

The Construction of the Notion of Religion

Attila K. Molnár*

The word “religion” is not a modern invention, we inherited it from the Romans. Yet, it was not commonly used until the age of the Reformation, when it emerged as a by-product of the religious conflicts. During this formative age of Europe many of our basic notions, like “politics,” were constructed. The aim of this paper is not to define religion or to analyse its several meanings and definitions, but to focus on the construction of the notion of religion in the early modern Europe. It seems that the word “religion” adopted the meanings of *conscientia* and *universitas fidelium* at this time. One of the basic ideas in the Christian thought was that sinful human needed restrains, controls from within as well as from without, which is referred to as *forum internum* or *conscientia*, and *forum externum* or worldly judges, respectively. When during the 16th-17th centuries *conscientia* received a highly individualized and emotional meaning from Luther and Milton, it was a useful concept for the reform minded people. It came to mean a control from within and at the same time shared, common among the people. However, the community who supported a gradual change in political thinking and political theology requested another word instead of *conscientia*. It is here, from the notions of *conscientia* and *universitas fidelium*, that religion adopted its own ideas of shared, common control from within and independent from the worldly power of any leader.

The construction of the notion of religion was partly a side effect of the Reformation and religious wars, and more specifically, this notion

* Eötvös University, Budapest

was taken from republican principles. The notion of religion was created by lay politicians and by political theologians from the viewpoint of politics and political society.

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The basic tenet of medieval Christian thought was obedience. Because of the fall of man and original sin, Christian thought emphasized virtue and the need of obedience of human will and mind. According to Augustinian thought, one of the results of original sin was worldly power. The effects of original sin—self-love, ambition, quarrels, the *libido dominandi*, and so on—could be restrained by baptism (*regeneratio* or *renovatio*). Through baptism people could also become members of *corpus Christi*, that is, the Church. The members of the Church are *fidelis*, subjects who are under the law that govern and rule over them, a law handed down and not created by fallible human¹⁾. The Church, just like a political society was seen as a *congregatio fidelium* or *universitas fidelium*, of which members are connected to each others by common *fides* and obedience to common law. Here, obedience originated from *fides*.

It was also a widespread view that people needed control in the *foro conscientiae* as well in the *foro externo*, that is, control from within by *conscientia* as well as control from without by magistrates. Neither of them could exist without the help of the other. The stronger the *conscientia* in a person the closer that person is to the ideal of a citizen of *Chvitas Dei*, while the weaker the *conscientia*, the closer that person is to the citizen of *civitas terrena*. The most terrible is, of course, the faithless atheist who can be governed only by their will, in which case *libido dominandi* is stronger than the *conscientia*.

In spite of the wars and conflicts between the Pope and secular powers, the idea of *universitas fidelium* was common in worldly thinking. Subjects were loyal to their rulers and to their oaths, because

1) I Corinthian. 15, 10.

they allegedly worried about other-worldly punishment. However, when the hope of rewards and the fear of divine punishment are removed, no human society can endure. Thus, those who did not believe in the other world and the associated punishment were seen as potential rebels, oath-breakers. Therefore, Christian thought connected the idea of being good subjects to Christian faith.

After the publication of Machiavelli's "The Prince" in 1513, in which religion or Christian faith were not used in the description of a political society, Luther published his 95 points in 1517. In the following two centuries the matter of divinity became again the most important element in public as well as in private life. After the victory of the secular government in the Investitura wars, not the Papal, but the highly individualist interpretation of *conscientia*, created a new rival for secular governments. *Sacerdotium* came back against *imperium*, however *sacerdotium* had taken a new form which, in the remote period between 11th-13th century, was institutionalized and legalized. Later after the Reformation *sacerdotium* was seated in the individual's *conscientia*.

The old wars between the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Seat was about the question of ultimate judgement. Rome vindicated the right to be the ultimate judge in any matter, even over the emperor, yet the new problem for rulers in the 16th century was the popular movements that claimed *conscientia* as the ultimate judge. However, the Holy Seat considered itself to be the ultimate judge above secular power, because of its direct relation to God's will. At the same time, *conscientia* was thought to be the ultimate judge, even above the rule of secular power because of its direct relation to God. However, the Reformation spread the view that the ultimate judge could only be *conscientia*, because it was not from human but from God.²⁾ Already in the patristic thoughts of St. Augustine and St. Jerome, *conscientia* became the highest position of authority in questions of morality.

2) "*Conscientia* was a little God sitting in the middle of men's hearts." (Perdins)
 "It immediately subject to God, and his will, and therefore it cannot submit it selfe unto any creature without idolatry." (Ames)

The idea of *conscientia* originated from the Hellenistic popular language, from the term “*syneidesis*.”³⁾ *Syneidesis* was the feeling of shame and fear produced by the knowledge that one's personal action in the past was wrong. It meant both the capacity to experience this reaction as well as to possess the knowledge that could bring about this reaction. St. Paul connected *syneidesis* to God, and saw it as a counterpart to Christian faith. *Conscientia*, however, was considered by St. Jerome as an inner secret of individuals and as part of the Christian faith, but still *conscientia* meant knowledge “shared with others.” “Con” or “Syn” means “with” and the original meaning of *conscientia* was the shared aspect of knowledge.

Conscientia in the Roman Stoic philosophy, namely of Seneca and Cicero, was connected to people's natural awareness of the natural moral law, so for Seneca and Cicero, *conscientia* was connected with “logos.” In the cases of Philip de Chancellor, Aquinas, and St. Bonaventura, healthy *conscientia* was a good emotion produced by reason. On the other hand, unhealthy *conscientia* was a bad emotion and it ruled over reason. Good *conscientia* produced certainty, clear and undisturbed felicity, and joy while bad *conscientia* caused terror, confusion, sadness, fear, and desperation. Whatever role and significance were given to reason in the idea of *conscientia*, it worked by means of feelings and emotions.

Aquinas' ideas were different from previous theologians. He gave a new and important meaning to *conscientia*, which was knowledge applied to an individual case. For him *conscientia* meant discursive, argumentative reasoning, and the application of knowledge and since Aquinas, *Conscientia* played the role of judge and witness, or reasoning and memory. Aquinas further believed that *Conscientia* came from nature, therefore everyone, by nature, had *conscientia* (*synteresis* - reason). It cannot be lost, not even by the damned.

Luther's notion of *conscientia* was connected to William Ockham's

3) This idea, however, cannot be found in the Old Testament.

nominalism. In Ockham's view, reason and will were identical, but unlike Luther he rejected natural law and *synteresis*. In Luther's works after 1516, *conscientia* became only an emotional concept and *synteresis*—reason and syllogism—disappeared from his works all together.⁴⁾ *Conscientia* was not the application of Law anymore, but rather a direct result of the Gospel, or the Holy Spirit. Luther equates *Conscientia* with faith, while *synteresis*, shared reason, was criticised as quasi-Pelagian. For Luther, without grace there was not *conscientia* but only Love.

According to Luther, shared knowledge and reason was not seen as a natural part of the human mind. The desire for good was not seen as natural. In other words, goodness was not a natural inclination of human but a gift. Human nature after the “fall of man” was seen by Luther as corrupt as argued in his “Tower Experience,” published in 1516. After the problem of application of God's Law to the people has disappeared, the chance and the problem of erring *conscientia* disappeared as well. For Luther, *conscientia* was always good, infallible and homogeneous among faithful Christians, and it was mainly an emotional experience given as a gift by God. Moreover, Luther, in this view of *conscientia*, turned against Scholastic rationalism but towards mysticism. He saw this rare, mystic *conscientia* as being basically emotional based on love and as the basis of Christian freedom. Basically, a true Christian does not need laws, government, nor anything that is of human invention, because a Christian was directed by God. Failing to follow the dictates of one's *conscientia* was seen as a sin. Thus, a Christian should not act against his *conscientia*. This is the origin of “negative freedom” in human made laws.

Conscientia characteristically could not be forced onto the people by the secular powers. So “force” as well as the “debate” were useless. This radical, Lutheran interpretation of *conscientia* was against not only institutional religiosity, but even against rational argumentation and reasoning. Luther's notion of *conscientia* had nothing to do with reason,

4) This is evident in Luther's “Lectures on Letter to Romans,” and in the “Lectures on Letter to Galatians.”

nor inter-subjectivity. *Conscientia's* direct relation with God was the origin of the sense of individual dignity and the confidence in other people. Luther says, "I cannot so otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen." Luther's faith was a faith of *conscientia* and through his reformation the meaning of *conscientia* was individualized losing its inter-subjective character.

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In the period between 16th-17th century the word "religion" took partly the previous role of *conscientia* in social-political thought and it was only in the middle of the 17th century that theologians adopted the word "religion" for their use. The change of *fides* and *conscientia* into the pagan idea of religion originated before the conflicts of Reformation, but the spread and formation of this idea can be seen as an intellectual effect of the Reformation.

The Renaissance of Cicero and stoic took the word of "religion" into the premodern political thinking. In the "*De Natura Deorum*," Cicero refers to salvation; he writes "with piety, reverence and religion must likewise disappear. And when these are gone, life soon becomes a welter of disorder and confusion, and in all probability the disappearance of piety towards the gods will entail the disappearance of loyalty and social union among men as well, and of justice itself, the question of all virtues."⁵⁾ It seems to be significant that the word "religion" was used initially in the republican political thinking, and emerged alongside the idea of "politics." It is also interesting to note that this adaptation started with a highly sceptical author, Cicero, whose arguments against dogmas and certainty spread widely in the 16th century. Thus the idea of religion was linked from its early period on to the sceptic's view on the possibility of certainty about truth. In the Ciceronian context divinity and piety was not important because of salvation, but because of its peaceful consequences to the Roman *respublica*. In a fragments of "*De*

5) Cicero. *De Natura Deorum*, tans. H. Rackham, Harvard University Press, 1967, p.7.

natura Deorum” we can find a decisive meaning of religion. Cicero was aware that the objects of people's worship were false. For after saying a number of things tending to subvert religion, he adds nevertheless that these matters ought not to be discussed in public, lest such discussion destroy the established religion of the nation.

I have referred previously to Machiavelli, because he had a role in the creation of the notion of politics as well as the notion of religion. As I have mentioned, in his work “The Prince,” religion did not have any role in any meaning, but his later work, “*Discourses on Livy*” introduced the idea of republicanism with the notion of religion into European thought. Machiavelli wrote here three chapters on Roman religion, Chapters XI-XIII in Book I. A Ciceronian meaning of religion was used wholly from the point of view of political society: “religion as a thing altogether necessary if he wished to maintain a *civilitá* or civilization.”⁶⁾ He further says, “religion... was among the first causes of the happiness of that city, Rome. for it caused good order, and good order makes good fortune, and from good fortune arises happy success of enterprises. And the observance of the divine cult is the cause of the greatness of republics, so the disdain for it is the cause of their ruin. *For where the fear of God fails, it must be either that the kingdom comes to ruin, of that it is sustained by the fear of a prince, which supplies the defects of religion.*”⁷⁾ It is worth noting that Machiavelli connected ‘religion’ to the *civitas* and civility, that is a political community following Ciceronian thinking. Simply said, the elimination of religious feelings results in anarchy and disorder. Instead of *fides*, Machiavelli used the word “religion” that was apart from any relevance to truth and salvation. This is evident when he named religion as the people's source of obedience where he writes, “In the province of Germany this goodness and this religion are still seen to be great in those people, which makes many republics there free, and they observe

6) Machiavelli, Nicolo. *Discourse on Livy*. University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.34. Probably, the ‘civility’ could be a better translation here than ‘civilization’.

7) *Ibid.*, p.35. emphasis added.

their laws.”⁸⁾

In the Christian republican thought, two phenomena were connected: freedom with morality, and despotism with immorality. Augustine spread the idea in Christian thought that, as a result of original sin, the lack of true faith and morality are necessarily connected to arbitrary power or coercion. From the point of view of the present paper, this image of *civitas terrena* or “city of man” is highly important. In *civitas terrena*, original sin results in vain, willful, and self-interested people, who are necessarily in conflict with each other and only absolute force may implement some relative peace. Since there is no morality among the people in the *civitas terrena*, the ruling power is necessarily absolute and cannot be morally legitimated. It is meaningless to think of morally conditioned power when the people are an immoral mob. Furthermore, in this social setting the controlling agency cannot depend on the approval of individuals. The citizens of *civitas terrena* can approve only sinful things, thus a form of rule cannot and should not result from their own will. In order that corrupted individuals can coexist, only a despotic power can control and oppress their licentiousness. The solution to this situation is true faith and the love of God, which can create real peace among the people. In such case, if people are obedient to God there would not be any need for a human ruler. The more people that can live peacefully without an outer controlling agency, the less they need a despotic ruler. What Augustine connected to true faith and the love of God, *civitas Dei*, was freedom from *libido dominandi* of a ruler and hence he connected religion with the republican tradition.⁹⁾

8) *Ibid.*, p.110.

“Italy... this province has lost all devotions and all religion, which brings with it infinite inconveniences and infinite disorders, for as where there is religion one presupposes every good, so where it is missing one presupposes the contrary.” (Machiavelli, p.38)

“Roman histories shows how much religion served to command armies, to animate plebs, to deep menschliche good, to bring shame to the wicked.” (Machiavelli, p.34)

9) The above quoted sentences can be rather familiar for anyone who at least read Tocqueville's “Democracy in America”, a characteristically republican book.

From the early use, the notion of "religion" had a sceptical meaning, this notion significantly was indifferent to doctrinal differentiations or arguments about truth. Thus, Machiavelli writes, "a prince of a republic of a kingdom should maintain the foundation of the religion they hold... All things that arise in favor of religion they should favor and magnify, even though they judge them false."¹⁰ This sceptical republican notion of religion was against church hierarchy and the experts of divinity. Machiavelli even goes as far as to argue that the church of Rome is opposed to religion. He says, "those people who are closest to the Roman church, the head of our religion, have less religion."¹¹

The dogmatic conflicts and wars of the 16th-17th century spread doubt against the church dogmas because of the social-political consequences of them. The need of peaceful co-existence of people attached to different faiths emerged. Therefore the image of *universitas*

Democracy can exist in America, because, other than the self-governing townships, there is a common religion which limits individuals from within. Religion supports democracy by means of restraining the mind. "Thus, while the law permits the Americans to do what they please, religion prevents them from conceiving, and forbids them to commit, what is rash or unjust." (Tocqueville, vol. I. p.305) Liberty especially needs religion, because in despotism there is political control, but in liberty it is replaced by religious morality. "Religion is much more necessary in the republic, which they set forth in glowing colors, than in the monarchy which they attack. It is more needed in democratic republic than in any others. How is it possible that society should escape destruction if the moral tie is not strengthened in proportion as the political tie is relaxed?" (Tocqueville, vol. I. p.307) As in Biblical thought, a person has to be obedient to God or to another person. Liberty and order can exist side by side, if religious morality governs individuals. "But what now remains of those barriers which formerly arrested tyranny? Since religion has lost its empire over the souls of men, the most prominent boundary that divided good from evil is overthrown and everything seems doubtful and indeterminate in the moral worlds; kings and nations are guided by chance, and none can say where are the natural limits of despotism and bonds of licence (lie)." (Tocqueville, vol. I. p.327); "I doubt whether man can ever support at the same time complete religious independence and entire political freedom. And *I am inclined to think that if faith be wanting in him, he must be subject: and if he be free, he must believe.*" (Tocqueville, vol. II. p.22. emphasis added).

10) Machiavelli, p.37.

11) Machiavelli, p.37.

fideliium based on *conscientia* and dogmatic tenets was slowly worn out, and religion took the role of *conscientia*. Religion was seen as a necessary control from within. As *conscientia* was being individualized during the Reformation, religion took its original meaning—a shared, inter-subjective knowledge of benevolent action in everyday life. The meaning of religion from its early days in the 16th century meant control, and it referred first of all not to dogmas, but to shared common moral rules. Of course, this change caused a new problem later in the 18th-19th century; if dogmatic faith was not the origin of good moral action, what on earth can be the origin of these shared common rules controlling human actions from within?

The meaning of religion was indifferent to truth, because it did not refer to salvation. It was without a defined content; it was simply a form of opinion, of thinking. Religion meant immanent moral rules with this worldly consequences, and it bracketed the future afterlife. Religion was seen as useful from the point of view of peace in a political society. This republican and highly sceptic meaning can be found, beside Montaigne's essays, in Bodin's writings who was the godfather of the modern notion of the state. Indeed, Bodin's "*Colloquium*" was not published until the 19th century, but his other work, the "Six Books of the Commonwealth" was widely read. This book not only spread the idea of republicanism, but it had a decisive role in the creation of our ideas about sovereignty, state, and politics. In Bodin's books, we can find the same republican and highly sceptic use of religion more in the "Six Books" than in "*Colloquium*." "Even atheists agree that nothing so tends to the preservation of commonwealth as religion, since it is the force that at once secures the authority of kings and governors, the execution of the laws, the obedience of subjects, reverence for the magistrates, fear of ill-doing, and knits each and all in the bonds of friendship. Great care must be taken that so sacred a thing should not be brought into doubt or contempt by dispute, for such entails the ruin of common wealth."¹²⁾

In the "*Colloquium heptaploromes*," that is, "Discourse on the Seven

Secrets of the Sublime,” Bodin's main interest was how the harmony of state could be preserved in spite of the variety of different opinions about humanity and the divided affairs. “Nothing is more destructive in a state than for citizens to be split into two factions, whether the conflict is about law, honor, or religion.”¹³⁾ In the France that he had lived, almost everyone was at odds with everyone else, all were angry at all others. One of this basic axiom was that not a more dangerous pest could arise than civil discord. “A change in religion has more dangerous consequences, namely upheaval in public affairs, destructive wars, even more calamitous than plagues and torments of demons.”¹⁴⁾ Toleration, a sceptic's attitude towards religions keeps religion in people's mind, but the peace in a political community does not need doctrinal unity, that is, it does not need a substantive *universitas fidelium*.¹⁵⁾

Bodin's conclusion was that ambiguity in matters of faith cannot be removed, and because such matters cannot be decided by reasoning or arguing, it is laudable to abstain from discussions of divine matters. From these two premises he concluded the outcome of tolerance, the indifference of the state in the affairs of divinity. He writes, “Since the leaders of religions and the priests... have had so many conflicts among themselves that one could decide which is true among all the religion, is it not better to admit publicly all religions of all peoples in the state, as in the kingdom of the Turks and Persians, rather than to exclude one, for if we seek the reason why the Greeks, Latins, and barbarians

12) Bodin, Jean. *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Basil Blackwell, p.141.

13) Bodin, Jean. *Colloquium on the Seven Secrets of the Sublime*, Princeton University Press, p.151.

14) Ibid., p.165.

15) “But if the prince who is assurance of the true religion wishes to convert his subject, split by sects and factions, he should not, in my opinion, attempt to coerce them. The more one tries to constrain men's wills, the more obstinate they become... those who are prevented from the exercise of their own religion, and not in sympathy with any other end by becoming atheists, as we know. Once they have lost the fear of God, they trample under foot the law and the magistrate, and give themselves over to every sort of impiety and wickedness, beyond the power of any human law to remedy.” (Bodin, *Six Books*, p.142).

formerly had no controversy about religion, we will find no other cause. I think, then a concord and harmony of all in all religions (will come about).”¹⁶⁾ We read practically the same sentences in the “Six Books” where it refers to the political wisdom of pagan antique states as well as the practice of the Turks.¹⁷⁾ Because we cannot decide which religion is true, “it is safer to admit all religions than to choose one from many.”¹⁸⁾ It is clear that, as the sceptics have thought, religion meant a form without any reference to rank or grade. As Bodin remarks, “I am not concerned here with what form of religion is the best.”¹⁹⁾

The point of view from worldly political peace and the view of its experts, the *politiques*, have come out as the winners above the questions of truth and otherworldly salvation and their experts, the clerics.²⁰⁾ “I believe *all are convinced that it is much better to have a false religion than no religion. Thus there is not superstition so great that it (religion) cannot keep wicked men in their duty* through the fear of divine power and somehow preserve the law of nature.... Epicurus committed an unpardonable sin because in trying to uproot the fear of divinity he seems to have opened freely all the approaches to sin. Of all the categories of public consideration nothing is more destructive than anarchy in which no one rules, no one obeys, no rewards are granted to good men, no punishment is given for wicked life.”²¹⁾ “*However great superstition may be, it is more tolerable than atheism* for the one who is bound by some superstition if (he is) kept by his awe of the divine

16) Bodin, *Colloquium*, p.152.

17) “The Kings of Turks... safeguard the rites of religion as well as any prince in this world. Yet, they constrain no one, but on the contrary permit everyone to live accordingly as his conscience dictates.” (Bodin, *Six Books*, p.142).

18) *Ibid.*, p.154.

19) Bodin, *Six Books*, p.141.

20) “When, therefore, he realized that Jews, pagans, and Christians were divided on religious principles, he choose to embrace all the religions of all groups rather than, by repudiating one, to arouse any one to contempt of divinity. With this reasoning he joined not only individual men but all men in the state to the great harmony of piety and love.” (Bodin, *Colloquium* p.159.)

21) Bodin, *Colloquium*, p.162. emphasis added.

in a certain way within the bounds of duty and of the law of nature.”²²⁾

Beside its effect on people's disposition to obedience, religion took another meaning of faith and *conscientia*. Namely, religion was thought, just like *conscientia* in Luther's case, as something out of the scope of political human will. Bodin writes, “we are unable to command religion because no one can be forced to believe against his will.”²³⁾

While Bodin focused on harmony, peace and integrity in the society, Machiavelli's concerns were freedom and success. Machiavelli faced in the renaissance masterless people, so he argued for internal controls, that of virtue and religion where religion was as important as virtue. Bodin, on the other hand, lived in a time of religious civil war, and having seen masterless enthusiasts, he, like Montaigne, claimed religion as a common shared moral rule that was indifferent to dogmatic tenets.

The notion of religion was blind to differences, but it strictly refused any atheism because of potentially harmful consequences. Religion meant something common among the differing sects and faiths, and it excluded any dogmatic debates among them due to its disruptive effects. That is why “religion was indifferent with respect to truth and salvation. It is important for us to know that religion was created by worldly rulers, politicians whose main interests were a peaceful society, control from within and without, obedience, but not eternal truth nor salvation. Religion referred to the inner-worldly consequences of *fides*, whatever its content might be. So, these authors did not think important to understand *fides* or to demonstrate dogmas.

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It was an important part in the emergence of the notions of religion when theologians, the experts of churches started to speak about religion instead of “Christian faith” or “true faith.” With this change they emphasized worldly political function instead of salvation and truth. Of course, it seems to be impossible to give the exact time of this change,

22) Ibid., p.139. Emphasized sentence can also be read in “Six Books.” p.142.

23) Ibid., p.471. Also in “Six Books.” p.142.

but a significant change occurred in the discourse about divinity when Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, retitled his book. Originally published in 1662 as “A Rational Account of the Grounds of the Christian Faith,” he later revised it with a new title, “A Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revel'd Religion.”

The central meaning of religion was common inter-subjective moral rules defining duties indifferent to personal feelings. Not the reformers, but their opponents, the defenders of establishment, like Cicero, used the notion of “religion.” During the reformation *conscientia* received a rather individualized meaning, and many people referred to his *conscientia* in order to find an unquestionable ground on which to judge for themselves. The experience of the high ages was schism which “arise from errors of conscience as well as carnal and corrupt reasons.”²⁴⁾ As Machiavelli argued for religion and virtue for the masterless disobedient people of Italy, Latitudinarians invoked religion for the civil disorder and upheaval originating from theological debates in England. Similar to the Latitudinarian use of religion, “the Apostles did not leave all persons to act as they judged fit, but did make rules determining their practice, and obliging them to uniformity therein.”²⁵⁾

It was because they, namely the Anglican Latitudinarians, started to use the notion of religion with indifference to doctrinal, dogmatic questions that they were criticized. Latitudinarians argued for social-political peace and harmony and against the disorder of civil society resulting from doctrinal fights about truth. This group of clerics imported the word of “religion” from the political discourse into the theological. It could be said that they were the first group of theologians, that is, the experts of divinity who reflected on the subject of “religion.” One of the leading figure of theological thought was John Tillotson, and his work, “The Advantage of Religion to Societies” may be a typical and a decisive one.²⁶⁾

24) Stillingfleet, Edward. *The Mischief of Separation*, London, 1680, p.40.

25) *Ibid.*, p.11.

26) At this time, the Calvinist sceptic, John Locke also used the word “religion”

Tillotson insisted on religion using intrinsic and political arguments. He writes, "religion is the great friend to our temporal interest... it doth not only tend to make every man happy considered singly and in a private capacity, but is excellently fitted for the benefit of human society." "Religion and virtue are the great cause of public happiness and prosperity" because "God recompenseth religious and virtuous nations with temporal blessings and prosperity." Without religion "human society would in a short space disband, and run into confusion, the earth would grow wild"²⁷⁾ This positive effect of religion in this world was interpreted as the consequence of political peace, obedience to the law of the state, and self-control by the religious people. Tillotson goes on to say "religion and virtue do naturally tend to the good order and more easy government of human society... Religion hath a good influence upon the people, to make them obedient to government, and peaceable one towards another" because religion "requires the extirpation of all those passions and vices which render man unsociable and troublesome to one another; as pride, covetousness and injustice, hatred and revenge and cruelty... (Religion) heals the natures of men, and (helps) to sweeten their spirits, to correct their passions and to mortify all those lusts which are the cause of enmity and division."²⁸⁾

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Transferring the notion of religion from political discourse into a theological one is paradoxical but important because firstly, religion refers to *fides* without involving the question of truth and salvation, the main issues of theological debates. Secondly, religion meant a shared common moral rules of which, the content is out of the control of clerical experts or any institution. Religion meant control from within

with a doctrinally indifferent meaning in the "*Epistola de Tolerantia*" when he argued for toleration. Yet, he was not a cleric!

27) Tillotson, John. *The Words of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, vol. 1.* Edinburgh, 1768, pp.70-72, 76.

28) *Ibid.*, pp.74-75.

which was thought necessary for a peaceful political life, obedience to worldly judges, and loyalty to oath. Moreover, religion was independent from doctrinal differences of clerics and from any direct control by these experts. Understanding of religion was supposed to be possible in this-worldly terms, apart from any special knowledge gained by training or obtained through inspiration. The early modern idea of religion continued the Medieval conception of *universitas fidelium*, but the word of *fides* lost its definite doctrinal content and its institutional and hierarchical reference. The word “religion” stole the matters of divinity from clerical experts and gave to the lay people whose common problem was living a peaceful conventional life. It seems that the religion did indeed solve this problem. “Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.” 8²⁹⁾

Not only the pre-modern notion of religion evolved from the medieval conceptions of *universitas fidelium* and *conscientia*, but the rationalist utopia of enlightenment in the 18th century, of which Rousseau and Kant were the main figures, also came from this heritage, but that is another story.

29) I. Timothy 2, 8.

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〈Abstract〉

The Construction of the Notion of Religion

Attila K. Molnár

Conscientia originated from the Hellenistic idea of *syneidesis*, or shared feelings of shame and fear of having done wrong. Through the Roman stoics and Aquinas *conscientia* took a more legalistic and rational nature. However, Luther interprets *Conscientia* to be no different from faith and as resulting from God's grace rejecting previous notions. It follows that even goodness was not a natural human inclination but a gift from God. One had to follow the dictates of one's *conscientia* and failing to follow it was sin. It was a radical interpretation that rejected rationality and polemics and it became personal rather than shared.

Other than this, the Reformation spread the idea of *conscientia* as a profane idea of religion and it was during the 17th century that the word religion begins to be used by theologians. Initially, as instigated by Cicero, religion was used as a source of social order and harmony rather than for the attainment of salvation. The profane nature of religion was made more poignant by Machiavelli when he joined the notion of religion with the idea of a republican ideal. Thus, a Ciceronian notion of religion that is stripped of its relevance to truth and salvation is connected to civility and social order. However the envisioned society was not based on *conscientia* as a dogmatic rule but based on religion as a controlling tool from within.

This republican and highly sceptic meaning of religion can be found in Bodin's works also. He asserts the importance of religion to social order when he insists that changes in religion can be more calamitous than natural disasters. Like Luther, Bodin too saw that religion was out of the command of the rulers and namely a form of internal control.

Yet, as a source of social stability, religion was seen as a social tool without any connection to the other-worldly by secular rulers whose main concern was political.

In following this tradition, the Latitudinarians invoked religion to counter the social disorder caused by dogmatic conflicts. Their goal, however, was a theological one not political. This seems ironic but the Latitudinarian conception of religion did not involve the question of truth and salvation but included the idea of being a shared but internalized moral rule. It also was seen as being out of the control of the clerics or any institution. Religion meant control from within which was thought necessary for obedience to moral leaders, loyalty to oaths, and a peaceful society.

Tracing its history from the Greek era to after the Reformation, it seems the notion of religion stole the matter of divinity from the clerics and gave it to the populace. There, religion has come to resolve the problem of peaceful living for the ordinary person and not for the secular rulers nor clerics. Through religion, other-worldly force came to be mediated not through external social agents, such as the church, but through internal personal channels.

종교개념의 형성

Attila K. Molnár

'Conscientia'는 잘못된 일에 대해 부끄러움과 두려움을 느끼는 것을 의미하는 회랍의 개념 'syneidesis'에서부터 나온 것이다. 로마의 스토아 철학자들과 아퀴나스를 거치면서 conscientia는 좀더 법적인, 이성적인 성격을 갖게 되었다. 그러나 루터는 이 같은 이전의 관념을 거부하면서, conscientia를 믿음과 다르지 않은 것으로 보았고 신의 은총에서 나온 것으로 보았다. 이에 따르자면 선(善)까지도 인간의 본래적인 성향이 아니라 신의 선물이다. 사람은 자신의 conscientia의 명령에 따라야하며 이를 따르지 못하면 죄가 되는 것이다. 이는 이성과 논증을 거부하는 급진적인 해석으로 이를 통해 종교는 여러 사람에게 공유되는 것이기보다 개인적인 것으로 취급되게 되었다.

뿐만 아니라 종교개혁은 종교의 세속적인 개념으로서의 conscientia의 개념을 떠뜨렸으며, 신학자들은 17세기 무렵부터 '종교'라는 말을 쓰기 시작했다. 처음에는 과거 키케로가 사용한 것과 같이 구원의 성취보다 사회적인 질서와 조화의 원천이라는 의미로 종교라는 말이 사용되었다. 이러한 종교의 세속적인 성격은 마키아벨리가 종교의 개념을 공화정의 이상과 결합시키면서 보다 심화되었다. 그리하여 진리, 구원과의 연관성이 제거된 키케로식의 종교 개념은 사회적인 규범과 질서와 연결되었다. 그러나 그들이 그리고 있는 사회는 교리적 질서로서의 conscientia에 기반한 사회가 아니라 내면적 통제 수단으로서의 종교에 기반한 사회였다.

이처럼 공화주의적이고 매우 회의적인 의미의 종교개념은 보던의 저작에서도 찾아 볼 수 있다. 그는 종교의 변화가 자연재해보다 더 불행한 것일 수 있다고 주장하면서, 사회 질서에서 종교가 갖는 중요성을 역설했다. 루터와 같이 보던 역시 종교는 지배자들의 명령권 밖에 있는 것으로서 내적 통제의 한 형태라고 보았다. 그러나 정치적인 문제에 주된 관심을 둔 세속 지도자들은 종교가 사회안정의 근원으로서 내세와는 관련이 없는 것이라 보았다.

이러한 전통을 따라 광고파주의자(廣敎派主義者)들은 교리적 충들로 의한 사회적 혼란에 대응하기 위해 종교라는 개념에 호소했다. 그러나 그들의 목표는 신학적인 것이었지 정치적인 것은 아니었다. 아이러니 하게도 광고파주의자의 종교 개념은 진리, 구원에 대한 물음을 수반하지 않으며, 여러 사람에게 공유된, 내재화된 도덕 규범을 의미한다. 그것은 또한 성직자들이나 어떤 단체의 통제 밖에 있는 것으로 보여진다. 종교는 도덕적 지도자들에게 대한 복종, 서약에 대한 충성, 그리고 평화로운 사회에 필요하다고 생각되는 통제를 의미했다.

희랍시대에서부터 종교개혁 이후까지의 역사를 훑어보면, 종교의 개념이 성직자들에게서 신성의 문제를 빼앗아 이를 민중들에게 넘긴 것처럼 보인다. 그 과정에서 종교는 세속적인 지도자들이나 성직자들을 위해서가 아니라 범인들을 위해 평화로운 삶의 문제를 해결하게 되었다. 종교를 통해 신적인 힘은 교회와 같은 외부의 사회적 대리인을 통해서가 아니라 내적인 개인적 통로를 통해 전달되게끔 되었다.