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### August 15, 2013: The Feast of the Assumption and the Disaster in Egypt

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Title: The Feast of the Assumption and the Disaster in Egypt

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8/15/2013—The news today was filled with the catastrophe in Egypt. Hundreds of people are dead. And there is no prospect immediately for the resumption of democratic rule. This is what happens when democracy is not trusted. If the Army had waited until after Morsi had canceled elections or free speech, the situation would be completely different. Perhaps the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was determined to install a dictatorial regime. But we will never know. In a larger sense, the question is the relationship of Islam and democracy. It is not necessarily the case that religious rule is consistent with democracy. On the other hand, the Catholic Church in Europe did ultimately come to terms with democratic rule and with religious liberty. There is no inherent reason why this should not be the case in Islam as well. The question that is not being asked is whether secularists are prepared to accept religious democratic regimes? There have now been several occasions in which democratically elected religious parties have either been prevented from taking office or have been removed from office at a later point. We must learn to defend democracy whoever wins the election. As long as future elections are not canceled, every democratically elected government should be America's friend. The Feast of the Assumption that is celebrated today in the Roman Catholic tradition illustrates the wide gap between organized religion and nonbelievers. This holiday celebrates the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven. It is an example of religious belief with which the nonbeliever, and many Christians for that matter, simply can have nothing to do. It is the kind of holiday that leads nonbelievers to assume that there can be no common ground between religious believers and nonbelievers. I have no idea how this gap is to be bridged. Until secularism sees its needs as bound up in the religious traditions, that is, sees how secularism is subject to the death of meaning and has no resources to deal with the death of meaning, there is not much hope. A confident secularism will never come to terms with religion.