peace, reason, and morality."²⁵

For Madison and for Jefferson, freedom of conscience was as much a matter of policy as a matter of principle. The author of the Declaration of Independence and the father of the American Constitution were Deists who looked for moral and political guidance not to the Holy Scriptures, but to the "law of nature and of nature's God."²⁶ If their strategem was successful, their fellow citizens would someday be unable to distinguish the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from the God of the philosophers; and, when that day came, the danger posed by parties of principle would disappear altogether.

25. See The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (ed. Ford) X 242-244: Letter to Thomas Cooper on 2 November 1822. The offer to Cooper of one of the university's eight professorships caused Virginia's Presbyterians to suspect that Jefferson intended to make his university a hotbed of Socinianism; had they known that he had sounded out two other Unitarians as well, they would undoubtedly have caused a greater fuss. For Jefferson's enthusiasm for Unitarianism, see Jefferson, Writings (ed. Peterson) 1458-1459: Letter to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse on 26 June 1822. Note also The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (ed. Ford) VIII 223n: Letter to Benjamin Rush on 21 April 1803.

26. It can hardly be fortuitous that, in critical documents, both resort to the language of Deism. Cf. The Papers of Thomas Jefferson I 413-433 (esp. 423, 429); The Declaration of Independence with Madison, The Federalist 43:297. See also The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York 1900-1910) IX 573-607: Notes on Nullification, 1835-1836. In each case "the laws of nature & of nature's God" turn out to be extrapolations from Thomas Hobbes's "natural right of self-preservation." Madison appears to have been swayed from religious orthodoxy at about the time of the Revolution by his reading of Newton's Dr. Clarke. Fifty years later, he would still endorse "reasoning from the effect to the cause, 'from Nature to Nature's God.'" See ibid. IX 229-231: Letter to Frederick Beasley on 20 November 1825. Though Madison was outwardly observant, his heterodoxy was widely suspected at the time. For further discussion, see Brant, James Madison I 68-71, 85, 111-122, 127-131; III 268-273; Ralph Ketcham, James Madison: A Biography (New York 1971) 55-58, 61, 66, 162-168. As his private correspondence indicates, Madison's motive for entering the fray concerning freedom of conscience and the establishment of religion was from the outset political and not religious.

III

The two statemen from Virginia could take it for granted that religious factions were entirely artificial because in antiquity there had been no parties of abstract, speculative principle apart from the completely powerless philosophical sects. Had it not been for the peculiar character of Christianity, circumstances in modern times would have been much the same. And, even then, where good fortune and good policy combined to disarm superstition, civil strife was most likely to arise in a fashion perfectly familiar to the ancients.

In Madison's view, factions should normally spring into existence because men (and the rich and the poor in particular) have conflicting material interests. It was with this in mind that he developed the most controversial and original aspect of his argument for the extended republic. Alexander Hamilton had remarked on the scope given to "commercial enterprise" in America by "the diversity in the productions of different States";²⁷ Madison saw that this diversity had political advantages as well. In Europe, where aristocratic hauteur added insult to the injuries of class, it might be impossible to obviate the tension between the rich and the poor. But, in a large and prosperous society unencumbered with the tradition of juridically defined orders, the various distribution of property would greatly outweigh in importance its unequal distribution. In the New World, if perhaps not in the Old, it would be possible to substitute the healthy competition of divers parochial interests for the internecine strife that had so plagued the republics of antiquity.²⁸

In short, once artificial factions had been disposed of, the real import of geographical extension was economic diversity, and this is the goal that was Madison's primary concern. His argument is essentially an economic argument and only tangentially a geographical argument. Because of the dissimilarity in climate and in terrain, because of the disparity in soil quality and in natural resources, and because of the discrepancy in the conditions of security, in the ease of communication, and in the means of transport available, the myriad of distinct localities composing the nascent

27. Hamilton, The Federalist 11:71.

28. See Martin Diamond, "Democracy and The Federalist: A Reconsideration of the Framers' Intent," American Political Science Review 53 (1959) 52-68, esp. 64-67. In this connection, see also the dissertation of Douglass Greybill Adair, The Intellectual Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy: Republicanism, the Class Struggle, and the Virtuous Farmer (Yale University 1943) 187-271.

republic were suited for different modes of subsistence: for the growing of different crops, for the procurement and export of different raw materials, and for the manufacture of different finished goods. This geographically dictated division of labor would pit town against country, seaport against hinterland, and frontier region against settled district; it would set mountain against plain, swamp against forest, and thin soil against rich.²⁹

Distressed by the dreary record of the state legislatures and persuaded that the Articles of the Confederation were unworkable, Madison and his colleagues longed for a more perfect union. If they thought it possible to improve on the ancients and to avoid class struggle altogether, it was because they believed that the economic diversity characteristic of an extended republic and the social fragmentation that went with that diversity would undercut the fundamental antagonism between the rich and the poor by generating a host of petty and easily reconcilable antagonisms. The Framers did not establish a corporate state, but they did devise institutions intended to have something of the same effect: as they well knew, the representatives elected from the various territorial districts would inevitably take to heart the parochial interests and affections of their constituents.³⁰

IV

In a sense, the task faced by Atatürk was easier than the one that had confronted the American Founders. Islam made no attempt to marry philosophy with revelation; it lacked a systematic theology. In fact, it was less a religion of faith than a religion of law and pious observance. Accordingly, it lacked the independent, clerical hierarchy that gave the Pope and his legions so much influence and power. Religious persecution and sectarian strife were not unknown within Islam; the umma might tolerate Christians and Jews as "peoples of the book" (Ah al-Kitāb), but it did not extend that toleration to heretical Muslims as well. The quarrel between Sunni and Shia was of vital importance. But this distinction was grounded more in history than in abstract, speculative principle. Islam was far less prone to sectarian division and to bitter strife than its Christian cousin.

In another, perhaps more important sense, Atatürk's task was far more

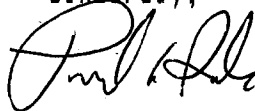
29. See The Papers of James Madison X 212-213: Letter to Thomas Jefferson on 24 October 1787.

30. Hamilton, The Federalist 35:218-222.

difficult than the one faced by his American predecessors. His Turkey was 97% Muslim. He could proclaim religious toleration; and he could formally disestablish Islam. He could even persuade his compatriots to call themselves Turks. But he could not so easily convince them that their religion was peripheral to their political loyalties, and he could not depend upon the competition between a multiplicity of sects to sustain his establishment of religious freedom and a secular state. The teachers of Islam would see themselves surrounded on all sides with more friends than adversaries; around them, they would find almost "nothing but followers, disciples, and humble admirers"; and so they would not at all be obliged by social and political circumstance to learn "candour and moderation." Time would not naturally and by imperceptible steps reduce their doctrine to "that pure and rational religion, free from every mixture of absurdity, imposture, or fanaticism, such as wise men have in all ages of the world wished to see established." It would not in this fashion "soften" the "asperities" of Sunni Islam; nor would it "liberalize and neutralize" the "prejudices" typical of that faith; and it would not make "the general religion a religion of peace, reason, and morality." Put simply, Turkey was not and could not become Pennsylvania. Serious Muslims would continue to wish to see the Shari'ah enforced; and they would be bitterly hostile to a regime restricted to strictly temporal ends. In Turkey, it might be possible to obviate class strife by promoting the competition of interests, but it would not be at all easy to eliminate parties of principle.

In my next letter, I will attempt both to outline the manner in which Atatürk tackled this problem and to assess the results. The subject will, I hope, be of considerable interest--for it bears directly on the question whether one can successfully establish a modern republic in an Islamic setting. For that endeavor, circumstances have nowhere been more propitious than in Atatürk's Turkey--though whether they have been propitious enough remains, even today, an open question.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Rahe

Received in Hanover 5/14/85