views of politics another version of the Great Separation or a "third way" in addition to the stark alternatives set out by Lilla, it would seem that the choices that lie before us are both less categorical and more complex than Lilla's account of them would allow. Moreover, the most solid insurance against the success of the sort of religious fanaticism that threatens to surprise complacent liberals, and the most effective support for a Great Separation that would be both durable and democratic, might well come from an alliance of those who defend the Great Separation for religious reasons with those who support it for non-religious ones.

Barth showed how and why the God of the liberal theologians was indeed stillborn. But he also gave the world again a God born in a manger who was with humankind from the beginning and who, far from dictating to us how we should set about arranging our political affairs, simply gave us our reason, thereby giving us all that we would require freely to govern ourselves.

Separation and Dialogue

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Mark Lilla's *Stillborn God* is the God of liberal theology, the outcome of an unsuccessful compromise in the European history of ideas after the Great Separation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lilla meticulously explores the origins of this compromise in the works of Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and later German philosophers and theologians (H. Cohen, Troeltsch), including Karl Barth's response to liberal theology. Apart from its careful, nuanced scrutiny of the epochal challenge posed by the Great Separation and subsequent reactions to it, this book presents a profound criticism of the liberal theology aspiration to provide a sort of "third way" between political theology and secular political philosophy. Lilla uses a powerful metaphor to demonstrate the futility of any attempt to bridge these two domains: "The river separating political philosophy and political theology is narrow and deep; those who try to ride the waters will be swept away by spiritual forces beyond their control."

The Stillborn God reminds us of our philosophical predecessors, by assessing their arguments and revealing their theoretic and practical

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failures: all is there already. But the world we live in is still fragile, and today's challenge lies not so much in realizing the importance of those ideas, as in expressing our full commitment to them. Lilla succinctly and persuasively formulates the dilemma: "We are heirs to the Great Separation only if we wish to be. Do we wish to be? That is the question we face." According to the author, the true origins of the Great Separation lie in the Hobbesian turn, an intellectual revolution quickly adopted and worked out by Locke, Hume, French philosophers, and other intellectual rebels against political theology in the West. For Hobbes, political theory could not rest on theology and revelation; it had to be based on firmer grounds of philosophy, anthropology and psychology. Writing his *Leviathan* only few years after the horrifying religious wars of the seventeenth century, Hobbes was able to identify and understand the common roots of religious and political conflicts. Lilla points out: "The religious problem and the political problem are, at bottom, the same problem. They can be solved together or not at all."

Variety of theologies, stemming from the inherent tensions within Christianity, gave rise to different antagonistic political theologies. One of the highlights of this book is its author's ability to convincingly demonstrate that such antagonisms are embedded in the "deepest ambiguities of Christian revelation." From the very outset, Christianity had to reconcile three different (pre-Christian) aspects of the divine — God's transcendence, his immanence and his remoteness — with its own complex doctrine of the Trinity. Lilla superbly demonstrates how certain ideas about biblical religions were transmitted, adopted and transformed within the Western philosophical and theological-political traditions. He also explains how various non-religious political ideologies (both secular and quasi-religious) can seriously challenge or even destroy societies. Eschatological elements have survived, and have been transformed into modern political ideologies, including Communism, Nazism and, one might add, liberal theories of the "end of history" (notably under Hegel's influence).

Lilla is hardly convinced that the "age of religion" is over in the West and that political theology can never be revived. His doubts about the certainty of these claims are based on his insight into the resilience of political theology with its apocalyptic-eschatological and messianic pretensions and radical possibilities. But recent political developments in Europe may perhaps provide some comfort. The European Union Constitution of 2004 clearly detached itself from political theology by referring, already in its preamble, to its inspiration based on the joint

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"cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law." In other words, there is no special place for God, or Christianity, or any other *particular* religion in this Constitution. Today's Europe draws its inspiration from an inclusive array of pre-Constantine, post-Constantine and non-Christian intellectual and cultural traditions. Indeed, Europe can only describe itself as a multi-cultural, multi-confessional and pluralistic community of nations and states. Whenever its countries attempted at defining themselves as homogeneous entities (be that homogeneity religious, ethnic or racial in its character), Europe experienced enormous tragedies and suffered terrible consequences in its modern history.

The concept of the Great Separation was certainly an experiment, an exception in its own time. Modern liberal-democratic ideas are not. Not any more. In this sense, Europe and the West have not lost their world yet. However, one should bear in mind that secularization, gradually evolving from the inspirations and concepts of the Great Separation, turned out to be a reversible process. The sociologists of religion who were rather optimistic in their prognoses concerning the prospects of secularization in the sixties and seventies, had to seriously revise their theories already in the eighties and nineties, soon after the Iranian revolution, the rise of the New Christian Right in the United States, and the return of post-socialist East European societies to their traditional religiosity. In some cases, such as the Balkans, the revival of the sacred was even accompanied by ethnic fundamentalism. In the same period, the sociologists have also noted a significant dose of moral panic concerning new religious movements.

Although Lilla's book does not deal with the non-Western traditions, it, nonetheless, addresses a much wider audience, because it tackles the dilemma that "all societies implicitly face." The European history of religious and political ideas provides a telling example in that regard. On the other hand, as seen from the author's introduction and concluding remarks, a more general concern about the global process of de-secularization seems to lurk beneath the surface of *The Stillborn God*. But how to move from the European history of political theology to this global level? Other, non-European and non-American cultures and civilizations (e.g., China, India, Japan, the Muslim world) should also be considered, in their own contexts, diversities and internal contradictions, in order to come up with any general hypotheses or expectations. Could, perhaps, a system of international morality, based on the concept of universality

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of human rights and the ideas of tolerance, cultural pluralism and inter-religious dialogue, connect both banks of Lilla's narrow, yet deep river? In this global world, there is an urgent need for at least two forms of religious dialogue: one is inter-religious in its character and concerns primarily faith communities; the other is between the secular humanists and religious representatives (theologians) and concerns everyone. Without dialogue the rift will, unfortunately, get even deeper.

However important for the Western civilization, the Great Separation (a Jeffersonian Wall?) is not the only model of religion-state relations today. A whole variety of models and constitutional distinctions were influenced by the secular turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the one hand, "the way modern liberal democracies approach religion and politics today is unimaginable without the decisive break made by Thomas Hobbes." On the other hand, religions can hardly isolate themselves from politics, because liberal democracies also recognize them as relevant players on the social and political scene. It is now up to the modern *states* to define the scope and limits of religions' involvement in social and political life. Notwithstanding the Great Separation, our liberal heritage is also based on a subtle acknowledgment of the place that churches and other religious communities occupy as relevant autonomous actors in the public sphere.

Between Divinity and Democracy

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In ancient times politics was encased in religion. It was believed that God revealed a law that governs the whole of human affairs. But then, argues Mark Lilla, at the transition to the modern age, a unique event occurred — a "Great Separation" — that pried politics away from theology. This took place along the North-Atlantic rim and Thomas Hobbes, more than anyone, articulated it. Lilla draws a portrait of Hobbes from an angle unfamiliar to many political theorists: By separating politics from theology, Hobbes founded not only the modern discourse of politics; he founded the discourse of modern, Western theology as well. This he did by directing focus away from God and zooming in on

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