

## RELIGION IN THUCYDIDES

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Even the mere suggestion in the title of this paper, that religion plays a role in Thucydides' work, will, I am sure, meet with immediate skepticism from the majority of Thucydidean scholars. Modern criticism rightly regards Thucydides as the model of the rational and objective historian who made it his first duty to leave the finger of God out of history and to tidy up the mundane events of the human drama. The contrast between his work with respect to the gods and the histories of his predecessor Herodotus and his successor Xenophon is plain; it is a contrast so great, in fact, as to provoke the observation from some (e.g. K. J. Dover) that Thucydides may well have been an atheist. Dover has been followed by some in this opinion, but most other scholars have been more cautious. To judge from their asides and other casual remarks in the literature, this group appears to regard Thucydides as an agnostic, in the modern sense of the word. I have, however, nowhere seen this view argued in print at any length and in detail. Those who maintain that Thucydides accepts Greek religion in a general way number a mere handful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> K. J. Dover, *HCT* 4.394; id., *Thucydides* (Oxford 1973) 41. Others who view Thucydides as an atheist or deny his interest in religion include H. Meuss, "Thucydides und die religiöse Aufklärung," *Neue Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie* 146 (1892) 225ff.; G. Bunsolt, *Griechische Geschichte* I–III (Gotha 1893–1904) 663; T. Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers* (London 1901) 407; J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (repr. New York 1958) 137. Gomme in his long introduction *HCT* 1.1ff. has virtually nothing to say about religion in the *History*. See also M. I. Finley in *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War*, transl. R. Warner (Harmondsworth 1972) 20. A more recent writer, A. Powell, "Thucydides and Divination," *BICS* 26 (1979) 45–50 seeks to uphold Dover's view. R. Jebb, "The Speeches of Thucydides," *Hellenica*, ed. E. Abbott (London 1880) 275–76 has a more balanced view, as does H. Breitenbach, "Thucydides," *Der Kleine Pauly* 5 (Munich 1975) 795. F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London 1907) stresses the influence of tragedy upon Thucydides without working out the full implications of his thesis for the historian's attitude to religion. H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley 1971) 141, following H. Strassburger, "Thukydides und die politische Selbstdarstellung der Athener," *Thukydides*, ed. H. Herter, *Wege der Forschung* 98 (Darmstadt 1968) 515, stresses the debt to the epic and finds no evidence that Thucydides was an unbeliever or agnostic. Among those who acknowledge that Thucydides at least occasionally shows some interest in religion and

Support for any of these views must come from the *History* itself since, apart from a lonely brief remark in Marcellinus' *Life* (22), external evidence is totally lacking. Such a procedure, however, is fraught with difficulties, for Thucydides, as is well known, tried to hide his own personal beliefs about such matters from his readers, and in this he was only too successful. Any conclusions about his personal views concerning the supernatural must therefore remain tentative and incapable of objective proof—hence the vagueness and caution of modern assessments.

Another problem is that of definition. It has been justly observed that it is far easier to say what ancient pagan religion was not than what it actually was. We may safely say, for example, that it lacked a revealed doctrine, a consistent eschatology, and the concept of redemption, in short, an organized and well-defined theology. It is more difficult to find agreement in detail on other matters, such as what constituted traditional religion and religious belief. But most of us will agree that the existence of the gods was taken for granted, that people were expected to believe in them, and that this belief was manifested in certain practices and institutions such as prayer, the observance of the numerous recurring festivals, the performance of rites and rituals such as sacrifice, and the protection of sanctuaries against illegal occupation, robbery, pollution, and sacrilege.

Whatever moral force was contained in that religion arose from the fact that many activities and conventions which held the social fabric together (e.g. the oath) were sanctified by individual deities and stood under their special protection. The gods, furthermore, were entitled to respect which in practical terms meant a willingness to observe the minimum limits of propriety and required a self-imposed restraint in conduct.<sup>2</sup> It was these manifestations of religious feeling which, being concrete in form and action, became particularly vulnerable in time of war.

Despite the difficulties, it is nevertheless legitimate to inquire to what extent, if any, Thucydides recognized religion in its various forms as a force to reckon with in the course of human events. It is also appropriate to inquire further how it affected the conduct of a protracted war and, what is more important, how it was itself affected by that war. Such an inquiry may reveal that Thucydides has more to say about religion than modern critics have been willing to concede.

The validity of two principles will, I believe, be admitted by everyone. First, the fact that in Thucydides the gods do not intervene in

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even belief in the gods are J. Classen and J. Steup, *Thukydides* 1 (Berlin 1963<sup>6</sup>) lxi–lxii (hereinafter abbreviated Classen-Steup); S. I. Oost, "Thucydides and the Irrational," *CP* 70 (1975) 195; N. Marinatos, "Thucydides and Oracles," *JHS* (1981) 138–40. On skepticism, agnosticism, and atheism as understood by the ancients see A. B. Drachmann, *Atheism in Pagan Antiquity* (Copenhagen 1922) 75.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford 1983) 190.

human affairs as they do, for example, in Herodotus, is not *eo ipso* proof that he ignores the institutions and conventions of religion; he does, in fact, retail a not inconsiderable amount of detail about both. Second, it is of fundamental importance to recognize that we cannot conclude, because the gods of popular belief have no significant role to play in the *History*, that Thucydides therefore denies either their existence or their importance to the people about whom he writes.

My purpose in this paper is twofold: first, to collect all references to religious matters in the *History*, including, very briefly and for the sake of completeness, passages which have little bearing on the problems posed above. Next, I propose to examine how much cognizance Thucydides takes of the religious sensibilities which underlie the actions of the people he describes, and to determine, to the extent that this can be done, how Thucydides viewed the relationship between religion on the one hand and politics and war on the other.

### SIGNPOSTS

The items which are not particularly informative or relevant can be dispensed with quickly. They consist of such obvious matters as temples and festivals to which the historian refers as signposts for geographical and chronological orientation. For example, the Corinthians sail to the mouth of the Ambracian gulf, where the temple of Apollo stands (1.29.3). The Peace of Nikias was concluded immediately after the celebration of the City Dionysia (5.20.1). Indices of this kind are fairly numerous and require no discussion except for the observation that temples of Apollo are more often mentioned as landmarks than are the temples of other deities.<sup>3</sup>

Whenever he has occasion to do so, and sometimes even when he does not, Thucydides relates facts of religious history, religious customs, and religious architecture. Much of this information is told in digressions of varying length; not surprisingly, the bulk pertains to Athens.

### RELIGIOUS ANTIQUITIES, BUILDINGS, AND CUSTOMS

#### Athens

In the excursus at 2.15–16 Thucydides traces the urban development of Athens by using the history of its shrines and temples as evidence; the town's history here becomes synonymous with the history of its religious architecture. His list includes several of the more important

<sup>3</sup> Apollo: 1.29.3; 2.91.1; 3.94.2; 6.3.1; 6.75.1; 7.26.2; 8.35.2. Artemis: 8.109.1; Aphrodite: 6.46.3; Androkrates (hero): 3.24.1; Ares (Enyalios): 4.67.2; Dioskouroi: 4.110.1; Herakles: 5.66.1; Hermes: 7.29.3; Poseidon: 8.67.2; Protesilaos: 8.102.3; Zeus: 8.19.2.

temples inside and outside the Akropolis: the temples of Athena and of the Other Gods,<sup>4</sup> of Olympian Zeus, Pythian Apollo, Ge, Dionysos in the Marsh, and other unnamed deities. There is a miniature history of the sacred spring Kallirhoe, renamed Enneakrounos after the tyrants equipped it with fountains. For Thucydides Athena is simply *the* goddess, her grand altar, *the* altar (1.126.10–11). He identifies more or less precisely the sites of the altar of the Furies (1.126.11), of the Pelargikon (2.17.1), of the shrines of Eleusinian Demeter and of Theseus (2.17.1, 6.61.2), and of the Leokoreion (1.20.2). Outside the city he locates Poseidon's sanctuary at Kolonos (8.67.2), a theater of Dionysos at Mounichia (8.93.1), and the Kerameikos, the burial site of Athenian war dead and the scene of the eulogy delivered over them. Thucydides takes an entire chapter (2.34) to relate this religious custom and its origins, including such details as the coffins, the participants, the rites of mourning, and the route of the funeral procession.

He also displays a marked interest in the religious policy of the tyrants. Peisistratos had purified Delos; besides beautifying Kallirhoe the tyrants improved the appearance of Athens in general and punctiliously performed sacrifices and other religious rites. Members of the family served as marshals of the Panathenaic procession and dedicated altars to the Twelve Gods in the Agora and to Pythian Apollo (1.20.2; 3.104.1; 6.54.6–7; 6.57.1).

For some of the festivals mentioned in the *History* we find a considerable amount of detail. The Older Dionysia were held in Anthesterion, at the same time as the Ionian festival (2.15.4). The Synoikia commemorating the unification of Attica were celebrated at public expense in honor of Athena since the time of Theseus (2.15.2). At the Diaisia, the greatest festival of Zeus Meilichios outside the city, the entire population offered local produce rather than victims to the god (1.126.6). As in the case of the war burials, we learn more about the Panathenaic procession from Thucydides than from any other classical writer. He reports its point of origin and the route, marching order, and equipment of the participants (1.20.2; 6.56.2; 6.57.1; 6.58.2). While much of this information is provided in passing, it demonstrates at least that Thucydides had considerable knowledge of religious matters which he wished to impart to his readers.

## Delos

Equally informative is the lengthy chapter on the early history of the sacred island of Delos (3.104). It is of special interest because Thu-

<sup>4</sup> There is unanimous agreement that the reference to the shrines of Athena has dropped out of the text. See Gomme, *HCT* 2.50 and Classen-Steup ad loc. for the necessary supplement.

cydides appears to have intended it as a contrast to the purification of Delos by the democracy (see below).

Peisistratos had purified the sacred precinct only; Polykrates of Samos had joined Rheneia to Delos with a chain, thus consecrating it to Apollo as well (cf. 1.13.6). Thucydides distinguishes three periods in the history of the Delian festival, for each of which he reports the participants, the nature of the competitions, and the changes that occurred for better or for worse. His evidence is the *Hymn to Delian Apollo*, from which he quotes at some length, just as he reproduces political documents. Several poetic and metrical phrases in the prose narrative reveal that he consulted other religious poetry now no longer extant; the chapter suggests that Thucydides conducted a good amount of research in the religious history of Delos.<sup>5</sup>

### Sparta

The historian contrasts Sparta's lack of external magnificence with her political and military power by saying that she possessed no temples or monuments of great splendor (1.10.2). The implication of this surely is that the erection of splendid temples was one way for a state to honor the gods. His remark that the Spartans march to the rhythm of flutes for a practical, rather than a religious, reason is revealing (5.70). Thucydides was so aware of Spartan religiosity and its profound role in Spartan life that he found it necessary to explain that for once a custom had a purely practical purpose.

### Argos

Thucydides mentions the most important priesthood of Argos, that of the priestess of the Heraeum, for dating purposes, and not because of an interest in religion (2.2.1). Later he interrupts the main narrative to report the destruction of the temple by accidental fire, and to report some details about the priestesses. This brief digression may perhaps be explained by the importance of the Argive Heraeum for Greek cult (4.133.2–3).

### Akarnania

Similarly, the story of the naming of Akarnania (2.102.5–6) has nothing to do with the events that surround it. Thucydides tells the story of Alkmaion and his son Akarnan at some length, including the

<sup>5</sup> Ἰώνων τε καὶ περικτιόνων νησιωτῶν (3.104.3) is partially paralleled by Hom. *Il.* 17.220; 18.212; *Od.* 2.65; χορούς τε ἀνῆγον αἱ πόλεις (ibid.) corresponds to Hes. *Sc.* 280: αἱ δὲ ἀναγον χορὸν ἱμερόεντα; cf. also Eur. *Tr.* 326ff.: αἰθέριον ἀναγε χορόν. Σύν τε γὰρ γυναιξὶ καὶ παισὶν ἐθεώρουν (ibid.) also appears to be an echo from some lost poetic work; cf. line 3 of the Homeric hymn which he quotes. See Classen-Steup ad loc. and Gomme, *HCT* 2.415 ad loc.

oracular advice that Alkmaion received from Apollo at Delphi. He labels the oracular response as traditional, and reports it in paraphrase, but, as in the passages on Delos, he also quotes some of its actual words, such as the poetic *alasthai* (often used of exiles wandering under a curse), and the poetic plural *deimata*. The terrors, i.e. the Furies' pursuit of matricides, he leaves unexplained, presumably because the identification was self-evident to his audience.<sup>6</sup> The language of the report is neutral in tone; it certainly contains no criticism of the concept of pollution, which he could easily have discredited.<sup>7</sup>

### Plataea

In their defense before the Spartan judges, Plataea's spokesmen make reference to their city's custom of offering, at public expense, garments on the tombs of the Spartan casualties in the great battle, in addition to the customary first fruits of the land (3.58.4).

### Magna Graecia

As in the case of the mother country, so also Thucydides provides some information about the religious antiquities of the Greek west. The Chalcidians from Euboea built the altar of Apollo Archegetes outside Naxos, at which the *theoroi* to the games in the mother country sacrifice before sailing from Sicily (6.3.1). He also reports without comment the popular belief that the Liparaean island Hieria where fire and smoke were often visible was the site of Hephaistos' smithy (3.88.2–3).

## OBSERVATIONS OF RELIGIOUS FORMALITIES

Among the warring states the Spartans are the most punctilious in the observance of religious formalities and, when unsuccessful, the quickest to assume divine displeasure. They suffered setbacks in the Archidamian war because their side had been the first to violate the peace treaty, and thus their oaths (7.18.2). The great earthquake at Sparta was a punishment for the massacre of the helot suppliants in the precinct of Poseidon (1.128.1): for the Spartans earthquakes were genuine signs from the gods. Because of them they desist from invading Attica (3.89.1), abandon an attack upon Argos (6.95.1), and delay the departure of a fleet (8.6.5). Other religious scruples also put their con-

<sup>6</sup> *Alasthai*, chiefly poetic usage: LSJ<sup>9</sup> s.v. Exiles: Lys. 6.30; Dem. 19.310. *Deimata*: A. Ch. 524; Ar. Ran. 688, LSJ<sup>9</sup> s.v.; cf. Classen-Steup ad loc. For the legend of Alkmaion cf. Parker (above, note 2) 377.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Marinatos (above, note 1) 139: "Thucydides says that Alcmaeon understood the place meant by the oracle which implies that there was a meaning to be understood." For Gomme, Thucydides' main interest is the natural phenomenon (*HCT* 2.250). Thucydides writes as if the Furies' pursuit were a matter of course.

duct of war and diplomacy at risk. Their army cannot cross Sparta's borders unless the *diabateria* turn out favorably (5.54.2; 5.55.3; 5.116.1).<sup>8</sup> The urge to celebrate festivals on time also impedes Spartan military movements. A festival in progress is partly responsible for Spartan inaction at the news of the occupation of Pylos in 425 (4.5.1). On other occasions too they delay campaigns (5.54.2; 5.75.5; 5.76.1), rush home (5.75.2), or retard the calendar (5.82.3) to hold a festival. For the Dorians all of Karneus was a sacred month (5.54.2); this fact and a general reluctance to fight during holy days (7.73.2; 8.9.1) causes the Dorians to tamper with the calendar, and once to exploit it (5.54) to the detriment of Sparta, which tries to observe it steadfastly.

Other states do not often show a comparable religious zeal. The Athenians on one occasion dedicate a part of confiscated land on Lesbos to the gods (3.50.2). Their ambassadors invoke the gods once in public statements (1.78.4), and Athens participates in the Isthmian Games of 412 (8.10.1). Religious scruples appear to have caused the adjournment of the *ekklesia* during an earthquake in 420 (5.45.4). The report that the Council of Four Hundred performed the *eisiteria* in 411 is probably included deliberately and is to be explained by Thucydides' favorable attitude towards this specific council (8.70.1).

Religious fear caused by an earthquake compels the Corinthians as well to cease diplomatic activity (5.50.5), and they hesitate to send out a fleet before the Isthmian Games (8.9.1). The ambassadors of Mytilene once beg for help in the name of Zeus at Olympia (3.14.1); great danger or political and military difficulties prompt others (e.g. the Plataeans) to act likewise (see below under "Uses and Misuses of Religion").

Thucydides naturally reproduces clauses dealing with religion and ritual in international treaties (4.118.1-3; 5.18.1-2; 5.47.8). Among other routine matters is the dedication of trophies, which victors regularly set up after a battle. Nilsson regards the erection of trophies as little more than a convention without real religious significance; in his view trophies were chiefly symbols of prestige.<sup>9</sup> But one may wonder. The trophy was a dedication to no less a deity than Zeus himself (Zeus *Tropaïos*). "So overwhelming was the religious compulsion, coupled possibly with some feeling of prestige, that in 412/11 B.C., after a naval battle off Syme, the entire Lakedaimonian fleet rowed more than eighty kilometers in wintry seas to carry out the ceremony of the erection of a trophy commemorating their victory over the Athenians"<sup>10</sup> (8.42.4). It is remarkable that Thucydides reports the erection of no less than

<sup>8</sup> Sacrifices, prophecy, portents, etc. in war are discussed fully by W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, Part 3 (Berkeley 1979) *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion* 1 (Munich 1955<sup>3</sup>) 134.

<sup>10</sup> Pritchett (above, note 8) 87.

47 trophies, 24 of which were erected in Sicily, and one during the Pentekontaetia.

### CONSULTATION OF ORACLES

Most belligerent states comply with the established custom of consulting the Delphic oracle before embarking on important enterprises. The Corcyraeans propose to submit their dispute with Corinth to the arbitration of Delphi (1.28.2). The Epidamnians inquire from Apollo whether or not to hand over their city to Corinth, and when the god gives an affirmative answer, they comply (1.25.1–2). The Spartans obey the command from Delphi and permit the helots on Mt. Ithome to emigrate (1.103.1–2). In 432, the Spartans ask Delphi whether they should go to war with Athens or not. Apollo promises victory and his own aid whether solicited or not (1.118.3). At first sight this passage appears to explain Athens' reluctance to consult Delphi: the god is pro-Spartan. Thucydides, however, does not guarantee the accuracy of the response: "*It is said* that the god replied that if they fought . . ." As Gomme<sup>11</sup> observes, this report may represent the Spartan war-party's interpretation of the oracle. Spartan propaganda or not, the Corinthians twice quote the response to the congress at Sparta, evidently to allay the guilt feelings of the Spartans because they had broken the Thirty Years Peace (7.18.2). Their motive is political, to induce the Spartans to declare war, although it is also true that they are making a proper religious gesture (1.123.1–2). The Spartans themselves seek Delphi's approval before sending settlers to found Heraklea (3.92.5). The affair of King Pleistoanax and his brother Aristokles, which exposes the unattractive side of Spartan religiosity, shows to what lengths the Spartans were willing to go in order to remain on good terms with Delphi (5.16.2–3). The Athenians on the other hand show no concern about Delphi, and do not ask its advice even about minor matters or side issues unrelated to the war.

### SANCTUARIES IN WAR

A feature common to ancient religion was the concept of sacred space; the cults of most divinities were tied to the soil. The ancient Greek landscape was crowded with sacred precincts and sanctuaries of varying sizes. Many of the sanctuaries stood in convenient locations, near roads, on promontories, and by the beaches of the sea, or had

<sup>11</sup> Gomme, *HCT* 1.413 (on 1.118.3) citing 1.112.5 says that Athens had lost her influence on Delphi. But the passage says that after the Spartans' departure the Athenians returned and gave Delphi back to the Phocians. There seems to be no good reason for believing that Athens had lost all her contacts with Delphi.

other useful features which attracted armies on the march: level spaces for pitching camps, timber, and water. The buildings themselves could provide shelter in bad weather. Some were located in strategic spots, on hills or near towns.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, the large and important sanctuaries were repositories for sacred and profane treasures housed in the solidly built major temples, a circumstance which exposed them to additional danger.

The use of sacred funds for military purposes was suggested even before the outbreak of war by the Corinthians who proposed to borrow money from Delphi and Olympia (1.121.3). Such loans were permitted by religious custom;<sup>13</sup> in an absolute emergency Perikles intended to use the gold and silver of the dedications on the Akropolis, with strict provisions for repayment (2.13.3–5). But it was indicative of the mood prevailing at Athens that Perikles could impute to Athens' enemies the illegal and sacrilegious conversion of the funds at Delphi and Olympia to their own use (1.143.1). Years later the Syracusans voice the same fear of illegal appropriation, this time by the Athenians, of the treasure in the Olympieion at Syracuse (6.70.4). Such fears were not entirely groundless; the treaty of 423 tells us that the treasure in Delphi was in fact tampered with (4.118.3).

The violations of the sanctuaries' space sometimes did not go beyond simple occupation, but in the aggregate they formed a pattern which soon destroyed restraint and moderation. In 427/6 the general Demosthenes camped for the night with his army in the precinct of Nemean Zeus in Locris. Thucydides then tersely adds what seems an entirely unnecessary and irrelevant detail, that the poet Hesiod had been killed in the sanctuary by the local inhabitants, despite a prophecy that he would suffer this fate at Nemea (3.96.1). Because of its lack of motivation modern scholars have seen in the remark criticism of oracular ambiguity.<sup>14</sup> However, such ambiguity was an article of Delphic belief, and was accepted as a fact by the ancients. If a prophecy was misunderstood, the blame was attached to the person who misunderstood it.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps Thucydides merely wished to record the curiosity that

<sup>12</sup> This is made evident by Thucydides, who reports several instances of military forces using sanctuaries' resources (see below). The so-called sacred laws contain numerous prohibitions against the profane use of precincts; see *LSAM*, *LSCG*, *LSS* passim, and T. Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult* (Giessen 1910) passim. For the practice specifically of pitching camps in sanctuaries see F. Sokolowski, "On the Episode of Onchestus in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*," *TAPA* 91 (1960) 379; B. Jordan and J. Perlin, "On the Protection of Sacred Groves," *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow* (Durham, N.C. 1984) 153.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Parker (above, note 2) 173.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Gomme, *HCT* 2.404; Classen-Steup ad loc.

<sup>15</sup> Marinatos (above, note 1) 138. J. E. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley 1978) 286 maintains that Delphi's reputation for ambiguity is wholly modern; Herodotos alone, however, has more than one example of ambiguous oracles.

a poet of such great personal piety as Hesiod should have misunderstood a prophecy. On the other hand, he may be telling us indirectly something about the judgment of Demosthenes, who, undeterred by the act of sacrilege committed in it, occupied the awful place with his troops. In retrospect the occupation turned out to be an ominous portent of what was to come. Having thus used the sacred precinct, Demosthenes proceeded to make one bad error of judgment after the next. He abandoned the conquest of Leukas, which he had a good chance of taking, and accepted the advice of the Messenians to which he added an ambitious and unrealistic plan of his own. Overconfident after a string of initial successes, and relying on his own good luck rather than on reinforcements, he came up against the massed Aetolians. The result was a bad defeat in which 120 Athenians ("so many, so young, and so very good"), including the other general, Prokles, perished "by every form of death" (3.96–98). Westlake says about this episode: "Thucydides makes his own verdict exceptionally plain that Demosthenes was at . . . fault in listening to the Messenians and was guilty of an easy optimism verging on irresponsibility. . . . Few passages . . . are so critical of an individual. . . . Thucydides seems determined to impress on his readers that Demosthenes sustained a defeat through his own errors."<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, sanctuaries and festivals are used and abused as military bases, pretexts, and occasions for launching aggression and perpetrating brutality. Initially the revolt in Mytilene was to be put down with a surprise attack upon the population massed for a festival in the sanctuary of Malean Apollo outside the fortified city (3.3.3). Since belligerents were expected to halt hostilities during holy days (5.49.1), the Athenians deliberately picked the festival as the perfect moment for attack. When Argos used as a pretext for war the allegation that Epidaurus had been delinquent in its obligations to the shrine of Apollo Pytheus, it did so at the instigation of that great manipulator Alkibiades, who had planned and directed the whole affair in the interests of Athens (5.53; 5.55.4). In 413, Diitrephes, in command of the brutal Thracians, used the temple of Hermes at Mykalessos as a base from which to plunder the town and its temples and to slaughter all the townspeople, including the boys in the largest school (7.29). This atrocity provokes special comment from Thucydides, similar in content and in language to the narrative about Demosthenes in Aetolia. Here too, the attack launched from a sanctuary ends with "death in every shape and form," and the young and promising are killed off as were the best of Athenian hoplites in the wilds of Aetolia (3.98.4).

The Sicilian sanctuaries too suffered the hardships of war. Arriving at Rhegion, the Athenians not only made their camp in the sanctuary of

<sup>16</sup> H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge 1968) 101.

Artemis, but turned it into a market place for the provisioning of their troops (6.44.3). At Syracuse the invaders straightaway made for the Olympieion and its treasure which became a contested military objective, and was turned into a fort (6.64.1; 6.70.4; 6.71.1; 6.75.1).<sup>17</sup> The Syracusans were forced to cut down the olive trees in the sanctuary of Apollo Temenites in order to defend the shrine against Athenian attack (6.99.3).

Other sanctuaries barely escaped becoming battlefields. Among them was the preeminent sanctuary of Zeus, Olympia. The dispute over the Olympic truce between Sparta and Elis nearly erupted into armed conflict (5.49–50). On balance neither side seems wholly in the wrong or wholly in the right in this affair. The Spartans' refusal to pay the fine for the truce violation was a matter of principle: they genuinely believed themselves innocent and steadfastly declined to accept the increasing concessions from Elis, preferring instead not to participate in the festival at all rather than admit to sacrilege. We can see from Thucydides' report how much admission to the games meant to them: all present fully expected the Spartans to force their own participation with armed might (5.50.4).

In the event, the Spartans exercised considerable restraint. Denied access to the temple of Olympian Zeus, they sacrificed at home. Despite the provocation of having one of their fellows beaten publicly for illegally entering the games, they made no move against Elis and Olympia (5.50.1–4). Here, amidst a clash of opposite interests, a common religious awe impelled the Eleans to make every possible concession, and inhibited the Spartans from retaliating; bloodshed on sacred ground was narrowly avoided.

While Olympia was thus spared the violence of armed conflict, Delion was not. This sanctuary of Apollo became the object of a premeditated Athenian assault (4.76.4). In the winter of 424/3 the general Hippokrates with the entire Athenian army at his back seized the sanctuary and fortified it (4.90.1–4), without any regard to a principle of universal standing (explicitly cited by the Thebans, 4.97.2–3) whereby enemies were expected to spare each others' sacred places. The army violated the sanctity of Delion in every possible way. They dug up the ground itself, cut the sacred vines, and demolished the auxiliary buildings (4.90). The precinct became a military fortress inhabited by a garrison which polluted it (and the sacrificial water) with their bodily functions (4.97.3).<sup>18</sup> In charging the Athenians with these profanities the

<sup>17</sup> Plutarch, *Nic.* 16.6 says that Nicias, in order to avoid the charge of sacrilege, deliberately held back so as to allow the Syracusans time to protect the sanctuary against his troops.

<sup>18</sup> The herald's words at 4.97.3 are a delicate and deliberate circumlocution, but there is no doubt that bodily functions are meant; cf. Parker (above, note 2) 162. The Athenians admit the pollution of the holy water with the phrase *hydor kinein* (4.98.5); for the techni-

Thebans speak with the conviction of outraged religious feeling, and in the certainty, revealed in the propitious outcome of the sacrifices, that the equally affronted Apollo is on their side (4.92.7).

All that the Athenians can say in reply to the Boeotians' justified charges and demands is pure sophistry and special pleading mixed with evasions, falsehoods, and irrelevant legalisms (4.98). Their claim that the Boeotians are the real aggressors, whereas they, the Athenians, are acting in self-defense is, on Thucydides' own account, a flagrant lie. The argument that the Boeotians too had usurped the temples from the aborigines, and that therefore the Athenians are now entitled to do the same speaks for itself. Equally specious is the argument that the necessity of war had forced them to use the sacred water: the occupation was not only voluntary, but premeditated. That the gods would understand and forgive an involuntary sacrilege since they also allowed asylum to involuntary criminals is a spurious rationalization resting on a false analogy.

The entire chapter (4.98), with its scandalous claim that sanctuaries belong, not to the gods, but to their human conquerors, who need care for their cults only as much as they can, and containing all the other perversions of religious sentiment and practice, is one of the most blatant pieces of sophistry in all of Thucydides.

#### THE PLAGUE IN ATHENS AND CIVIL WAR IN CORCYRA

Thucydides makes a special effort to point out the adverse effect on religion of the twin scourges spawned by the Peloponnesian War, the plague at Athens and the civil war in Corcyra. The Spartan invasions had as their direct consequence the abandonment of houses and ancestral shrines in Attica and the overcrowding in Athens, including the urban temples and sanctuaries (2.16.2–17.1). Although he does not explicitly link the overcrowding with the severity of the plague, Thucydides was quite aware of the connection (2.54.5). While it is true that he mentions the occupation of the sacred precincts in order to stress the extent of the emergency, it is also true that by so doing he draws attention to the breach of a strict religious convention: all Greeks knew that no matter what the circumstances or the reasons for it inhabitation polluted the temples and came close to sacrilege.

Having related that some enclosures (the Akropolis and the Eleusinion) were spared, Thucydides next reports the two different interpretations of the Delphic oracle concerning the Pelargikon—the people's and his own (2.17.1–2). His account has been taken as evidence of rational-

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cal meaning of *kinein*, see R. Renehan, *Greek Lexicographical Notes*, 2nd series (Göttingen 1982) 88.

ization and satirical criticism both of this oracle and of oracles in general.<sup>19</sup> His own words, however, suggest that he is taking the oracle seriously: it came true, but since it was ambiguous, its actual meaning turned out to be the opposite of what people expected. In short, Thucydides accepts the ambiguity (for he himself supplies the correct interpretation) and also the view that, in Gomme's words, "the oracle could in some degree know the future."<sup>20</sup> It is hardly credible that he should have picked, with ineffable bad taste, precisely this occasion of Athenian suffering to satirize the superstitions of his countrymen concerning oracular pronouncements.

Perikles' funeral oration forms, so to speak, the prologue to the plague. It is perhaps significant that of all the funeral orations delivered in the war Thucydides has chosen to relate, and in full, the speech that Perikles delivered over a comparatively few war dead immediately before the darkness of the epidemic engulfed thousands of Athenians, including Perikles himself.

The severe physical and spiritual damage that the plague inflicted had a devastating effect upon morality and religion.<sup>21</sup> Secular and religious norms lost their validity. The restraints of human and divine law collapsed. People lost faith in their gods as they saw the good and the bad dying indiscriminately and turned to dissipation (2.52–53).<sup>22</sup> Worship, prayers, and oracles became as ineffective as the remedies of human skill (2.47.4).<sup>23</sup> The populace concluded that the gods had turned

<sup>19</sup> E.g. by Gomperz (above, note 1) 510.

<sup>20</sup> Gomme, *HCT* 2.65–66. His comments exemplify the problems created by the unthinking acceptance of the view that Thucydides completely excludes religion from his work; he speaks of Thucydides' rejection of a "common superstition," but is forced by the evidence of the text to argue against Cobet's emendation of *προῆδε* for *προήδει*, and to admit that Thucydides believed in the prophetic power of Delphi, only to qualify the admission and to say that the prediction was in any case easy to make. One might add that Thucydides here uses the same oracular formula as does Herodotus (a participle with a finite verb): "(not) knowing, naming, I shall (not) say," *Hdt.* 1.20; 1.51.4; 2.123.3; 4.43.7; 9.16.2. See also Telekleides fr. 41.4–5 (Kock).

<sup>21</sup> For a careful analysis of the power and pathos of the account of the plague see A. Parry, "The Language of Thucydides' Description of the Plague," *BICS* 16 (1969) 110ff.

<sup>22</sup> Gomme, *HCT* 2.116 is uncharacteristically willing to accept this section as evidence for religious feeling on the part of Thucydides. For similar reactions of people facing destruction from war and pestilence see *LXX Is.* 22.13; G. Deaux, *The Black Death* (London 1969) 145–75 (the plague in Europe); C. Ryan, *The Last Battle* (New York 1966) 16, 30, 36 (Second World War).

<sup>23</sup> "Ὅσα τε πρὸς ἱεροῖς ἰκέτευσαν ἢ μαντεῖοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐχρήσαντο (2.47.4) are taken as an indication of skepticism towards oracles because of the qualification "such things" (thus Gomme, *HCT* 2.147: "superstition"). It is most unlikely that *manteion* refers to superstition; everywhere else Thucydides uses it of the Delphic oracle which he, like Plato, respected. His respect can be inferred from the fact that he bothers to quote Apolline oracular pronouncements, either verbatim or in paraphrase, but above all from

against them and paradoxically sought evidence and confirmation of divine disfavor from the gods themselves.<sup>24</sup> These they found in the two oracular pronouncements in the text (2.54.2–5), and this is why Thucydides quotes and discusses them. His purpose here is not to make statements about the validity of oracles, but to present the state of men's minds in a crisis. The chapter reveals his lively interest in the psychology and sociology of religion. In the midst of disaster people find the divine validation they seek by emending "dearth" to "death" in the oracle: Apollo had long ago determined to send the pestilence upon them. For the same reason they also recall the prophecy given to the Spartans by the god, that victory would be theirs and he himself would help them against Athens. With great skill Thucydides analyzes the psychology of fifth-century Athenians in their effort to come to terms with the problem of evil. Thus far the analysis of the Athenians' mental state; the facts appeared to support the popular reasoning, for the plague began immediately after the Peloponnesians occupied the Attic countryside. Its action was most severe in Attica, and while it affected some other regions as well, it did not spread to the Peloponnese. For the rest, Thucydides leaves it to the reader to draw his own conclusions about the wrath of Apollo, of which the Athenians believed themselves to be

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the respectful language which he, like Herodotos, uses: "the god in Delphi" or simply "the god" or "Apollo" (1.25.1; 1.118.3; 1.126.4; 1.134.4; 2.54.4; 2.102; 3.92.5; 5.32.1). For Plato cf. G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton 1960) 430: "Plato's law forbids private worship because it lacks the authority of Delphi." The logic of the whole sentence also argues against hostility to religion on Thucydides' part. The sense of 2.47.4 is: human skills (medicine and other skills) proved just as ineffective as religion (prayers and oracles) *on this specific occasion*. Human and divine action are contrasted and closely linked together in one sentence; physicians and other human agents did not help *on this occasion*, nor did prayers and oracles help *on this occasion*. The structure of the thought is such that to deny the efficacy of divine action on other occasions would also require the denial of the efficacy of human action, i.e. medicine, on other occasions, which is absurd.

<sup>24</sup> Deaux (above, note 22) 21, 180 documents the same ambivalence toward religion during the plague in Europe: "The suddenness and universality of such a disaster inspired men with both scepticism and an intense desire for authentic religious experience." The accounts of contemporary writers report the same moral and religious degeneration as that reported by Thucydides at Athens: Boccaccio recorded the symptoms of the plague and noted that neither the medicine of the doctors nor the prayers and supplications of the priests had any effect upon it (87). Deaux describes a supplication by ordinary citizens attended by a miracle (85). People turned against the Church; particularly those who were most firmly convinced that the Church was a God-given institution which had been corrupted by its human custodians. They believed further that the plague had been sent by God, and the religious movement of the flagellants attempted to appease the anger of Christ by flagellant pilgrimages, i.e. by taking upon themselves the expiation of human sins (179–80). As at Athens, the most rudimentary funeral traditions were abandoned (83). See also P. Ziegler, *The Black Death* (New York 1966) and G. Marks, *The Medieval Plague* (New York 1971). None of these parallels, which support Thucydides' claim to have written for the instruction of posterity, is mentioned in the standard commentaries.

the victims, without expressing his own view of the god's oracular pronouncement (2.54.5).<sup>25</sup>

In the reflections arising from his account of party strife and revolution on Corcyra, Thucydides for once makes a personal statement on religion. Speaking in his own name he says of the party factions that "they trusted one another not because their fidelity was based upon divine law, but because they were partners in crime" (3.82.6). The implication of this remark is that Thucydides accepts religion as the foundation of morality; Classen-Steup, perhaps with justice, remark that, "no one who did not believe in the existence of the gods could speak in such terms about the *nomos* of the gods."<sup>26</sup>

The events of the Corcyraean civil war which prompted Thucydides to deliver this verdict parallel in their atrocity and sacrilege the devastation of the plague at Athens. In Corcyra an acquittal is followed by a condemnation on charges of desecration of a god's precinct. The condemned promptly seek asylum in the temples of the city (3.70.3-5). Murder, fighting, arson, and threats of deportation come next. Again men take up positions as suppliants in the sanctuaries, this time in large numbers (3.70.6-75.5). Mass executions, with and without trials, follow (3.81.2), until at last most of the suppliants still at the temple of Hera commit suicide, some by hanging themselves on the trees of the precinct. Such suicide in a temple was the final means whereby "the suppliant asking to be spared could brand an indelible pollution on the enemies he was otherwise powerless to harm."<sup>27</sup> Here too, as in the episodes about Diitrephes at Mykalessos and Demosthenes in Aetolia, Thucydides uses nearly identical language to describe the degree and extent of the bloodshed: "There was death in every form" (3.81.5). It is as if he meant the phrase to be a signal to the reader to connect the passages containing sacrilege and carnage.

From these many forms of death at Corcyra he selects two as the most horrible and sacrilegious: the killing of a son by a father, a crime against one of the most sacred human relationships, and the death by starvation of human beings of all places in the temple of Dionysos, a god who guarantees the abundance of crops (3.81.5). As at Athens, where the precincts were filled with the corpses of the plague's victims (2.52.3), so here too the dwellings of the gods became the houses of death. At Corcyra the name of the plague was civil war.

<sup>25</sup> I follow here the analysis of Classen-Steup ad loc. On the oracle that predicted a duration of 27 years for the war (5.26.3) see the excellent discussion of Marinatos (above, note 1) 140.

<sup>26</sup> Classen-Steup lxi. See also L. Edmunds, "Thucydides' Ethics as Reflected in the Description of *Stasis* (3.82-83)," *HSCP* 79 (1975) 83-91: Thucydides remained true to traditional ethical thought and to the conservative *nomos* that we find in Hesiod and Pindar.

<sup>27</sup> Parker (above, note 2) 185.

The Corcyraean factions were not alone in the brutal mistreatment of the rights of sanctuary. There is the similar transgression against the Kylonian conspirators in the Athens of long ago (see below). Nor are the pious Spartans exempt; they dragged the helots from the sanctuary of Poseidon at Tainaros, they starved to death their king Pausanias in the temple of Athena (1.128; 1.134.1–4), and they violated the sanction given to the helots in what is probably the most sinister report in all of Thucydides. Promised their freedom by the ephors, the helots put garlands on their heads and walked around the sanctuaries in the belief that they were free men, only to be secretly exterminated afterwards (4.80.4).<sup>28</sup>

Calamities such as these undermined Greek religion and led to a brutalization of men's character, as Thucydides tells us (3.83.1). The plague, too, we can be sure, accelerated the corrosion of a religious spirit which had for some time already come under attack from the doctrines of the sophists.<sup>29</sup> To what extent it survived or was destroyed may be glimpsed from the official acts of the Athenians and from the attitudes to religion of the principal Athenian leaders who present something of a contrast to their enemies.

#### STATESMEN, GENERALS, DEMAGOGUES, SOOTHSAYERS

Of the Athenian leadership only two men express religious feeling. Perikles, whom Thucydides admired, in the funeral oration points to the contests and sacrifices which the Athenians regularly perform throughout the year (2.38.1).<sup>30</sup> It is likely too that the "unwritten laws" which he mentions in the previous chapter (2.37.3) are the laws of the gods. Again, exhorting the Athenians to be of good courage, Perikles advises them to endure with resignation what the gods send (2.64.2).

Nikias, whom Thucydides praises for his high moral character (7.86.5),<sup>31</sup> again and again displays a deep and sincere religiosity. He

<sup>28</sup> Thucydides does not explain the ceremony, presumably because its meaning was known to his readers. Modern commentaries are silent. The garland was the symbol of a change in fortune for the better, and so an expression of joy. The walk around the temples (*amphidromia*) was the ritual for receiving new-born children in the family: the happy helots are joining the family of free men. See S. Eitrem, *Opferitus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Kristiania 1915) 8, 28, 64–70.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Deaux (above, note 22) 22, who is more cautious: "It would be going much too far to suggest the plague of Athens was the cause of the collapse of the fabric of Greek polytheism . . . but surely the plague spread doubts."

<sup>30</sup> Gomme, *HCT* 2.116 asserts that Perikles had recreation, not piety, in mind. The wording, "It is our customary religious practice (*nomizontes*) to hold festivals with competitions and to offer annual sacrifices," shows otherwise. The celebration of festivals was an expression of piety, most pronounced at Sparta.

<sup>31</sup> I follow Dover's interpretation of this disputed passage, *HCT* 4.463 ad loc.

invokes the gods, proclaims himself their servant, and submits to their decisions without losing faith (6.9.1; 7.69.2; 7.77.2–3). Thucydides' criticism of his tendency to divination does not really detract from Nikias' essential piety.<sup>32</sup> It is, rather, a criticism of his capitulation to a powerful religious fad of the day, namely the world of the oracle-mongers and soothsayers, whom Thucydides clearly regarded as an aberration from traditional religion. Athens and the other belligerent states were rife with such soothsayers, ridiculed in the comedies of Aristophanes, who rather resembled self-serving fortune tellers plying their trade for private gain. They certainly did not belong to the ancient and venerable priestly guilds, but formed what would nowadays be called a religious subculture.<sup>33</sup> The utterances of these people became most effective in times of tension and crisis, as for example, on the eve of the war (2.8.2).<sup>34</sup> Hand in hand with such prognostications, which found a receptive audience among the masses, went portents such as earthquakes "whose meaning was closely examined" (2.8.3).

When speaking of the chresmologues Thucydides invariably manages to make his distaste and even disdain evident.<sup>35</sup> Amid the consternation at the sight of Spartans in Acharnai, the professional prophets

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Pritchett (above, note 8) 110; Dover, *HCT* 4.428–29. Dover recognizes the pejorative connotation of *theiasmos*, an utterance claiming to reveal through a human medium the intentions of the gods, but fails to point out that the word is not used of the authentic responses of established oracular sites, and refers to bogus oracles only. Cf. Fontenrose (above, note 15) 212–18. Dover's "correction" of LSJ<sup>9</sup> s.v. is due to his preconception.

<sup>33</sup> The chresmologues appear to have enjoyed a certain reputation in the archaic and early classical periods, J. H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Ancestral Law* (Baltimore 1950) 1–17; Fontenrose (above, note 15) 152–65. By the time of the Peloponnesian War they were in disrepute for their venality and meddlesomeness in public affairs, and chiefly because their main purpose was to keep themselves well-fed, well-clothed, and well-shod, as the comic poets tirelessly explain; see Cratinus, frs. 6, 14, 57–58, 62 (Kock); Eupolis, fr. 212 (Kock); Ar. *Av.* 521, 959–91; *Eq.* 115–39, 197–201, 999–1100; *Pax* 1045–1126; *Pl. Resp.* 364B; J. H. Wright, *HSCP* 6 (1895) 67; Morrow (above, note 23) 430–32. Even after allowing for comic exaggeration, the picture that we see emerging of these gluttonous beggars is such as to make it unlikely that they were Eupatrids as Oliver 13 believes them to be. The creation of the official *exegetai* of the fourth century was an effort to curb the capers of the chresmologues (Oliver 31). It is surely no accident that the *exegetai* were old nobility dedicated, as the inscriptions show, to the service of Apollo. The counterparts of the chresmologues in medicine were the bogus healers of whom the author of *The Sacred Disease* writes: "Witch-doctors, faith-healers, quacks, and charlatans, who pretend to be very pious and to be particularly wise and who, by invoking a divine element, were able to screen their own failure. . . . All these professions of piety are really more like impiety, and a denial of the existence of the gods, and all their religion and talk of divine visitation is an impious fraud which I shall proceed to expose" (2, 4).

<sup>34</sup> It is clear that in times of war and other crises the chresmologues fared better because their advice was sought and believed; cf. Ar. *Pax* 1084 and note 33 above.

<sup>35</sup> Thucydides' references to the chresmologues are derogatory (2.8.2; 2.21.3), especially when coupled with *theiazein/theiasmos* (8.1.1). Cf. Marinatos (above, note 1) 138–140.

only compound the indecision and confusion in the city with their predictions, and thereby contribute to the attack on Perikles (2.21.3). He also betrays his low opinion of them after the Sicilian war with his sarcastic rebuke of the Athenians for having listened to their chants and believed them (8.1.1). In sum, Thucydides' opinion of the professional oracle-mongers is wholly different from his view of the Delphic oracle, which he never criticizes.

The public statements of other Athenian leaders are singularly free of all references to the supernatural. Lamachos, Hippokrates, Eurymedon, Kleon, Phormio, Diodotos, Demosthenes—not one of them has as much as one word to say about matters sacred and divine. Alkibiades stands out as the exact opposite of Nikias. His sense of personal honor, exaggerated even by the standards of his time, leads him to regard the world, human and divine, as the showplace for his own limitless ambition. His performances at Olympia as a sacred deputy are merely opportunities for self-glorification rather than true homage to the gods. The achievement that he claims for himself of an Athens stronger than she really is, is fraudulent, and from a military point of view of incalculable danger for the state. Just as fraudulent is the subtle and indirect comparison that he draws between himself and an Attic hero, "with whom future generations will claim kinship even where there is none" (6.16.2–6). The sacrilege for which he is sentenced to die and his survival form a stark contrast with the piety and death of Nikias.

In contrast, Spartan kings, field commanders, and magistrates frequently make appeals to the gods (Stheneleides, 1.86.5; Pausanias, 2.71.2; Archidamos, 2.74.2).<sup>36</sup> The brilliant figure of Brasidas, whose energy and resolution Thucydides plainly admired (2.25.2; 2.86.6; 4.11.4) stands out above all others as a unique representative of the old-fashioned Herodotean piety and devotion (4.87.2–6; 5.10.2). He alone in the entire history of the war expresses the belief that his success in battle is due to divine rather than human effort, and he alone converts a fort into a sanctuary (4.116.2); all others do the opposite. Thucydides elects to recite his honors as a victorious athlete and hero (4.121.1), and to record that, having received burial at public expense, he was worshipped at his tomb, which itself became a sanctuary (5.11.1).

If we look for similar conduct and distinction of Athenian commanders, we look in vain. In the early years of the war they behave at best with a certain correctness in their treatment of religious matters. Nikostratos is moderate and humane towards the suppliant oligarchs in the temple of the Dioscuri at Corcyra (3.75.4). Paches respects the asylum of the pro-Spartan party in Mytilene (3.28.2); this same Paches,

<sup>36</sup> The invocation of the gods by individuals in Thucydides is discussed by L. Strauss, "Preliminary Observations on the Gods in Thucydides," *Interpretation* 4 (1974) 1–16.

however, a little later on treacherously murders the Arcadian commander Hippias by observing the letter but not the spirit of his sacred oath to give him safe conduct (3.34.3). And so, as the pressures of war mount, the misuses and abuses of religion to gain political and military ends increase. Athens is not the only culpable state; several of the major states, including the Spartans, come to exploit religious convention for their own purposes.

### MISUSES, ABUSES, AND EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION

#### Athens and Delos

Thucydides tells the story of the purification of Delos in segments, owing to the requirements of his annalistic method. On the face of it, each section is straightforward, factual, and precise (1.8.1; 3.104; 5.1; 5.32.1; 8.108.4). But when the whole story is pieced together no doubt remains in the reader's mind that the entire affair was so pitiless as to be fundamentally sacrilegious.

Thucydides gives no motive for the purification. Modern explanations have been, uncharacteristically, religious: thanksgiving to the god for the cessation of the plague or an Athenian wish to reassert an interest in Apollo,<sup>37</sup> neither of which seems a plausible reason for the harsh treatment of the Delians. The true motive may lie in an event reported almost casually and parenthetically by the historian under the year 427. In the summer of that year forty Peloponnesian ships sailed to Delos undetected by the Athenians until their arrival. Thucydides reports no attempt to oppose their landing or to intercept and defeat the fleet which went on to make unopposed landfalls at Ikaria and Mykonos as well (3.29.1). The incident shows that the islands were far from secure, and it appears that Athens came to suspect the fidelity and reliability of the islanders, for the first eviction took place a year later. The motive for it therefore was very likely military and political; this is Nilsson's view, although he produces no argument in support.<sup>38</sup>

We are told at the very beginning that the authority for the purification was suspect: "the Athenians purified Delos in accordance with *some* oracle" (3.104.1). Gomme, as usual, saw irony in this reference;<sup>39</sup> but if we look at it in the light of what follows, the expression becomes one of sarcasm and contempt.

<sup>37</sup> Gomme, *HCT* 2.414; Classen-Steup on 3.104.1; Parker (above, note 2) 203. Gomme, *HCT* 1.388 sees the earlier history of Delos as a digression on cultural history which it no doubt is. But it also presents a contrast with the purification by the democracy.

<sup>38</sup> M. P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung* (Stuttgart 1957) 149. For a very recent discussion of the Delos affair see W. R. Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton 1984) 105–7.

<sup>39</sup> Gomme, *HCT* 2.414 ad loc.

The precedent for the ritual cleansing had been set by Peisistratos, who, however, had very properly purified only the sacred precinct. The Athenians of 426/5 in contrast used religion as a pretext to be rid of both the living and the dead. The wholesale removal of the dead was an inhuman and cruel act. So was the proclamation forbidding birth and death on the island and the transport of all concerned to Rheneia. In effect this meant the breakup and dislocation of families; and the reader is left to wonder how the Delians coped with the command to leave. Rheneia on the other hand was by implication reduced to the status of a half-way house for people officially declared impure. Yet, a century earlier that island too had been rendered sacred by another devout tyrant, Polykrates of Samos (1.13.6; 3.104). The contrast between the tyrants of the sixth century and the Athenians of 426/5, though silent, is remarkable and suggests that it is intentional. Otherwise Thucydides need not have introduced either Peisistratos or Polykrates into his story.

The contrast presented in the sequel also appears to be intentional. Against the background of old men and pregnant women leaving the island under coercion (accompanied, probably, by relatives to care for them), Thucydides paints a joyful picture of Delian festivals of old by quoting the splendid lines of the Homeric hymn which tell of the sports, the dancing, and the singing, and include the passage "whenever some other man among mortals weary with travel comes to this place . . ."—a passage which presents a stark antithesis to the Delians who are being evicted. (3.104.4–5).

The brutal treatment of Delos does not end here. Four years later Athens, taking advantage of a truce and alleging that the previous purification had not expunged the ancient pollution, expelled all Delians from the islands. Thucydides adds with pregnant brevity that a Persian satrap—a barbarian—resettled them in Asia Minor (5.1).

In the following year, 421, "adversity in battle and the oracular command of the god in Delphi," in that order, caused the Athenians to bring back some of the evicted to Delos. Thucydides uses the verb *enthymeisthai* to express the idea that the Athenians were "pondering their afflictions and connecting them with past offenses,"<sup>40</sup> thereby making it plain that they had pangs of conscience about their conduct on Delos. As to Apollo's command, it is the only instance in which Athens acts upon an oracular pronouncement from Delphi in the course of the war. The oracle was, moreover, spontaneous and not solicited by Athens (5.32.1).<sup>41</sup> The

<sup>40</sup> For this special meaning of *enthymion/enthymeisthai* see Parker (above, note 2) 252–54, 277.

<sup>41</sup> H. W. Parke and D. F. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* 2 (Oxford 1956) 71, no. 162 classify this as "perhaps a spontaneous prophecy." Parke-Wormell list several such prophecies: no. 82 (p. 36); no. 101 (p. 44); no. 114 (p. 51). The Pythian oracle about the Pelargikon had been delivered long before 431, for it was only a fragment (2.17.2). The oracular

resettled Delians were liquidated a decade later by another Persian satrap (8.108.4).

Thus the outrages perpetrated upon the wretched residents of Delos could only be partially repaired by the Delphic oracle. Thucydides makes no comment *in propria persona* on these events anywhere. But one need only contemplate the unified account to see what his opinion really is.

#### Athens and Melos

While in the matter of Delos Thucydides passes a subtle and indirect judgment of disapproval upon his countrymen, he allows the Athenians in person to expound their views concerning religion on another island, Melos, which suffered a much worse fate at their hands. In the chapters of the Melian dialogue touching upon the relationship between gods and men the Athenians appear in the worst possible light (5.103, 104, 105, 112). The message which they convey with the twisted language and tortured logic of the sophists is the gospel of *Machtpolitik*, the proposition that the strong must rule the weak.<sup>42</sup>

Such rule is a necessity rooted in nature. It applies to human beings as empirical observation shows; it also applies, as human conjecture shows, to the gods—their actions too are bound by the natural law of necessity. It follows that men in trouble must rely on themselves for salvation. Divination, oracles, and other such obscure things are useless, for they only raise false hopes. Hope itself is an expensive commodity affordable only by those having a surplus of resources which they can stake on its caprice; the Melians are poor and weak and hope is not for them (5.103, 105). This doctrine destroys the autonomy of the gods; its determinism also destroys the link between religion and morality and reduces the gods to the level of human beings.

The Melians in contrast uphold the traditional view. The gods do have freedom of action, for they are the dispensers of fortune, which by definition is random. Significantly the Melians twice repeat their belief that the gods send fortune to men, a traditional conception as old as Homer (5.104, 112).<sup>43</sup> The Melians also uphold the traditional link be-

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verse about the plague was likewise old; moreover Thucydides does not say that it was Apolline (2.54.2).

<sup>42</sup> Might over right is the Athenians' guideline from the very beginning of the war. The spirit of Thrasymachos and Kallikles finds expression in the pronouncements of Athenian spokesmen and politicians: 1.76.2; 1.77.3; 5.89; 5.97. Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 3 (Cambridge 1969) 92. This however does not prevent Kleon from accusing Mytilene of putting might before right (3.39.3) or the Athenians on Melos from reproaching the Spartans for their belief that what they like doing is honorable and what suits their interests just (5.105.4).

<sup>43</sup> Hom. *Il.* 24.527ff.; Tyche is a child of divine beings from the very beginning, M. L. West, *Hesiod Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 267; N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford 1974) 289; Pi. *Ol.* 12.1ff.

tween religion and morality when they describe themselves as righteous (*hosioi*) and the Athenians as unjust (5.104). *Hosios* in the context of their speech denotes a person who lives in accordance with divine law whose highest principle is justice. Their reliance on divine providence is based on their righteousness; as *hosioi* they have taken a stand against the unjust Athenians. The implication here is that the gods punish injustice.<sup>44</sup>

Some critics have argued that the entire dialogue or parts of it represent Thucydides' own reflections and cannot therefore be construed as an indictment of Athens.<sup>45</sup> This thesis seems unlikely in view of Thucydides' assurances concerning the content of the speeches in his *History* (1.22.1). If we take him at his word, as we surely must, we must also regard the opinions in the dialogue as those of the speakers, and not as his own.

The irreligiosity, therefore, verging on a radical atheism, in the Athenians' speeches is their own; apparently Thucydides has inserted these chapters into his work in order to point up the decline of religion and morality at Athens. This decline becomes apparent in the argument from expediency in the debate over Mytilene; it is also revealed by the Athenian treatment of Delos, and more explicitly by the sophistry of the Athenian arguments at Delion, all of which are cut from the same cloth.

Thucydides' verdict against his own countrymen may appear harsh, but its legitimacy and accuracy are beyond question. With it the historian sums up a phenomenon which he clearly understood: the destruction by that "harsh taskmaster, war," of the entire fabric of religion. Thucydides neither exaggerates nor minimizes the Athenians' part in this process. He assigns a greater share of the blame to Athens because Athens deserves it. But he is by no means reluctant to expose Spartan culpability wherever he finds it.

### Sparta and Plataea

The brutality perpetrated upon Melos invites comparison with a similar Spartan atrocity, the liquidation of Plataea. It was only when they

<sup>44</sup> I follow the analysis of the passage by Classen-Steup ad loc. (5.104.2). Cf. Lloyd-Jones (above, note 1) 141, according to traditional religion, injustice was punished by the gods. There seems little doubt that the Melians have the moral and religious right on their side, and that the Athenians are in the wrong. Andrewes, *HCT* 4.172 ad loc. also finds the passage (5.104) damaging to Athens, although he professes doubts about Thucydides' own views on the rights and wrongs of the case. But Thucydides reports views which clearly are morally wrong; one must conclude that he wishes to criticize Athens.

<sup>45</sup> So Andrewes, *HCT* 4.172 specifically with respect to the oracles: "The unconventional and harsh contempt for oracles is Thucydides' own." His refusal to see the passage as an accusation involves him in difficulties: the Melians have not cited oracles or claimed encouragement from seers; the point about oracles is dragged in unnecessarily(!); Thucydides was thinking about the Sicilian Expedition, etc. Finley (above, note 1) 615 also holds that Thucydides is expressing his own atheism.

reached the end of their tether that the unhappy Plataeans resorted to the services of a soothsayer, Theainetos the son of Tolmides, who together with the military commander devised a plan to break out (3.20.1).

In the trial before the Spartan judges after the city's capitulation both Thebans and Plataeans use arguments from religion. The former put up a fraudulent defense against the charge of attacking during a festival truce (3.56.2; 3.65.1–3), while the latter cleverly explain the various forms of impiety in which their execution will involve the Spartans. Since the Plataeans had surrendered as suppliants, the Spartans will be guilty of breaking the religious code protecting suppliants (3.58.3; 3.59.2). Because they had been the ministrants of holy places (including the Spartan tombs), the Spartans will become responsible for the termination of all divine worship (3.58.5). Inasmuch as the tripod set up at Delphi after the Persian Wars bears the name of Plataea as one of the victors, the dedication there of the spoils about to be taken from the ruined city will be totally incongruous and by extension offensive to the god (3.57.1–2). Finally, giving Plataea to the Thebans will mean leaving murdered kinsmen, i.e. the Spartan dead from the Persian Wars, in the hands of their murderers, i.e. the medizing Thebans (3.58.5). Such association with the murderers (*authentēs*) of kinsmen was regarded as corrupting and polluting, especially when it was voluntary.<sup>46</sup> These arguments and protestations doubtless reflect genuine religiosity, yet it cannot be denied that they are also precisely the sort to arouse every religious scruple in the pious Spartans, so as to deflect them from their purpose.

For their part, the Spartans see no need to justify their verdict in religious or any other terms (cf. 4.86.6). They make no attempt to hide their real motive, which is pure self-interest. The brutal treatment of Plataea differs only in intensity, not in kind, from that of Melos. Yet, although the Spartans, like the Athenians, enslaved the women, they at least refrained from the wholesale slaughter of the men (3.68.3). It is arguable that the Spartans may have had more cause for proceeding against Plataea than the Athenians had against Melos. On the whole they show a little more restraint and appear in a slightly better light.<sup>47</sup> The episode ends with some curious details which are irrelevant to the military operation. Thucydides finds it necessary to record that the Spartans built a large temple for Hera and a guesthouse for the precinct with the materials of the ruined city. They may have viewed this as a partial act of atonement. Thucydides has no comment on it, but

<sup>46</sup> See Parker (above, note 2) 122.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Strassburger (above, note 1) 524–25: the Spartans are in general more humane than the Athenians, who commit more atrocities.

at any rate it assured the continuation of the festival.<sup>48</sup> Placed side by side as they are by Thucydides, the savagery inflicted upon the wretched city of Plataea and the honor paid to the goddess produce a contrast so stark that it leaps from the page, revealing the Spartans for the religious hypocrites that they on this occasion prove to be. Thus, whereas the Athenians systematically deny and destroy the spirit of religion, the Spartans hypocritically observe its formalities in meticulous detail.

### THE EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION IN DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERING

Even before the commencement of hostilities, religion becomes a tool of diplomacy serving as a pretext for taking sides and giving or refusing aid. The Corinthians' pretext for aiding Epidamnus against Corcyra is the allegation that the latter had failed to give them preferential treatment in public sacrifices (1.25.4).<sup>49</sup> During the congress at Sparta they use the Delphic oracle's promise of help to incite the Spartans to war (1.123.2; cf. 1.71.5). Years later Corinth once again manipulates religion when it gives the oaths sworn to its Thracian allies as a pretext for rejecting the Peace of Nikias. Their attempt to exploit the religious clause in the treaty is only too transparent and Thucydides wastes no time in exposing it (5.30.1-4).

The motives for that much-debated measure, the Megarian Decree, cannot be unravelled with certainty with the little that Thucydides says about it (1.139.2).<sup>50</sup> The charge of impiety is lumped together with two others, having nothing to do with religion, the occupation of disputed territory and the harbouring of runaway slaves, which weaken the force of the first as a serious pretext. The religious grievance was seen as trifling and transparent at Athens; when Perikles insists that the decree is no small matter and objects to its revocation he reacts to the form of the Spartan demand, an ultimatum which no self-respecting state can accept (1.139.1; 1.140.3-5; 1.141.1; 1.144.2; 1.145).<sup>51</sup>

Contrast with this the allegations concerning the ancient curses which were clearly taken seriously and were by themselves regarded as

<sup>48</sup> So Gomme, *HCT* 2.358.

<sup>49</sup> The verb used is *prokatarchesthai*, like *katarchê* a technical religious term; see Classen-Steup ad loc.; P. Stengel, *Opferbräuche der Griechen* (Leipzig and Berlin 1910) 40ff. F. Sokolowski, "On Prothysia and Promanteia in Greek Cults," *HThR* 47 (1956) 168. Gomme, *HCT* 1.160 ad loc., in keeping with the *communis opinio* that Thucydides is a complete rationalist, minimizes the religious and emphasizes the material aspect of the occasion.

<sup>50</sup> In spite of G. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London 1972), the political and economic motives for the decree are still an open question.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Gomme, *HCT* 1.453.

sufficient *casus belli*. Thucydides at any rate gives this impression, for he goes to great lengths to report the origin of the curses in the stories about Kylon and Pausanias. The Kylonian affair and that of the hermo-kopidai of 415, both unsuccessful revolutions, illustrate especially clearly how firmly intertwined were the religious and secular spheres of society, and in particular Thucydides' own understanding of this connection. It is also in these two accounts that Thucydides makes the most effective use of his technique of silent contrasts. As Schadewaldt puts it, Thucydides renders historical judgments by contrasting silently incidents of the war with events from earlier history.<sup>52</sup>

The story of the Kylonian conspiracy (1.126) is followed by the stories of Pausanias and Themistokles, so that the entire digression is the history of three traitors (1.128–38). In the accounts of the first two, Kylon and Pausanias, the interests of religion and of the state collide. Both accounts also have in common the flagrant misuse of religion by Spartans and Athenians alike for the purpose of diplomatic maneuvering. Here, for a change, it is the Spartans who initiate the misuse.

In reporting the bungled coup d'état and the Delphic oracle which led Kylon to attempt it, Thucydides stands in the tradition of Herodotos. Kylon, embarking on a course of action which was at once illegal (the overthrow of the government) and sacrilegious (the occupation of the Akropolis), could not possibly have the support of Delphi. Illegal and impious acts are the mark of unreasonable and unreasoning men, and Kylon, in consequence, misunderstood the oracular pronouncement. The bungling revolutionary clearly does not have the sympathy of Thucydides; nor is there any evidence that he belittles the oracular pronouncement or its outcome.

In this episode, the Athenians of that bygone age appear in a favorable light. To be sure, they do break their promise to the conspirators and violate the asylum of the Dread Goddesses. But their magistrates act in the defense of the state which, as they see it, is in mortal peril. The people of Athens, however, admitted the sacrilege afterwards, and twice made reparations for it which were more than sufficient (1.126.12).

In view of this double atonement, the Spartans have no justification whatsoever in demanding, nearly two hundred years after the event, yet a third expiation of the same crime. Thucydides' sober statement of the real motive behind this dishonorable demand also expresses his own view of the matter: the Spartans hoped to achieve the exile of Perikles or, failing that, to destroy his popularity (1.127.2). The Spartan attempt to use the Kylonian conspiracy against Athens, a diplomatic power play

<sup>52</sup> W. Schadewaldt, *Die Geschichtsschreibung des Thukydides* (Berlin 1929) 93. Westlake (above, note 16) 3.

disguised in religious dress, was repugnant to Thucydides and he meant it to be so to his audience as well.

If the historian reveals his opinion of the Spartan demand by exposing it for what it is, his view of the Athenian retaliation cannot have been much different. The sacrilege which the Athenians throw in the face of the Spartans is of the same kind as their own: illegal executions of suppliants at the Altar of Poseidon and in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. The careers of the chief villains also run a parallel course: the aristocrat and Olympic victor Kylon, whose megalomania leads him to sacrilege and treason, and the royal victor of Plataea who from a competent and pious field commander (2.71.2) changes into a hybriatic offender against the Spartan virtues of personal modesty and simplicity. Pausanias' presumption shows forth in the self-glorious couplet which he inscribed, without permission, on the column at Delphi (1.132.2).

The Spartan government, not surprisingly, had its hands full trying to control his megalomania, his exorbitant ambitions, and his endless intrigues at home and abroad. The ephors nevertheless were reluctant to move against a Spartiate and a king to boot. Only incontrovertible evidence finally convinced them of the necessity to rid the state of a most dangerous man, even at the cost of what they must have fully realized to be official sacrilege committed in the name of the entire state. Faced, like the Athenians, with a most painful choice, the commission of sacrilege or the risk of absolute monarchy of the Persian kind, Sparta chose sacrilege. Yet again like the Athenians, the Spartans lost no time in mending their relations with a deity offended by the manner of Pausanias' demise and burial, and promptly carried out Apollo's order to clear up the sacrilege (1.134.4).

Thus, on the very eve of the Peloponnesian War there stand the exchanges by the two principal parties of demands and counterdemands, designed to gain time for both of them. The history of the Greeks for the next thirty years is enacted under the malevolent auspices of the old curses, long since expiated, but now dragged in from the past as pretexts for opening hostilities. The war begins with the irreligious exploitation of religion.<sup>53</sup>

## THE SICILIAN EXPEDITION

Religion and its debased form, superstition, are a leitmotif running through the entire story of the Sicilian Expedition. Nikias opens the great debate in the assembly with oracular language (6.9.1); accusations against the soothsayers stand at the end of the disastrous venture (8.1.1).

<sup>53</sup> For Gomme, *HCT* 1.425, the entire digression is irrelevant.

In Nikias' mouth the words *ei ameinon esti* become an ironical reminder that Athens had not asked Delphi's approval for so large an enterprise, as other states in the *History* do often enough. At Athens it is not Apollo who answers the oracular question but the people sitting in assembly, aided by the interpreters of omens.

Omens are not long in coming: the violation of the herms and the profanation of the mysteries. Bad as they are, they do not delay the sortie of the fleet; but as the Athenians become fully aware of the magnitude of the offense, they dispatch the sacred ship Salaminia to arrest Alkibiades and themselves turn the precinct of Theseus into an armed camp against the danger (6.61.2–6).

The picture that Thucydides paints is that of a city beset with sacrilege and desecration and rife with suspicion and drunkenness. Above all hangs the threat of revolution. The long chapters in which Thucydides retails all these events in his customary impartial manner are followed by an excursus on the Peisistratids, which likewise reports objectively the positive and negative sides of the tyranny.

The report is inconsistent with Thucydides' earlier judgment of the tyranny as a whole in 1.17. This and other discrepancies have prompted much debate about the purpose and appropriateness of the digression.<sup>54</sup> It is perhaps possible to see a connection between the erotic entanglements which led to the oppressive period of the tyranny and its eventual downfall, and the passions which agitated large numbers of Athenians in 415/4. Certainly Thucydides seems to be drawing a picture of deliberate contrasts between the two periods by means of the religious facts and events which he chooses to record.

In contrast to the widespread sacrilege of 415 (6.27–28.1; 6.53.1–2) there stands the tyrants' punctilious performance of sacrifices in the sixth century (6.54.5). Whereas in the Athens of 415 men engage in the destruction of sacred symbols (6.27.1), the tyrants promote the construction of beautiful buildings (6.54.5), including a sacred fountain-house (2.15.5). Whereas the *jeunesse dorée* of Athens amuse themselves by burlesquing the most ancient and venerable mystery religion of Greece in private houses (6.28.1), the family of the tyrants pay public honor to the Twelve Gods and to Apollo by erecting altars for them (6.54.6–7). While the hermokopidai violate the sacred space of temples (6.27.1; 28.1), the tyrants set up inscriptions honoring sacred ground (6.54.7), and properly purify Apollo's sanctuary on Delos (3.104.1). Whereas the Athenians of 415 organize gaggles of informers (6.27.2), the tyrants of old organize the Panathenaic procession (1.20.2; 6.57.1).

<sup>54</sup> H.-J. Diesner, "Peisistratidenexkurs und Peisistratidenbild," *Thukydides, Wege der Forschung* 98 (above, note 1) 537, with a full bibliography on the excursus. Diesner remarks that not much note has been taken of this inconsistency.

There is a strong contrast too between the Athenians' mood of hope and elation at the departure of their splendid fleet and the despair of the army in retreat before Syracuse. The troops leave port with prayers of hope, paeans, and libations poured from gold and silver cups (6.32.1–2). Two years later, amid the unburied corpses of their comrades, the soldiers send up to the gods entreaties, imprecations, and laments, the exact opposite of the invocations with which they had sailed from Attica (7.75.7).

The decline of the armada's strength and morale during the two years in Sicily is also partly depicted in religious terms. With all at stake, the Athenians perform sacrifices before battle (6.69.2)—the only instance where they do so. In 415, the veteran Athenian hoplites pay no attention to the thunder and lightning of a storm during the battle near the Olympieion (6.70.1). Two years later they regard the same natural event as a portent of their destruction (7.79.3). Likewise, an eclipse of the moon strikes such superstitious fear into them as to delay their departure for nearly a month. The pious Nikias, ill and predisposed to omens, gives in to this fear (7.50.4).

His appeal to their wives, children, and ancestral gods may have been regarded by the trierarchs as a cliché (7.69.2).<sup>55</sup> But when the final chips are down it no longer matters whether his words are hackneyed or not. The religious sentiments in his speech before the destruction of the Athenians could be taken from the pages of Pindar and Herodotos: there are divinely ordained limits to fortune good and bad; arrogant human behavior provokes the resentment of the gods, who punish the offenders; the most fortunate human being may come to grief. The gods may look kindly on those who worship them, if they choose to do so, and they may show pity to those who have suffered enough (7.77.1–4).<sup>56</sup>

The fortunes of the Athenians at home and abroad run along parallel courses to the bitter end. Feeling threatened by the sacrilege and demoralized, the demos recalls the only wholehearted supporter of the expedition in its high command, and finishes in futile recriminations against the oracle-mongers. The military force beginning its voyage with hopes for divine favor suffers setbacks in the west, falls prey to superstition, and ends up in pitiful lamentation to the gods. The devout Nikias is executed while his very blasphemy allows Alkibiades to live and see the day when the high priests of the Eleusinian mysteries oppose his return in the name of the gods (8.53.2).

<sup>55</sup> The meaning of *archaiologeîn* is discussed by Dover, *HCT* 4.446 ad loc. and now by D. Lateiner, "Nicias' Inadequate Encouragement (Thucydides 7.69.2)," *CP* 80 (1985) 204, who infers far more from the passage about Nikias' abilities than the evidence allows.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Westlake (above, note 16) 203 for the resemblance of Nikias' views to those of Pindar and Herodotos.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, Thucydides is surprisingly well informed on topics of religious history and religious institutions. There is evidence that he conducted research on these topics: he quotes some oracular responses verbatim, others he reproduces in accurate paraphrase; he is also familiar with certain formulaic religious expressions.<sup>57</sup> On the whole Thucydides treats religion much as he treats economics and finance, military organization, and constitutional procedures: taking much for granted as known to his audience, he is selective, limiting himself to what he considered significant and pertinent to his overall design. With respect to religion, he could have taken much more for granted than he actually does, for religion and its institutions were a common ground, familiar to all the Greeks to a far greater extent than, say, the internal politics and constitutional history of a given city state. Yet he takes the trouble to retail and explain a not inconsiderable amount of religious facts and reports no less than fifteen oracular pronouncements.

But Thucydides does more than that. He often makes connections, sometimes indirect, between religion and mundane events. Several of the most interesting religious diagnoses (of political action), a recent writer observes, come from Thucydides.<sup>58</sup> In doing all that, he shows that he is a student of religion in a deeper sense. He understands the importance of religion and appreciates the powerful role which it plays in human affairs. His discourse indicates that he is capable of first-rate insights into the psychology of religious people. For him religion is the underlying fabric which holds human society together and he shows how a prolonged and vicious war gradually destroys that fabric as it destroys so much besides.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. *enageis kai aliterioi* (1.126.11; cf. 1.139.1); *prokatarchesthai* (1.25.4); *kinein* (1.143.1; 4.98.5); *enthymion poieisthai* (7.50.4); *authentēs* (3.58.5). Oracular questions and answers quoted verbatim or in paraphrase: 1.103.2; 1.118.3; 1.134.4; 2.102.5; 5.16.2.

<sup>58</sup> Parker (above, note 2) 277.