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7-11-2010

### July 11, 2010: The Power of Religion

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Title: The Power of Religion

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7/11/2010--Ever wonder why religion has such a hold on people and whether there is any way to do away with religion? Here is part of the answer from Rivka Galchen appreciation of Jorge Luis Borges in the New York Times Book Review on Sunday, 6/27/2010: [describing Borges' relationship with the characters in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Wrecker*] "there is a vast unwritten book that the heart reacts to, that it races and skips in response to, that it believes in. But it's the heart's belief in that vast unwritten book that brought the book into existence; what appears to be exclusively a response (the heart responding to the book) is, in fact, also a conjuring (the heart inventing the book to which it so desperately wishes to respond)." But this is more than a reader's reaction to a book. It is our relation to religion. But this is more than our reaction to religion. It is our relationship with God. This is Pascal, no? There is another way of seeing this power of religion. The question has often been asked, why did not more Germans oppose Hitler? Some did after all. In the New York Review of Books, Adam Hirsch quotes Hans Mommsen to the effect that what was needed was not so much personal courage, as an "alternative utopian vision". That is why Communists and Christians opposed Hitler when so many of Germany's leading citizens did not. If we are not going to be religious believers, what are we going to find to fill the large spaces in our hearts? If such spaces are not filled, they will just shrink.