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Appealing to Heaven: The Significance of Religion in John Locke's Advocacy of Revolution

Glenn Andrew Moots

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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APPEALING TO HEAVEN:
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION IN JOHN LOCKE'S ADVOCACY OF REVOLUTION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

by

Glenn A. Moots

A.B., The University of Michigan, 1991

M.A., Louisiana State University, 1993

M.S., Walsh College, 1996

Ph.D., Louisiana State University, 2007

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

It is customary in a work on Locke to cite the primary sources within the text itself. Locke's works are cited using the following abbreviations. Complete information on the editions cited is provided in the bibliography. I have also taken the liberty of modifying spelling and removing italics. Grammar and capitalization has been left as it appears in the editions used.

<i>Two Tracts of Government</i>	Tracts, page number
<i>Letter Concerning Toleration</i>	Letter, page number
<i>First Treatise of Government</i>	TI.paragraph number, page number
<i>Second Treatise of Government</i>	TII.paragraph number, page number
<i>Some Thoughts Concerning Education</i>	Thoughts.paragraph number, page number
<i>The Reasonableness of Christianity</i>	R, page number
<i>Essay on Toleration</i>	Essay, page number
<i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	E.book.chapter.section number, page number

ABSTRACT

This research addresses the intersection of philosophy and theology in Locke's philosophy, particularly his political philosophy. The justification for this inquiry is Locke's use of the phrase "Appeal to Heaven" in the *Second Treatise* together with his advocacy of resistance in the *Letter Concerning Toleration*. The thesis begins with a brief survey of the relevant secondary literature and frames the intersection of theology and political philosophy. The thesis then seeks to justify the claim that Locke's political ideas were motivated by religious concerns. This includes a close examination of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and his works on religious toleration. The thesis then examines the *Two Treatises* and *Letter Concerning Toleration* in light of what Locke said elsewhere about the significance of God and religion. The intended goal is to demonstrate that Locke's argument for resistance and revolution is ultimately motivated by his own theistic religious arguments.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Controversial Locke

Locke is a philosopher whose work inspires academic controversy. Some of that controversy concerns the particulars of Locke's liberalism and his political philosophy.¹ This includes, but is not limited to, its contemporary significance, historical roots, and motivations.² Some scholars recommend Locke as an antidote for what they fear to be moral peril in contemporary liberalism.³ Others indict the liberal tradition and cite Locke as its primary villain.⁴ Some scholars leave aside Locke's political theory and instead devote themselves to other facets of his philosophy.⁵ There is renewed interest in the relevance of religion in Locke's overall philosophy.⁶ And whereas Locke used to be known for the most part as a "social contract theorist" or "empiricist" because of traditional focus on either the *Two Treatises* (or sometimes just the *Second Treatise*) or *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, there is new emphasis on viewing Locke's major works as an integrated study.⁷ Locke has become a figure of such prominence and debate that one is tempted to ask, when coming to a new Locke study, "Which Locke will this be now?" There are now new Lockes and old Lockes.

This project focuses on an aspect of Locke's political philosophy quite appropriate for examination in light of such controversies, his treatment of political resistance and revolution. That question intersects with many of the current debates and offers a fresh examination of another previously "settled" matter in Locke studies. By studying one of the most radical of modern political doctrines, as articulated by one of liberalism's godfathers, we gain insight into

the foundations of liberalism. We may also gain insight into the American Revolution, where Locke's ideas had important historical significance.⁸ We may even be able to gain lessons applicable to contemporary liberalism's theory and practice.

Reconsidering this area of Locke's political philosophy may require distancing ourselves from what we think we know. As is so often the case in Locke, the well-worn paths from past scholarship are sometimes the least profitable to travel. Tarcov is probably right in asserting that Americans consider Locke to be "*our* political philosopher."⁹ But sometimes what appears most familiar is not well known. What Locke has come to represent to us in popular terms, or simpler academic terms, may not be borne out by a careful study of Locke's own argument.

We then approach Locke with a fresh perspective to review his arguments about resistance and revolution. The "new" Locke scholarship (in general) may not have everything quite right, but the revisionists are forcing a badly needed reexamination. Previous discussions of Locke's arguments on resistance and revolution see these as corollaries of his theories about rights and contract. Simmons almost gets it right when he asserts "It is in his theory of resistance that Locke completes his account of the political relationship, applying his views of political consent and of the limits on political consensual transactions to an analysis of injustice and misfortune in actual political life."¹⁰ But what about those areas where Locke justifies resistance in terms not fitting into the traditional "Lockean" model, as evidenced in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*? As Simmons also argues, it is not always clear that inalienable rights are rightly used in discussing the political consequences of religion in Locke.¹¹ I contend there is an important religious aspect of Locke's theories about revolution and resistance.

1.2 Ambiguity in the Conventional Interpretation of Locke's Resistance Theory

Understandably, arguments for resistance and rebellion in Locke are usually drawn exclusively from the *Second Treatise*. Given its focus on government as a fiduciary, and the background of the state of war, it is easy to think of the question entirely in those terms. Dunn presents that straightforward view: "The right of resistance within Locke's theory is based upon a concept logically antithetical either to the state of nature or to the legitimate polity. It derives from the notion of the state of war."¹² Trust is breached when peace is violated through the abuse of law (by the civil magistrate). The result is a restoration of the state of war. The violation of the magistrate merits that resistance, according to Dunn's Locke, because he has abandoned "the way of 'reason'" for the way of force and violence. Security has been removed and replaced with the state of war.¹³

Such a general analysis is clear enough from a legal perspective, perhaps. But it remains morally ambiguous. It also provides no clear direction for Locke studies, already a house of mirrors reflecting a host of different Lockes. Dunn's minimalist study, typical of most presentations of revolution in Locke, could be read as the secular natural right Locke, the Puritan Locke, the hedonic Locke or even a Hobbesian Locke.¹⁴ And despite Dunn's reputation for being the main proponent of a religious Locke, the relationship between God and resistance is thinly articulated in Dunn. Dunn offers only two allusions to the ubiquitous Lockean prescription of God as judge between contending parties.¹⁵ Dunn offers no substantial historical or theological context for Locke's resistance theory, merely contrasting it with that of John Knox.¹⁶

Simmons's treatment is a bit more helpful, but it takes liberties with Locke's own

arguments. For Simmons, the right of resistance is largely a strong claim right derived from the right of self-defense.¹⁷ It is the existence of these individual moral rights that enables Locke's philosophy to break with natural rights absolutist traditions such as those found in Grotius or Hobbes. Rights become not merely liberties, but the boundaries of protected spheres that a violated party can defend from a moral high ground. Locke's ideas about rights transferability are also imperative to articulating arguments for resistance. Individuals must control the dispensation of their rights.¹⁸ Like Dunn, Simmons finds justification in Locke's two key arguments about the state of war and a breach of trust.¹⁹ But Simmons also devotes considerable attention to a more complex question taken up at the end of the *Second Treatise*: what is dissolved under the terms of revolution.²⁰ And Simmons is not content to simply summarize and analyze Locke's own arguments. He also suggests alternative conclusions for Locke's premises, arguing for what he considers to be a *more* Lockean prescription.²¹

As Dunn and Simmons present it, the argument is reasonably clear. There are terms under which the political contract is formed. (T II. 222) The contract exists to remove persons from the state of war. When the terms of the contract are breached, and the state of war is restored, citizen rights antecedent to those of executive or legislator may still be asserted. Locke writes, "Whosoever uses force without right, as every one does in society, who does it without law, puts himself in a state of war with those against whom he so uses it; and in that state all former ties are cancelled, all other rights cease, and every one has a right to defend himself, and to resist the aggressor." (T II.232, 202) These rules concerning self-defense apply to individual persons in a state of nature, prior to civil government, and those in a state of war with the civil magistrate.

The strength and simplicity of the argument invites a straightforward understanding of Lockean revolution, but what is the metaethical justification behind the argument for resistance and revolution? In other words, what are the moral first principles that warrant the “appeal to heaven” (Locke’s term for armed conflict against invaders private or magisterial)? There must be some directing moral argument behind this contract and what it effects. Locke must be up to something more than providing recourse against contract breakers or potential murderers.

To draw a theory of resistance and revolution exclusively and comprehensively from the *Two Treatises*, particularly the *Second Treatise*, is an incomplete enterprise. First, it presumes that Locke intended the *Second Treatise* to be considered in isolation from the rest of his work. That is a thesis increasingly rejected by Locke scholars.²² It also presumes that the *Second Treatise* is the main treatise on ethics in Locke’s body of work, another assumption to which no Locke scholar will assent. More importantly, Locke himself never claimed to have written such a stand-alone treatment of ethics. It seems that there are definite justifications for looking elsewhere. The *Two Treatises* stand on their own as political statements to a large degree, but one can understand their metaethical justifications better only by looking for support and clarification elsewhere.

Working only from the *Two Treatises* can lead to confusion. A perfect example of this is controversy surrounding Locke’s call for the preservation of human life, or what some characterize as merely a call for self-preservation. Is this a hedonistic and Hobbesian (as Strauss alleges) self-preservation or a self-preservation motivated by divine law? Or, to put it another way, is self-preservation simply the instinct of a pleasure-seeking individual or is it the

fulfillment of a divine command? The latter would be consistent with Locke's Workmanship Argument, wherein every person is the workmanship of God and "bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully." (T II.6, 102) Self-preservation is, of course, central to the Lockean state of nature.

Strauss claims that Locke's use of the state of nature, including its central claim to self-preservation, is necessarily Hobbesian and "wholly alien to the Bible."²³ Hobbesian arguments are anathema to Strauss, whose indictment of both Hobbes and Locke gives more evidence of wanting to defend classical political philosophy than to give serious attention to the development of Christian political theory, particularly after the Reformation. Strauss's claim that Locke is essentially Hobbesian will be addressed to in this thesis. As for Strauss's implication that any reference to a "state of nature" or reliance on self-preservation as a political axiom are alien to the Bible, he reveals his ignorance of Christian political theory and politico-theology.²⁴

According to Strauss, Hobbes is an atheistic hedonist and Locke is something of his protégé; Hobbes's natural persons are bent on power, pleasure and self-preservation and so are Locke's. But a careful study of Locke demonstrates this not to be the case. The "hedonism" of Strauss's Hobbes does not characterize Locke at all, as later chapters will demonstrate. I do not intend to present a full indictment of Strauss's critique here, particularly since one does not have to look far for remedies. Even Zuckert, who follows a somewhat Straussian reading of Locke, will not consent to all of Strauss's Hobbesian reading of Locke. Zuckert begins his latest treatment of Locke by saying, "I agree with Strauss on Locke's manner of writing, but not on his identification of Locke as, in fundamental ways, a Hobbesian." It is because Locke moves

beyond Hobbes, Zuckert argues, that he is able to “launch liberalism.”²⁵ (Forster provides many solid summaries of Strauss’s claims and offers efficient and insightful replies.²⁶) As for whether or not self-preservation is defensible within the orthodox theological tradition, Tierney’s work presents the historical precedents, as does Skinner.²⁷

Perhaps the most readily available refutation of Strauss is that Hobbes’s main objective of civil peace, the most necessary and valid remedy of a solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short state of war, is evidently not Locke’s objective. Simply put, Locke provides moral justification for armed resistance against tyranny. Hobbes refuses any justification for armed resistance against the civil magistrate. Locke justifies resistance not only on grounds of natural right (in the *Second Treatise*), but also on religious grounds in the *Letter Concerning Toleration*.

But the controversy about self-preservation hardly ends there. Simmons, for example, agrees that Locke’s duty of self-preservation is generally cogent. But he thinks that Locke’s theory of divine voluntarism on which it seems to rely appears inconsistent. Locke seems to say that we should obey God because He is our Creator. Simmons replies,

But if Locke’s position is intended by him to be staunchly voluntarist, he seems still obliged at least to deal with one problem on which we have focused in this section. Why ought we to obey God? What is the ground of our obligation to do as He wills? As we have seen, Locke’s answer seems to be that we must obey God’s commands not because of their character as wise or power-backed, but because we have an antecedent obligation to obey, correlative with God’s right of creation. But with the ‘dilemma of voluntarism’ in mind, we are entitled to ask whence came this right of creation. What moral code or system includes this right and how is it justified?²⁸

Simmons concludes that the result of this compels Locke to assert an essentially secular argument for self-preservation.²⁹ Zuckert challenges the sincerity of a “Workmanship Argument”

in Locke altogether, asserting that there exists a shadow argument of self-ownership that negates any idea of divine ownership.³⁰ Grant sees self-preservation as altogether overrated as a key principle in Locke, arguing correctly that if one takes self-preservation as the axiom of every political argument then one will quickly reach non-Lockean conclusions. Waldron, however, argues that the divine imperative for self-preservation is a key basis for the normative recognition of human equality.³¹ From all this, it can readily be concluded that even Locke's metaethical foundations are in dispute, particularly those that inform resistance and revolution.

1.3 Debating the Role of Religion: Secondary Literature

We return to the foundational arguments that lie behind Locke's arguments for resistance and revolution. This thesis explores that question with an eye to Locke's religious and theological concerns. Broadly conceived, that means Locke's views of both God and God's revelation. As we will see in Chapter Three, Locke's description of the faculty of reason readily accommodates both God and divine revelation. But one must be careful in how one approaches the integration of religion and political philosophy in Locke. As will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five, this requires some careful understanding and examination of Locke's arguments on the subject.

Naturally, there is deep disagreement on the question of religion in Locke's resistance theory. Simmons goes so far as to argue that Locke confuses even himself when discussing the relationship of religion, rights and the inevitable political consequences that follow.³² While Simmons's own reading of Locke's argument on religion and politics proves to be less than entirely helpful, one can certainly see that Locke isn't always as explicit as one would prefer. For

example, why is the *Second Treatise* so admittedly reluctant to place religion in the catalog of natural rights while the *Letter Concerning Toleration* offers it as grounds for revolution?³³ Why are Locke's theological and epistemological works practically devoid of explicit political content? Some explanation must be offered.

Because Locke evidently does care about the relationship between religion and political theory, some scholars have been tempted to suggest a theological reading of his resistance theory. Foster, for example, notes that Locke's *Two Treatises* cites seven "Calvinists" (Hooker, Bilson, James I, Milton, Hunton, Ainsworth, and Seldon), one ex-Calvinist (Grotius) and includes only one exclusively non-Calvinistic reference (to Barclay, an opponent).³⁴ Skinner offers a reading of Locke's revolutionary arguments that looks back to the Reformed (Calvinistic) tradition, calling Locke's *Two Treatises* "the classical text of radical Calvinist politics" and asserting that the revolutionary concepts of Locke were developed a century earlier.³⁵ But Simmons dissents from Skinner's picture of things, asserting that Locke's theory of rights promotes a "fully secularized" theory of revolution.³⁶ But both Skinner and Simmons agree that Locke does not necessarily view resistance as a duty – only as a right.³⁷ If true, that is a notable deviation from Calvinist resistance theory.

While there is no doubt that parallels can be asserted between Locke's political philosophy and some aspects of Protestant political thinking, finding explicit influence is difficult. Locke did own important revolutionary treatises in the Continental tradition, including the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*.³⁸ But something more than mere ownership of the texts must be demonstrated if one is going to prove the point. Becker, for example, rejects an influence of the

Vindiciae on Locke but Amos retorts that Becker did not understand covenant theology.³⁹ On the question of Scottish Covenanter (and revolutionary advocate) Samuel Rutherford, Coffey asserts that there was no clear influence on Locke. Locke's father did fight with the Puritan army, was likely acquainted with Rutherford, and *Lex, Rex* was published just two years before Locke was at Westminster. But all of this proves nothing and cannot be used to argue anything substantial. It is also true that Reformed and Presbyterian resistance theory was not the only one available at the time. (Given its bloody historical implications for Britain, Locke may have even found it repellent.) So this line of inquiry will not help much. Also, given Locke's own scorn for what he viewed as "enthusiasm" and unnecessary civil strife in the name of religion, it is no surprise that he offers an explicitly religious justification for revolution only on two occasions - once in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* and once in the *Second Treatise*. It would be appropriate then to reexamine the case for exploring a religious dimension to Locke's resistance theory.

1.4 Summarizing Locke's Own Treatment of Resistance and Revolution

Locke's early work on government, only recently discovered and now published as the *Two Tracts*, is a work that denies both religious toleration and political resistance. It reads like the work of a very different Locke. In the *Two Tracts*, Locke is quite sensitive to any religious justification for disobedience and he rejects such action. His argument is similar to that of contemporary antitolerantists. For many reasons, perhaps chief among them Locke's own memory of previous English civil war, that is not surprising. Seeing religious toleration to be the imprudent first step toward political violence in the name of conscience, Locke writes, "Grant the people once free and unlimited in the exercise of their religion and where will they stop, where

will they themselves bound it, and will it not be religion to destroy all that are not of their profession?" Civil-religious agitators will be generally indistinguishable from sincere tender-hearted Christians. Political ambitions will be camouflaged behind claims of piety. (Tracts, 40-41)

In the *Two Tracts*, Locke has not yet articulated his now familiar civil-ecclesiastical jurisdictional boundary (evident in the *Essay on Toleration* and the *Letter Concerning Toleration*). So like other antitolerantists, the younger Locke argues that religious matters are inevitably political ones. He writes against Bagshaw, "I wish our author would do us the courtesy to show us the bounds of each and tell us where civil things end and spiritual begin." (Tracts, 23-24) Locke asserts civil disobedience to be contrary to Christian teaching. He argues, "A more sober view will eventually recognize that civil disobedience, even in the indifferent things of divine worship, is not counted among the least duties of the Christian religion, and that there is no other help but in eagerness to obey." (Tracts, 56) Locke also finds no New Testament mandate for claims of divinely authorized civil disobedience. He writes, "The New Testament nowhere makes any mention of the controlling or limiting of the magistrate's authority since no precept appointed for the civil magistrate appears either in the Gospel or in the Epistles." Christ and the apostles, Locke insists, were apolitical. (Tracts, 72)

In the later *Essay on Toleration*, however, Locke appears more inclined to acknowledge legitimate tension between the commands of God and the commands of the magistrate. It is here that one first sees Locke's familiar division of civil and ecclesiastical affairs. But the discussion of disobedience is not entirely clear. He writes,

If the magistrate, in these opinions or actions by laws and impositions, endeavor or restrain or compel men contrary to the sincere persuasions of their own consciences, they ought to do what their consciences require of them, as far as without violence they can; but withal are bound at the same time quietly to submit to the penalty the law inflicts for such disobedience. (Essay, 143)

By this they secure their own good before God and peace for their kingdom. That should be the end of it, but Locke continues the discussion. He offers qualification, offering an extended warning not against all resisters but against those who pursue worldly ambition masquerading as conscience. What might Locke approve for *sincere* (rather than hypocritical or worldly ambitious) resisters? Or what should be made of Locke's exhortation to avoid violence as far as one *can*? It is probably best to err on the side of caution here and not presume an esoteric doctrine of revolution, but it is interesting that Locke in the *Essay on Toleration* is cognizant of the tension and the potential for religious revolution.

Locke's most explicit discussion of revolution is found in the *Second Treatise*. When briefly considering the work in light of this thesis, one is struck by a contrast. On the one hand, Locke makes little mention of religion there as a basis for revolution. Only one reference is made wherein Locke writes,

But if either these illegal acts have extended to the majority of the people, or if the mischief and oppression has lighted only on some few, but in such cases, as the precedent and consequences seem to threaten all; and they are persuaded in their consciences, that their laws, and with them their estates, liberties, and lives are in danger, and perhaps their religion too, how they will be hindered from resisting illegal force, used against them, I cannot tell.⁴⁰ (T II.209, 192)

But though Locke does not *emphasize* religious exercise as a cause for resistance in the *Second Treatise*, he does emphasize the role of God as the final judge between persons in the state of war, including the dispute between citizens and a tyrannical magistrate. Explicit occasions for

armed resistance are called an “appeal to heaven” and Locke provides particular instances for its use: when there is no earthly judge against tyrants; against the abuse of prerogative power; to recover government by consent; just self-defense. (T II.21, 192; 87, 137; T II.168, 175; T II.176, 179; T II.168, 175) Wherever force rather than right is the basis for government, Locke argues, revolution (distinguished from rebellion, which Locke condemns) is not an offense before God. (T II.196, 187) Men must judge whether or not they are in a state of war. But having judged themselves that they are, God is the judge of right in such cases. (T II.241, 242)

Here is the motivating question: Why does Locke call the basis of revolution an “appeal to heaven”? Why not simply call it an appeal to justice or reason or right? Locke could certainly have done so and thereby still provided some means of transcendent standard. If the “appeal to heaven” is nothing more than an appeal to arms (or force) to resolve a dispute, why not simply call it that? It would seem that this is an unnecessarily vague and perhaps redundant prescription if Locke simply means that people should fight when put into the state of war, even against the civil magistrate. But it seems that Locke means something more than the prescription of a means for resolving a dispute. He is also looking for a standard of right in resolving that dispute. The appeal appears to be both a current appeal to right, demanding a clash of force. But it is also, in at least two cases in the *Second Treatise*, a reminder that such an appeal to right will be tested by God both here and in the hereafter. Locke writes,

To avoid this state of war (wherein there is no appeal but to Heaven, and wherein every the least difference is apt to end, where there is no authority to decide between the contenders) is one great reason of men’s putting themselves into society, and quitting the state of nature: for where there is an authority, a power on earth, from which relief can be had by appeal, there the continuance of the state of war is excluded, and the controversy is decided by that power. Had there been any such court, any superior power on earth, to determine the right between Jephthah

and the Ammonites, they had never come to a state of war: but we see he was forced to appeal to Heaven: ‘The Lord the Judge (says he) be the judge this day, between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon,’ Judg. Xi.27; and then prosecuting, and relying on his appeal, he leads out his army to battle: and therefore in such controversies, where the question is put, who shall be judge? It cannot be meant, who shall decide the controversy; every one knows that Jephthah here tells us, that ‘the Lord the Judge’ shall judge. Where there is no judge on earth, the appeal lies to God in heaven. That question then cannot mean, who shall judge whether another hath put himself in a state of war with me, and whether I may, as Jephthah did, appeal to Heaven in it? Of that I myself can only be judge in my own conscience, as I will answer it, at the great day, to the supreme Judge of all men. (T.II.21, 109)

Note that while the individual conscience is to decide whether the contest is a contest of arms, both the outcome and the judge of right in such a contest appears to be a Providential one. Thus, it would seem that any rational person would need some standard for being on the right side of Providence and divine judgment – both at the time of conflict and at the Last Day. That would necessitate knowing something about divine justice now *and* in the final measure.

What is more provocative and significant is the possibility of a connection between this appeal and the significance of the Final Judgment elsewhere in Locke’s work. If Locke is going to argue prudent application of the right of revolution because one will have to answer to a just God, would it not follow that this tribunal would provide some information to enable justification or condemnation? How could such an appeal be possible if the moral warrant could not be known? Locke says as much when he writes, “He that appeals to heaven must be sure he has right on his side, and a right too that is worth the trouble and cost of the appeal, as he will answer at a tribunal that cannot be deceived, and will be sure to retribute to every one according to the mischiefs he hath created to his fellow subjects.” (T II.176, 179) Given Locke’s interest in

both religion and epistemology, the inquiry that Locke urges here must be explored elsewhere in his work.

But though Locke's judge may be in heaven, are the motivations for resistance only earth-bound? If one is willing to gloss over the reference to religion in paragraphs 209 and 210, it might be tempting to assert that the divine moral warrant in the *Second Treatise* is for something as simple as survival or government by consent. That would be the extent of any divine mandate for resistance or revolution. Locke's divine warrant for resistance becomes more intriguing and less earth-bound when one takes into account Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration*. While the *Second Treatise* is more guarded in offering religion as the cause of revolution, Locke's *Letter* is more explicit, offering its first premise in the argument for revolution,

Every man has an immortal soul, capable of eternal happiness or misery; whose happiness depending upon his believing and doing those things in this life, which are necessary to the obtaining of God's favor, and are prescribed by God to that end: it follows from thence, first, that the observance of these things is the highest obligation that lies upon mankind, and that our utmost care, application, and diligence, ought to be exercised in the search and performance of them; because there is nothing in this world that is of any consideration in comparison with eternity. (Letter, 241)

This duty falls upon each individual, though he may not impose such beliefs on others. If magistrates insist upon religious impositions contrary to the constitution of the government granted him or contrary to any power that was in the people to grant to him over religion, the people have the right to engage in a contest of force over law. Locke writes,

But if the law indeed be concerning things that lie not within the verge of the magistrate's authority; as, for example, that the people, or any party amongst them, should be compelled to embrace such a strange religion, and join in the worship and ceremonies of another church; men are not in these cases obliged by that law, against their consciences; for the political society is instituted for no other end, but only to secure every man's possession of the things of this life. The

care of each man's soul, and of the things of heaven, which neither does belong to the commonwealth, nor can be subjected to it, is left entirely to every man's self....But what if the magistrate believe that he has a right to make such laws, and that they are for the public good; and his subjects believe the contrary? Who shall be judge between them? I answer, God alone; for there is no judge on earth between the supreme magistrate and the people. God, I say, is the only judge in this case, who will retribute unto every one at the last day according to his deserts....But what shall be done in the mean while? I answer: the principal and chief care of every one ought to be his own soul first, and, in the next place, of the public peace. (Letter, 243-244)

Though the magistrate will probably prevail, this does not diminish the right of the people to resist. (Letter, 244)

1.5 Significance of Theology and Religion in Locke

Before proceeding, it is important to once more address this question of what it means to make a religious argument and whether such an argument exists in Locke. It is beyond dispute that Locke uses religious language and Biblical allusion and citation. What is in dispute is what this means for Locke's many arguments. Are these essential to his argument or something less? There seem to be three possibilities. First, Locke believed religious content to have essential import for his argument and analysis demonstrates this to be the case. Second, Locke understood his religious content to have essential import but analysis demonstrates this not to be the case. That is, while Locke sincerely desired to have theological claims play an essential role in his argument, he could not make these claims succeed in practice. It is doubtful that Locke would be oblivious to such an inconsistency, so it would seem reasonable that he would acknowledge that failure somewhere. The third possibility is that Locke knew that his religious content was of no essential import and that was Locke's intent. Why include it then? Perhaps Locke includes it merely as a rhetorical device (common to the discourse of his day). But that doesn't tell us

enough. Is it part of a calculating plan to persuade a 17th century audience, serving to project false piety as a ruse to ensnare his audience with an essentially secular project? Or is it merely a pleasant window dressing, intended to be of no real significance in making his point but included to conform to present pious rhetorical style. In that case, Locke would be merely redundant or superfluous rather than conniving.

My argument that follows suggests that readings of Locke as calculating or insincere are based on unwarranted and prejudicial conjecture and not on textual evidence. I also reject the thesis that Locke was thoroughly inconsistent in his work, believing religion to be essential to his work when it is really not. The only logical possibility is that Locke's religious content is sincere but redundant and of no serious significance to the overall project *or* that he was sincere and intended the religious content to play a critical role – and analysis bears this out.

1.6 Conclusion

This thesis seeks to discern if a larger explanation for the “appeal to heaven,” here understood as a divine warrant, can be drawn from Locke's work. Though it will intersect with other questions in Locke studies, there are some specific questions that it will not explicitly focus on. It is not an exploration of Locke's own religious opinions except insofar as they have political significance. It is not an exploration of Locke's general political philosophy.

Chapter Two establishes Locke as an author who is not only deeply concerned with religion, but also as one whose political ideas have a religious motivation and context. Chapter Three examines Locke's treatment of morality and revelation in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, providing clarification on what it is Locke meant by law and nature. In particular,

it demonstrates how Locke sees God as an active lawgiver behind all types of human understanding. Chapter Four continues the exploration, looking to *The Reasonableness of Christianity* for Locke's particular ideas on divine revelation and its significance. It also demonstrates why Locke's seemingly secular politics are not so secular. Chapter Five approaches various sections of Locke's *Two Treatises*, engaging Locke's Biblical exegesis in the *First Treatise* and his treatment of the law of nature in the *Second Treatise*. All of this will be directed to a deeper understanding of what Locke means by "happiness" and the political consequences that follow from that. Chapter Six will reexamine Locke's particular justifications in light of the studies of previous chapters. The concluding chapter, Chapter Seven will summarize the conclusions and offer suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS FOR LOCKE'S POLITICAL IDEAS

2.1 What Motivates Locke's Political Philosophy?

The typical presentation of Locke's political philosophy, usually a summary provided in the course of a survey of political philosophers, is both oversimplified and secular. That is attributable to the fact that most of these summaries are drawn exclusively from the *Second Treatise*. Attention is paid to the mechanics of Locke's civil society, but there is little discussion of any moral considerations that may have led Locke to prescribe these particular mechanics. To the point of this thesis, one should also ask if there is any essential religious content informing those moral considerations. This will not only deepen our understanding of Locke's political philosophy. It will determine if it is essentially "secular."

It is true that there appears to be little *explicit* religious content in the *Second Treatise*. It contains relatively few references to God and divine revelation and includes no discussion of religious practice and piety. But that cannot be said of the great majority of Locke's work. In fact, the *Second Treatise* is one of only two or three of Locke's major works *not* devoted to religious concerns. Thus, its apparently (but debatably) "secular" character is not representative of Locke's overall philosophy. Shouldn't the majority of Locke's (religious) work provide some insight into a more correct (and less secular) reading of the *Second Treatise*? It would be difficult to argue that Locke intended his *Two Treatises* to be read in isolation from the rest of his work.

When reflecting on this question of a "secular" Lockean political philosophy, two important facts should be kept in mind. First, the personal revolutionary intrigues of Locke that cast their shadow over the composition of the *Two Treatises* were directed not only against a

monarch who might dissolve the legislature or assert unconstitutional prerogative (all grounds for the “appeal to heaven”). Intertwined with those concerns was the prominent fear that Charles II’s support for his brother (James II) as his successor might lead to the end of Protestantism in England (and perhaps the world). William, by contrast, would establish both Protestantism and toleration.⁴¹ This context demonstrates the significance of religion for Locke’s political philosophy because it means that Locke saw an inherent threat to liberty from a Roman Catholic monarch.⁴²

Second, almost all of Locke’s work, published and unpublished, is taken up with religious questions. If Locke intended the religious content to be merely window dressing, pious or not, this would seem an inordinate amount of time to devote to window dressing. The list of Locke’s work focused on religious concerns is extensive, including ten prominent works directly addressing religious concerns: (1) the now-titled *The First Tract of Government* (1660) (also called the “English tract” and titled “Question: Whether the Civil Magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to Religious Worship,” a reply to Bagshaw’s *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship*); (2) The now-titled *The Second Tract of Government* (1662) (also called “the Latin tract,” a more formal presentation re-working the point-by-point refutation style of the “English Tract”); (3) The *Essay on Toleration* (1667), a reply to Samuel Parker’s *Ecclesiastical Politie*; (4) The *Epistola de Tolerantia* (1685), published in 1689 and translated as *A Letter Concerning Toleration* by William Popple; (5) *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (1690); (6) *A Third Letter Concerning Toleration* (1692); (6) *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695); (7) *A Vindication*

of the Reasonableness of Christianity (1695); (8) *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1697) (9) *Part of a Fourth Letter Concerning Toleration* (Posthumously – 1706); (10) *Paraphrase and Notes of the Epistles of St. Paul* (Posthumously - 1707). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) should also be included on this list of works concerned with religion because of its motivating concerns, revelation and morality. The same could be said, though to a lesser degree, of the unpublished *Essays Concerning the Law of Nature* (1663-64) or perhaps Locke's translation of Nicole's *Essais de Morale* (1676). There also exist numerous essays, published and unpublished by Locke, on the subject of religion.⁴³ Finally, the *First Treatise of Government* (1689) includes extensive theological claims and Biblical exegesis in Locke's engagement with Filmer. The *First Treatise* is not only a reply to Filmer's own assertions, but also includes counter-assertions made by Locke that become important for his *Second Treatise*.

Locke himself also did not see his work delineated in the way that we do – “religious works” versus “political works.” To Locke, religious questions and political questions were not so easily segregated. While he did argue, beginning with the *Essay on Toleration*, that the magistrate's duties were different from the church's, this in no way necessitated a “secular” (God-less) view of politics. Locke's division was not between “political questions” and “religious questions” but between ecclesiastical jurisdiction and civil jurisdiction. It is therefore not helpful to attempt a taxonomy separating Locke's political essays from his religious essays, especially given that Locke wrote so much on the subject of religious toleration, a subject integrating both areas of concern.

If we are to consider Locke's political philosophy anew, and apart from the usual understanding, we must prepare to do so using a lens more familiar to Locke and less familiar to us. Whereas the integration of politics and religion may seem alien or unwarranted to us, such things were quite appropriate in Locke's own day. If we are willing to pay close attention to any religious context and content of Locke's argument, it will help us to discern if Locke articulated his political theories with the motivating concerns that are nonreligious (such as property acquisition for its own sake) or whether Locke's motivating concerns have something to do with God and God's revelation. Even more significant than that, we might determine whether this religious content is just motivational or perhaps even essential.

This chapter argues that many of Locke's essential political ideas emerge from debates about matters essentially theological and ecclesiastical, and that Locke's own concerns for religious practice and piety give him a clear and sincere stake in those debates. It does not deny the prominent role of property or consent, for example, as collateral, contextual or consequent concerns. But as I will argue later, these are not ends in themselves. They are imperatives necessitated by divine command or warrants for fulfilling divine commands. In other words, there is a divine justification and motivation transcending "equality" or "property." Locke seeks to establish certain political or social conditions as fulfillments of divine commands evident in both reason and revelation. When these conditions (and therefore their informing commands) become threatened by the magistrate, a moral warrant for revolution exists.

In addition to challenging the standard presentation of Locke's political philosophy, the question at hand has many important implications for refuting claims of Locke's so-called

Hobbesianism or “possessive individualism.” If it is demonstrable that Locke has sincere religious motivations for articulating his political philosophy, this would put him at a considerable distance from Hobbes. Hobbes advocates religious conformity and imposition to achieve civil peace. He was not interested in giving space to the personal exploration of religious piety and practice. By contrast, Locke’s preference for religious practice and piety motivate him even to the point of threatening public peace for the sake of one’s soul. (Letter, 243-244)

Whereas Hobbes advocates a minimalist creed similar to Locke’s: “Jesus is the Messiah,” Hobbes uses it as an antitolerantist might – to refute arguments for toleration. Locke uses it to simplify Christianity and create a community of tolerance and goodwill among Christians.⁴⁴

Against Strauss’s or Macpherson’s assertion that Locke’s articulation of a private sphere against government intrusion is motivated by a concern for endless material pursuits, one can demonstrate an otherworldly motivation in Locke.⁴⁵

It is the works on toleration, a broader presentation than merely the *Two Treatises*, which provide a more comprehensive and explanatory context, justification, and understanding of Locke’s political ideas. An examination of Locke’s essays on toleration reveals that important Lockean political doctrines are developed not just in the context of secular political concerns, but in the interest of preserving religion and virtue. After all, Locke’s argument is not an argument for simple toleration of any or all opinions. It is not an argument for pluralism and freedom as an end in itself. It is an argument for toleration of religious exercise. Locke argues for political freedom to the end of preserving religion, not religious freedom as an end to preserving politics. And while Locke thinks that earthly concerns (life, liberty, estate) are certainly important and

require protection, these are not ends in themselves. Good politics become a necessary (though not sufficient) means to a heavenly end.

Finding political argument in the works on toleration even suggests that many of Locke's political first principles were articulated not in the context of political intrigues surrounding Charles II and James II and Shaftsbury. They were articulated during the long debate about the nature of true religious practice and its significance for politics. By looking at Locke's discussion of toleration, we might get a picture of his political theory that extends beyond a strict natural rights approach.⁴⁶

This chapter demonstrates Locke's abiding interest in the intersection of religion and politics. Part of it, as the title indicates, addresses the religious context and motivation for Locke's formulation of political arguments. Part of it addresses Locke's own religious opinions. The former question helps us to understand the broader context for Locke's political ideas. The latter question helps us to understand how Locke's own religious opinions dictated the political arguments that he formulated. Another goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that Locke's interests are consistent between his early and later work. Locke's desired outcomes are the same throughout his work, though the means to those ends will admittedly change.

2.2 Continuity in the Two Tracts

The earliest major works on government, the *Two Tracts* (1660-62), demonstrate that Locke was considering important political arguments long before they took root in the *Two Treatises*. The motivating concerns for Locke's early political arguments have nothing to do with traditional liberal concerns – property rights or government by consent, for example. Rather,

Locke is trying to navigate the right of the civil sovereign with respect to religion. He wants to maintain civil peace while preventing unnecessary religious offense. The default position here is not one of liberty, to be sure. But neither is Locke insensitive to questions of liberty. He insists that enforced religious conformity *is* compatible with the natural liberties of subjects. Even in his early work, Locke is wrestling with defining and defending the proper boundaries of liberty, even if his understanding of those boundaries changes significantly over time.

Another continuity evident is Locke's desire to create a climate in which religious sectarianism is not the source of political struggle. Because Locke does not see civil religious imposition as an inappropriate imposition on natural liberty, he advocates it in the *Two Tracts*. Later, (in the *Essay on Toleration* and the *Letter Concerning Toleration*), Locke finds imposition impractical and (more importantly) a threat to true piety and religious practice. He will therefore insist on toleration against imposition.

A broad outline of Locke's argument in the *Two Tracts* shows us an argument that is not particularly unique. He argues that imposition will suppress the quarrel and disorder that would come from toleration. (Tracts, 6) The magistrate's authority over various religious concerns is all in the interest of preserving liberty and peaceful civil life. (Tracts, 7) Such concerns are expressed in other antitolerantist arguments of the period.⁴⁷ Given its narrow approach to freedom, the *Two Tracts* might strike the modern reader as odd or insignificant, especially if one is unfamiliar with that larger toleration debate. But as "unLockean" as the *Two Tracts* may seem to modern readers using hindsight, there is important continuity with Locke's later thought. First, the *Two Tracts* signal Locke's lifelong interest in preserving true religion from undue civil

interference. When read in tandem with the *Essay* and the *Letter*, they demonstrate Locke's deepening desire to preserve the eternal benefit that he associates with religion. Second, they demonstrate the pre-*Two Treatises* development of some of Locke's important political ideas.

Many consistent Lockean investigations are found here, both political and religious:

(in)alienability of natural liberty, the foundational importance of the patristic Church versus the superfluities of the later Church, the difference between internal and external worship, the difference between belief and will, distinguishing sacred from civil matters, and Locke's suspicion of religious hierarchies and political ambition.

Civil religious imposition in the *Two Tracts* is not absolute for Locke. He argues that where the practices Christianity can be truly discerned, they ought not to be imposed on by the magistrate. In asserting this and distinguishing what is the "true" practice of Christianity, Locke signals his parallel project of determining what is clear from Scripture and what is imposed by religious or civil hierarchies. Locke writes, "Imposing on conscience seems to me to be, the pressing of doctrines or laws upon the belief or practice of men as of divine original, as necessary to salvation and in themselves obliging the conscience, when indeed they are no other but the ordinances of men and the products of their authority." (Tracts, 23) Inconsistent with what one would find in a work *dismissive* of the claims of conscience, Locke is concerned that conscience not be violated unnecessarily. He emphasizes that the magistrate not take it upon himself to judge the heart. (Tracts, 47) He also emphasizes that true religion cannot be wrought by force. Force can reach only external and indifferent actions, but these have no consequence in salvation. (Tracts, 13) He is also sensitive to the disorder that may come from the abuse of government

authority in enforcing conformity. (Tracts, 13-14) Most notably, Locke begins a theme carried throughout his work and into the *Second Treatise's* "appeal to heaven." When there are questions of fundamental right at stake, one must keep the Final Judgment in mind. In the *Two Tracts*, this is used as a threat against abuses by the civil magistrate. (Tracts, 62)

Locke avoids clear opportunities to assert an authoritarian approach to his subject. Nowhere, for example, does he make the magistrate the arbiter of doctrine in the way that Hobbes does. It can even be argued that some of Locke's passages defending true religion (against external practice) in the *Two Tracts* would be at home in his later work defending toleration. Locke does not assert the right (and duty) of the magistrate to impose "true religion," as other antitolerantists did. Instead, Locke argues for antitolerantism as an expedient justified by the magistrate's care of the community. Externals may be regulated *because* they are of no eternal consequence in the spiritual economy of the New Testament.⁴⁸ Locke writes,

All that God looks for in his worship now under the Gospel is the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which may be willingly and acceptably given to God in any place or posture, but he hath left it to the discretion of those who are entrusted with the care of the society to determine what shall be order and decency which depend wholly on the opinions and fancies of men, and 'tis as impossible to fix any certain rule to them as to hope to cast all men's minds and manners into one mould. (Tracts, 29)

These passages demonstrate that Locke is trying to accommodate sincere religious conviction within a framework of political expediency. He never argues that true Christian practice *requires* the civil magistrate's enforcement. Rather, he argues that it would survive such enforcement if that enforcement was necessitated for civil peace. When Locke decides later in his philosophy that true Christian piety is antithetical to civil enforcement and contrary to civil

peace, he argues for toleration. In other words, Locke remains interested in preserving sincere religious practice. But over the years, his belief changes on how this is best achieved.

But even while Locke's arguments in the *Two Tracts* lead him to an intolerant position, there is consistency with his later advocacy of toleration. Some passages in the *Two Tracts* are even predictive of Locke's later frustration with religious intolerance and signal the epistemic and religious individualism that will come to light in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the *Letter Concerning Toleration*. For example, one can foresee the seed of Locke's later argument that toleration is a Christian virtue. The *Two Tracts* condemns those who use the sword in the name of ambition and revenge. Instead, Locke urges his reader to take up Paul's advice to live together and use no weapons but pity and persuasion. (Tracts, 41) Locke writes,

If men would suffer one another to go to heaven everyone his own way, and not out of a fond conceit of themselves pretend to greater knowledge and care of another's soul and eternal concerns than he himself, how much I say if such a temper and tenderness were wrought in the hearts of men our author's doctrine of toleration might promote a quiet in the world, and at last bring those glorious days that men have a great while sought after the wrong way, I shall leave everyone to judge. (Tracts, 41-42)

That statement, for example, would be very much at home in either of Locke's 1689 works.

One sees even in the *Two Tracts* Locke's apparently lifelong belief that essential Christian doctrines were patristic, not modern.⁴⁹ This signals his continual distrust of religious hierarchy and clerical ambition taking the place of the clear meaning of Scripture. He writes, "Had the questions of paedobaptism, church government, ordination, excommunication, etc. been as hotly disputed in the days of the apostles as in ours, 'tis very probable we should have

had as clear resolutions of those doubts and as positive rules as about eating thing[s] strangled and blood[y]. But the Scripture is very silent in particular questions.” (Tracts, 51) Locke’s interest in patristic doctrines here is thus indicative of a lifelong concern with discerning essential doctrines as contrasted with “externals” and what Locke fears are impositions on a Scripture of plain words and clear facts.

2.3 Rights and Liberty in the Two Tracts

There is further continuity between the *Two Tracts* and Locke’s later work, notably his famous *Two Treatises*. While Locke is admittedly ambivalent about government by consent in the *Two Tracts*, he does address the question of liberty and the degree to which it may be alienated.⁵⁰ Locke asserts that civil power may come from God or from the people or from both, demurring from offering a conclusion.⁵¹ If one is unfamiliar with the broad spectrum of seventeenth century political theory, or erroneously persuaded that Locke’s ideal regime is representative democracy, this makes the *Two Tracts* sound like nothing less than a divine right argument.⁵² But historical context is significant. As evidenced by Rutherford’s *Lex, Rex*, for example, it was not inconsistent in the 17th century to argue that power was derived from both the people and God.⁵³ These were not mutually exclusive alternatives, as some might think today. Nor does arguing a divine origin of civil power discount the possibility of natural right, constitutional restraints, or the requirement for consent. Representative and constitutional government in the 17th century was defended on theological grounds. So was absolutism. There were a variety of political theologies on which to draw.

While the following passage sounds discordant to an ear trained by the *Second Treatise*, its concerns are similar: social contracting, liberty, and the question of alienable freedom.

Whatever any man hath the liberty of doing himself, one may consent and compact that another should enjoin him. And here I cannot but wonder how indifferent things relating to religion should be excluded more than any other, which though they relate to the worship of God are still but indifferent and a man hath as free a dispose of this liberty in these as well as other civil actions till some law of God can be produced, that so annexes this freedom to every single Christian that it puts it beyond his power to part with it. (Tracts, 12)

The real question to be answered here by Locke is the degree of liberty that may be alienated by the people to the ruler. Thus, the *Two Tracts* is considering the same kind of question taken up in the *Second Treatise*. Locke's maxim in the *First Tract* is the same as in the *Second Treatise*. That is, the magistrate cannot violate freedoms granted by God. Locke even repeats in the *First Tract* (cited below) a form of the Workmanship Argument found in the *Second Treatise*.⁵⁴ The reason why "indifferent" or "external" religious matters could be imposed by the magistrate was that man was not given inalienable freedom in (religious) "things indifferent." This is why Locke challenges the people (or, more precisely, his opponents) to provide justification for limiting the magistrate's power. He writes,

Otherwise no doubt, those indifferent things that God hath not forbid or commanded, his viceregent may, having no other rule to direct his commands than every single person hath for his actions, vis.: the law of God; and it will be granted that the people have but a poor pretense to liberty in indifferent things in a condition wherein they have no liberty at all, but by the appointment of the great sovereign of heaven and earth are born subjects to the will and pleasure of another. (Tracts, 9-10)

Locke's conceptual picture of how freedom is defined and bounded is therefore not dissimilar from that of the *Second Treatise*, though what lies within those boundaries will change in the *Second Treatise*.

Initially, the sense of continuity between the *Two Tracts* and the *Two Treatises* seems disrupted by the fact that the *Two Treatises* are concerned with articulating *inalienable* liberties and the *Two Tracts* are concerned with *alienable* liberties.⁵⁵ That is understandable, given that one important motivation of the *Treatises* is to define precisely what the civil magistrate *may not* do. The *Tracts* are written primarily to articulate (in part) what the magistrate *may* do.⁵⁶ Locke *Two Tracts* have admittedly not taken the *Second Treatise's* (or the *Letter's*) wide default position of liberty for the people. Freedom in the *Two Tracts* is inalienable only if God denies the magistrate power or makes it otherwise inalienable for the individual. In the case of "external things," this power is not inalienable. (Tracts, 14-15) That which is not mandated by God (and therefore free) may be commanded by the sovereign.⁵⁷ Locke's goal, the preservation of freedom, does not change between the earlier and the later texts. Rather, his understanding of the best means changes.

Locke is not offering fundamentally different conceptions of freedom in the *Two Tracts* versus the *Two Treatises* if one keeps in mind that he always understands freedom in the context of moral law. Inalienable is never taken to mean "without moral limits." Freedom is always conditioned by the particulars of God's grant. This is why it cannot be used without restraint; it is only given and defined by the One who gave it. Freedom is therefore possessed conditionally. Even in the *Letter* or the *Two Treatises*, Locke approaches freedom with preliminary questions

about how much freedom is divinely granted and where it may (or may not) be curtailed by divine sanction for the sake of political prudence and civil peace. Thus, for Locke, the preconditions for determining (in)alienation remain the same. Locke looks to God to set the terms. The difference is that Locke's early work sees the divine call on the magistrate differently from how he sees it in his later work. Most notably, the divine mandate for greater civil peace necessitates religious intolerance in the *Two Tracts*. In the *Letter*, the divine call on the magistrate does not necessitate religious intolerance.

2.4 Mature Political Themes in the Essay on Toleration

We now turn to a more familiar and later work on toleration, the *Essay on Toleration* (1667). It is a work whose motivation, promoting toleration, is more familiar to us. Though its subject is the same as the *Two Tracts*, its real significance is not that it sees toleration rather than imposition as the means to civil peace, or that Locke takes a different view on what is essential to true Christian practice. Rather, the real significance of the *Essay on Toleration* may be that it articulates many foundational ideas on politics similar to those found in the *Second Treatise*, but does so at least a decade prior to its composition. This strikes the severest blow against the idea that Locke formulated some of his more "liberal" arguments in a non-religious context. Included similarities include not only careful limits to the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, but also a justification for government rooted in the threat of the state of war and the desire for self-preservation.

When considering the problem of conscience and obedience this time, Locke resolves the problem in two ways. First, to prohibit absolutism and religious strife, he denies the magistrate

ability to coerce religious obedience. Locke now argues that persecution, rather than sensitivity to conscience, becomes a threat to the civil order. (This was a common tolerationist argument.)⁵⁸

Second, to keep religious liberty from promoting civil anarchy, Locke defines the boundaries of civil government in a way that sounds similar when compared with *Second Treatise*. Locke's argument follows.

That the whole trust, power, and authority of the magistrate is vested in him for no other purpose but to be made use of for the good, preservation, and peace of men in that society over which he is set, and that this alone is and ought to be the standard and measure according to which he ought to square and proportion his laws, model and frame his government. For, if men could live peaceably and quietly together, without uniting under certain laws, and entering into a commonwealth, there would be no need at all for magistrates or polities, which are only made to preserve men in this world from fraud and violence of one another; so that what was the end of erecting government ought alone to be the measure of its proceeding. (Essay, 135)

Against limited monarchy (by divine right), Locke suggests an argument from a default state of natural liberty (similar to that argued later in the *Second Treatise*). He writes,

Let us see where God hath given the magistrate a power to do anything but barely in order to the preservation and welfare of his subjects in this life, or else leave us at liberty to believe as we please; since nobody is bound, or can allow anyone's pretensions to a power (which he himself confesses limited) further than he shows his title. (Essay, 136)

In the *Essay on Toleration*, in contrast to the *Two Tracts*, Locke has shifted the burden of proof to the magistrate and presumed a default state of liberty for the people. A large part of his motivation is to preserve religious practice. There is little attention paid to typically "liberal" concerns. He writes, "The magistrate ought to do or meddle with nothing but barely in order to securing the civil peace and propriety of his subjects."⁵⁹ (Essay, 136) Locke argues that this prohibition even extends to enforcing the second table of the Ten Commandments or promoting

the moral virtues and vices of the philosophers. (Essay, 143) Locke argues, “Yet give me leave to say, however strange it may seem, that the lawmaker hath nothing to do with moral virtues and vices, nor ought to enjoin the duties of the second table any otherwise than barely as they are subservient to the good and preservation of mankind under government.” (Essay, 144) These ought to be left to the consciences and discretion of the individual and not to the laws, if possible. They concern the relationship between God and the individual’s soul and have little to do with civil society. (Essay, 144)

Returning to the question of what is alienated by the people in the establishment of government, Locke appeals to self-preservation as the basis of government. This is a familiar idea from the *Second Treatise*, but here it is articulated at least a decade beforehand and in the context of religious toleration. He argues,

There are others who affirm that all the power and authority the magistrate hath is derived from the grant and consent of the people; and to those I say, it cannot be supposed the people should give any one or more of their fellow men an authority over them for any other purpose than their own preservation, or extend the limits of their jurisdiction beyond the limits of this life. (Essay, 136)

Later in the *Essay*, Locke argues, “Were there no fear of violence, there would be no government in the world, nor any need of it.” (Essay, 149) Locke later makes a similar appeal to a hostile state of nature in the *Letter*, too.

Such an appeal to self-preservation would be only erroneously cited as Hobbesian and egocentric. Locke probably got this idea from Grotius or Pufendorf, whom he recommends on origin of government. Not only did Grotius make a similar appeal to self-preservation, but he then attributed the doctrine to “the old poets and philosophers.”⁶⁰ Pufendorf also recommends

self-preservation (in a peaceful and social state of nature similar to Locke's own) as a defining premise of civil government.⁶¹ The appeal to self-preservation is also a first principle in medieval theology and canon law.⁶² Locke's familiarity or appreciation of medieval theology may certainly be disputed, but he explicitly recommends Cicero, Grotius and Pufendorf for those studying the origin of government. (Thoughts.186, 239) He does not recommend Hobbes. Rather than arguing that Locke is becoming more Hobbesian by appealing to self-preservation as the origin of civil government, it would be more accurate to suggest that Locke is becoming less *Hobbesian*. That is, he is moving away from a more characteristically "Hobbesian" fear of disorder in the *Two Tracts* to a greater endorsement of liberty in the *Essay on Toleration*.

2.5 Limiting the Civil Magistrate in the Essay on Toleration

Because Locke's concerns are consistent from his early to his later work, the *Essay on Toleration* will raise themes already considered in the *Two Tracts*. They all have to do with the power of the civil magistrate in one way or another. Locke must address the boundaries of conscience (and liberty). If Locke can demonstrate that claims of conscience will not become grounds for anarchy, it will remove the justification for broader civil power over them. He must explain why true piety and religious practice, by its very nature, *prohibits* imposition and necessitates toleration. This will place essential limits on civil power. And he must continue to keep in mind the challenge of civil and clerical ambition. Casting doubt on the sincerity of powerful ambition will provide a third justification for limiting civil power and also provide an argument against clerical power and insincere misuse of religion for political ends. The *Essay* will thus provide segue to the more familiar political ideas of the *Letter* and the *Two Treatises*.

Its motivation is not the familiar liberal or typically secular concerns about government by consent or property rights, for example. Instead, Locke is motivated by the desire to protect religious exercise and piety.

Locke cleverly uses his argument to remind the reader of three of his favorite themes: the importance of religion; the proper boundaries of civil law, and the human fallibility that necessitates distrust of civil and clerical power. He writes,

For the magistrate is but umpire between man and man; he can right me against my neighbor, but cannot defend me against my God; whatever evil I suffer by obeying him in other things, he can make me amends in this world, but if he force me to a wrong religion, he can make me no reparation in the other world. . . [W]e may well suppose he hath nothing at all to do with my private interest in another world, and that he ought not to prescribe me the way, or require my diligence, in the prosecution of that good which is of a far higher concernment to me than anything within his power, having no more certain or more infallible knowledge of the way to attain it than I myself. (Essay, 137-138)

In contrast with the *Two Tracts*, Locke's *Essay* does not find any tension between toleration and civil expedience. Neither does he share Rousseau's distrust of any civil disunity caused by religious pluralism. Instead, Locke rallies to a "Madisonian" argument. That is, the threat from religious faction will be diminished, not worsened, by toleration of a multiplicity of denominations and sects.⁶³ After asserting that religious congregations are not any more an inherent threat than corporations or chartered towns, Locke adds that having *many* and *divided* factions will neutralize the danger from faction and the potential for civil harm. The greatest harm results from the state choosing favorites or singling out one group or another. Such would be a violation of the magistrate's fundamental duty to protect the "property, quiet and life of every individual." (Essay, 149)

So much for the problem of the magistrate picking religious favorites. But what about the concern Locke raises in the *Two Tracts* about the abuse of conscience becoming the means to civil anarchy? Locke will answer this concern, and his growing concern about political ambition, with the threat of Last Judgment. To stake out the range of sovereignty for individual conscience, Locke writes, “The other thing that hath just claim to an unlimited toleration is the place, time, and manner of worshipping my God. Because this is a thing wholly between God and me, and of eternal concernment, above the reach and extent of polities and government, which are but for my well-being in this world.” (Essay, 137) Locke answers his own argument in the *Two Tracts* about what is “indifferent,” also anticipating his argument in the *Letter*. Now it is the individual worshipper who defines for himself what is indifferent. Locke writes, “When I am worshipping my God in a way I think he has prescribed and will approve of, I cannot alter, omit, or add any circumstance in that which I think the true way of worship.” (Essay, 139)

But this sovereign territory must still be moderated by both civil and eternal concerns. Not all claims of conscience are entitled to toleration. (Essay, 140-141) They must be confined to matters of “eternal concernment.” What Locke has in mind, of course, is Roman Catholicism. (Essay, 146) Whereas general toleration of apolitical denominations should reduce the sectarian threat to political order, toleration is ineffectual in reducing the civil threat from political religions, such as Roman Catholicism. (Essay, 152) And Locke also knows that the claim to liberty of conscience can be an important stalking horse for political ambition. In warning against the misuse of conscience by anyone, Locke appeals to the Last Judgment. He writes, “But, if there be any ambition, pride, revenge, faction, or any such alloy that mixes itself with what he

calls conscience, so much there is of guilt, and so much he shall answer for at the day of judgment.” (Essay, 140) The significance of the Final Judgment explains Locke denying toleration to atheists. The last check on ambition masquerading on conscience is the threat of the Last Judgment. Because atheists are not checked by a concern for the last judgment, there is no ultimate threat against their potential misuse of conscience as cover for ambition. The Last Judgment also stands as a threat against the abuses of the civil magistrate, particularly against conscience. Locke writes,

[T]he magistrate has a power to command or forbid so far as they tend to the peace, safety, or security of his people, whereof though he be the judge, yet he ought still to have a great care that no such laws be made, no such restraints established, for any other reason but because the necessity of the state and the welfare of the people called for them...And I think it will be easily granted that the making of laws to any other end but only for the security of the government and protection of the people in their lives, estates, and liberties, i.e. the preservation of the whole, will meet with the severest doom at the great tribunal, not only because the abuse of that power and trust which is in the lawmaker’s hands produces greater and more avoidable mischiefs than anything else to mankind, for whose good only governments were instituted, but also because he is not accountable to any tribunal here, nor can there be a greater provocation to the supreme preserver of mankind than the magistrate, [who] should make use of that power which was given him only for the preservation of all his subjects and every particular person amongst them as far as it is practicable, should misuse it to the service of his pleasure, vanity, or passion, and employ it to the disquieting and oppression of his fellow men, between whom and himself, in respect of the king of kings, there is but a small and accidental difference. (Essay, 142-143)

2.6 The Letter Concerning Toleration and the Great Defense of Conscience

Thus far, this paper has argued that insofar as Locke articulates a sphere of liberty in the context of religion rather than egoistic pursuits. Locke is particularly innocent of three charges commonly leveled against him: skepticism with respect to divine revelation (how else would religious practice and piety proceed?); a political philosophy of liberty motivated by possessive

individualism (there is only the barest mention of property or security in these essays, and only to ensure that the magistrate knows his prescribed duties); and a political theory grounded in Hobbesian self-preservation. Instead, what permeates Locke's work is a belief in objective truth from the Scriptures (though outside any particular ecclesiastical tradition), liberty articulated for the sake of Christian practice, and a belief in the potential for eternal happiness. Given the date of the *Essay* (1667) and its mature political themes, one can even cast doubt on the idea that the default state of liberty in the *Two Treatises* has its origin exclusively in Locke's biographical political intrigues. More likely, based on their context and date, Locke's defense of natural freedom is also deeply rooted in his sincere desire to protect Christian practice from the undue impositions of the magistrate. The *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) will now be considered with these themes in mind.⁶⁴

Many familiar political-religious themes are evident in the *Letter*. Locke scolds religious hierarchies for insincerity. In this case, that scolding is directed against those who plead toleration to use it as a wedge for civil imposition of a particular own denomination. (Letter, 226) As in the *Essay*, Locke threatens with the Final Judgment, warning these ecclesiastical authorities that they will have to give account to the Prince of Peace for their worldly ambitions. (Letter, 226-228) He distrusts the magistrate's use of religion and the potential for corruption of the church by the state and vice-versa. (Letter, 231) Locke emphasizes that each person is responsible for himself and the maintenance of his own soul. (Letter 229, 241, 243)

Locke's emphasis on human fallibility is also evident, as is his now established doctrine about the function of the civil magistrate. He argues that it would be no more rational for a man

to complain about the neighbor's neglect of his own soul than it would be to complain about the neglect of his financial affairs. (Letter, 227) This does not mean that Locke thinks that there are many ways to heaven, as there might be many ways to pay one's debts. Rather, it is not the concern of one man to dictate through political devices how another chooses to pay them. And in the case of one's eternal debts, they are of too great a consequence to be dictated by another fallible person. In the case of the magistrate, there is no more reason to think that he is any more privileged or capable of finding the way to heaven more accurately than any private man. (Letter, 229) And just as the magistrate would not prosecute those who declined to seek health or wealth, it makes no sense to dictate the particulars of spiritual health or wealth. (Letter, 228) Such a task goes beyond the scope of the civil mandate, which is only to protect against the fraud and violence of others. (Letter, 228) The magistrate has no charge to care for souls. Only the individual is charged with the care of his own soul.⁶⁵ (Letter, 230-231)

While Locke believes in the individual's own pursuit of eternal happiness, it does not follow from this that Locke advocates Christian practice that excludes corporate worship. Neither does Locke prescribe an autonomous Christianity because of his evident suspicion of power-hungry clergy. Locke may initially appear to excuse separation from public worship so long as it is accompanied with "innocency of life," but he is not defending Christian separation from corporate worship so much as separation from the magistrate's church.⁶⁶ (Letter, 216) Locke holds to the importance of corporate, public religion. He writes, "The end of a religious society, as has already been said, is the public worship of God, and by means thereof the acquisition of eternal life. All discipline ought therefore to tend to that end, and all ecclesiastical laws to be

thereunto confined.” (Letter, 222) This serves a public and evangelistic function as well. Locke writes,

Men, therefore, constituted in this liberty are to enter into some religious society, that they may meet together, not only for mutual edification, but to own to the world that they worship God, and offer unto his divine majesty such service as they themselves are not ashamed of...that by purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and decent form of worship, they may draw others unto the love of true religion, and perform such other things in religion as cannot be done by each private man apart. (Letter, 232)

Locke also defends the sacraments from civil interference, arguing that they are by divine institution. If they were by human imposition, they could be accompanied by “the eating of fish, and the drinking of ale, in the holy banquet, as a part of divine worship.” (Letter, 234) So important is this public worship that “stubborn and obstinate persons, who give no ground to hope for their reformation, should be cast out and separated from the society.” (Letter, 223)

Locke’s particular discussion of corporate worship is important for two reasons. First, it is clearly more characteristic of someone who believes in a theistic and revealed religion. It also serves as an explicit application of his social contract model outside the “secular” context of the *Second Treatise*. Being voluntary associations with no divine right, no religious society can claim entitlement to coercive imposition or infallibility.⁶⁷ The church is a voluntary compact no different from the civil society presented in the *Second Treatise*. Nowhere is that more clear than in an odd addendum to the *Letter*, a “coda,” which also serves to articulate Locke’s belief in a simple and primitive Christianity. These few paragraphs initially appear as a subtle attack on doctrinal objectivity, but quite the opposite is true. After Locke has bid the reader “Farewell,” he writes, “Perhaps it may not be amiss to add a few things concerning heresy and schism.” (Letter,

251) Here Locke defines a “religion” (not a denomination) as a group of persons that are of the same “rule of faith and worship.” (Letter, 252) (This would make Lutherans and “papists,” for example, of different religions though Locke also includes “Turks” in this group as well.) Heresy for Locke then becomes a political (community) charge, leveled by an ecclesiastical authority/body, pertaining to citizenship within the religion as a political unit. (Locke elsewhere labels “heretic” or “schismatic” as nicknames given by churches.) It is a charge that can have no divinely appointed significance because, by implication from the rest of the *Letter*, no religious unit can claim infallibility (or, as Locke’s says, to know the “unadorned and simple truth of the Scriptures”).

The particular opinions of each “religion” are voluntarily subscribed to by their adherents and are therefore not binding on those outside their fellowship. After a discussion explaining that groups are distinguished by what they agree to be the “same rule of faith and worship,” but that all claim the authority for this rule to be derived in one way or another from Holy Scripture, Locke goes on to draw two conclusions. He writes,

This being settled, it follows, First, That heresy is a separation made in ecclesiastical communion between men of the same religion, for some opinions no way contained in the rule itself. And secondly, That amongst those who acknowledge nothing but the Holy Scriptures to be their rule of faith, heresy is a separation made in their Christian communion, for opinions not contained in the express words of Scripture. (Letter, 252)

Locke’s resulting assertion that each religious communion is characterized by “opinions not contained in the express words of Scripture.” is not necessarily a criticism, however. Locke says elsewhere in the *Letter* that such practices and beliefs are unavoidable. “Outward form and rites of worship” and “doctrines and articles of faith” are essential to any public assembly.⁶⁸ (Letter,

232-233) But when an individual ceases to consent to these, and leaves a particular religion, he has no more political relationship to his fellows than if he was a political unit legally seceding from the mother country. Or, better yet, drawing a parallel with paragraph 121 of the *Second Treatise*, he quits the possession of the profession and practices of a particular church and incorporates himself to another religious commonwealth. Locke therefore denies that heresy can be charged by one person against another for betrayal against the Scriptures. Given that the Scriptures cannot claim to be infallibly interpreted by any particular person or group, heresy is a political (community) charge that can be leveled only between persons of the same ecclesiastical communion. He concludes the discussion with a warning against civil imposition, implying a variant of the Golden Rule: If we impose doctrines on others, we would have to be content that they are imposed on us. (Letter, 253-254) The “social contract” model is quite explicit here.

Locke’s contempt for those who would *impose* such additional doctrines is evident, but it is not the condemnation of a Voltaire, for example. Locke does not condemn imposition out of skepticism for the whole project. The problem is not that the practices are contrary to reason, but that imposing them presumes infallibility. Thus, their enforcers put themselves in the place of the Holy Spirit. Locke writes, “Nothing in worship or discipline can be necessary to Christian communion, but what Christ our legislator, or the apostles, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have commanded in express words.” (Letter, 254) Locke writes, “I cannot but wonder at the extravagant arrogance of those men who think they themselves can explain things necessary to salvation more clearly than the Holy Ghost, the eternal and infinite wisdom of God.” (Letter, 253) Locke is not signaling anything but a natural religion here. Instead, he is signaling his

lifelong intent to discern precisely what Christ taught, and how that translates into true faith and practice.

Locke's sincerity about religious practice and its political implications are evident in a preemptive strike against his detractors, Locke argues,

He that denies not any thing that the Holy Scriptures teach in express words, nor makes a separation upon occasion of any thing that is not manifestly contained in the sacred text; however he may be nicknamed by any sect of Christians, and declared by some, of all of them to be utterly void of true Christianity; yet in deed and in truth this man cannot be either a heretic or schismatic. (Letter, 254)

Locke here has turned a famous antitolerant argument into an argument for toleration. Recall Locke's assertion from the *First Tract* that when something is known clearly by reason and revelation, we owe "submission and obedience."⁶⁹ Everything else is imposed by men and reek of unjust and undue authority, perhaps even "superstition." (Tracts, 30) Locke was echoing an argument made by antitolerantists – the notion of the false conscience. (Stillingfleet, for example, admonished the dissenters not to dissent over small things.⁷⁰) There is, according to toleration's opponents, a clear objective truth that obliged magistrates to impose and consciences to obey. Those who protested that truth on grounds of conscience possessed a "false conscience." Locke is now arguing something similar at the end of the *Letter*, but for the cause of toleration.⁷¹ That is, there are clear truths in Scripture that God reveals by reason and revelation to men, and they ought to be obeyed. Anything else is nonobligatory. Hence, those that insist upon them possess the authentic false conscience. The resulting comparison demonstrates Locke's Protestant faith in the self-sufficiency of the Bible. Despite decades of separation between the two works, the Locke of the *First Tract* would be at home in the coda of the *Letter* (or even the

later *Reasonableness of Christianity*) when he argues that the discourses of Christ and the apostles seldom go “beyond the general doctrines of the messiah or the duties of the moral law.” (Tracts 51-52)

2.7 Conclusion

In arguing that there is a divinely rooted moral warrant for political revolution, it is necessary to demonstrate that Locke’s political ideas are not rooted in purely secular or earthly concerns. That is demonstrated by all of Locke’s works on toleration, especially the *Essay on Toleration* and the *Letter Concerning Toleration*. Each not only demonstrates that Locke’s political ideas are motivated by religious questions, but also that Locke sees a necessity for eternal happiness that the state ought not to transgress. Furthermore, these essays demonstrate that Locke’s mature political ideas do not rest on preoccupations with earthly happiness, Hobbesian paranoia about civil unrest, or the acquisition of property. By focusing on Locke’s more transcending concerns, the ground can be laid for focusing on any God-given moral warrant for revolution.

CHAPTER III

PROVIDENTIAL UNDERSTANDING IN AN ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

3.1 Introduction: Constructing an Ethics of Belief

The previous chapter chronicled and emphasized the religious context and motivation surrounding many of Locke's political arguments. More than that, it also considered whether Locke had essential religious content in these arguments. This essential content would be exemplified in Locke's appeal to the Last Judgment, a threat against both citizens and religious leaders who abuse the appeal to conscience as a stalking horse for faction. Locke also uses the Last Judgment to threaten civil magistrates who would abuse their authority over the religious conscience of their citizens. We now ask why religious questions concerned Locke at all, how Locke understood the truth and significance of religious questions, and pursue this particular theme of the Last Judgment. It is appropriate to begin with one of Locke's most famous and significant texts, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (hereafter referred to as *Essay*).

The *Essay* addresses ethics, religion and epistemology rather than politics, but insofar as those are prefatory to the study of politics, the *Essay* will inform our understanding of the political works in later chapters. The *Essay* is also an appropriate vehicle because it shares its publication date (1689) with the *Letter Concerning Toleration* and the *Two Treatises*. The *Essay* is a landmark work of modern epistemology, exemplifying influence of Descartes and Bacon, and inspiring reactions from Berkeley, Leibniz and Hume. Though it is a massive work, extending over three hundred thousand words, this chapter will review the parts most essential to

the question at hand and avoid much of the tempting quicksand that comprises the particulars of Locke's overall epistemological system.⁷²

Locke explicitly states that he wrote the *Essay* to settle some principles of morality and religion, motivated by a conversation with friends. From Locke's epistle to the reader we learn of his own understanding of the project,

After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. (E, Epistle to the Reader, 9)

Locke therefore sets out to establish an "ethics of belief."⁷³ That is, he must determine what obligations we have in the area of human understanding and what limits must be acknowledged in that pursuit. Locke's goal is neither a rigid and uncompromising pursuit of certainty nor a zealous defense of skepticism. Locke sets out to determine the proper limits of human inquiry. The goal here is not to discourage the pursuit of understanding, but to put it on a more certain foundation and within appropriate limitations. (E.I.III.24, 115) This, Locke hopes, will increase our delight in it. (E.Epistle to the Reader, 7-8) That will be accomplished by understanding its appropriate and comfortable use. (E.Introduction, 28-29)

This key work demonstrates Locke to be sincere about religion and intent upon demonstrating that there is a divine imperative for human understanding. That imperative directs man to the law of nature and comes to its fruition in the Last Judgment. Locke wants to make the fundamental points of religion accessible to all, but he frequently repairs to Biblical allusion, citation, metaphor and imagery throughout the work. It is a work that sees our rational faculties

as both providential (part of the God's divine plan) and designed for learning about Providence (enabling us to understand the divine plan itself). The Creator bestows reason for his ultimate purposes and with a heavy responsibility. There is no trace of Strauss's or Macpherson's Locke here. If anything, the *Essay* offers key arguments against their characterizations of Locke's philosophy.

3.2 Certainty and Its Divinely Appointed Alternatives

Locke offers a moderate approach to human learning. The goal of the *Essay* is not just a right use of certainty but also a right understanding of probability and faith as well.

Accommodating the various kinds of human understanding requires that Locke offer the reader a menu of human understanding. Knowledge is achieved "by degrees." (E.I.1.23, 57; E.II.1.22, 140) To insist that we can fully grasp all subjects of inquiry, Locke argues, is a frustrating and self-destructive enterprise. Locke likens it to throwing away an entire blessing because we are not capable of carrying all we want. Our "hands" (mental faculties) are not big enough to grasp everything. (E, Introduction, 29) By demanding more from our reason than we should, we invite skepticism. (E, Introduction, 31)

Locke's epistemology rests on the acquisition of ideas and the relationship between those ideas. Perceiving ideas in our minds is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of knowledge. (E.IV.III.6, 191) We must also perceive the relationships among those ideas. We cannot expect to have certain knowledge when our ideas are imperfect, confused or obscure. We must also develop the art of finding the intermediate ideas showing agreement or disagreement among ideas. (E.IV.XII.14, 354-355) But this may not be possible. Thus, ignorance and imperfect

knowledge are all part of the divine plan too, according to Locke. They quiet our disputes and improve our useful knowledge. (E.IV.III.22, 212) Locke scolds those who “expect demonstration and certainty in things not capable of it.” (E.IV.XI, 325) Using a familiar philosophical metaphor of light, Locke argues that some of God’s revelation can be compared to twilight and some to broad daylight. Most of our earthly revelation is like twilight. This emphasizes our earthly state of mediocrity and should inspire us toward heaven. Until we reach heavenly perfection, we are on intellectual probation. Locke writes,

Therefore, as God has set some things in broad daylight; as he has given us some certain knowledge, though limited to a few things in comparison, probably as a taste of what intellectual creatures are capable of to excite in us a desire and endeavor after a better state: so, in the greatest part of our concernments, he has afforded us only the twilight, as I may so say, of probability; suitable, I presume, to that state of mediocrity and probationership he has been pleased to place us in here; wherein, to check our over-confidence and presumption, we might, by every day’s experience, be made sensible of our short-sightedness and liableness to error; the sense whereof might be a constant admonition to us, to spend the days of this pilgrimage with industry and care, in the search and following of that way which might lead us to a state of greater perfection. It being highly rational to think, even were revelation silent in the case, that, as men employ those talents God has given them here, they shall accordingly receive their rewards at the close of day, when their sun shall set, and night shall put an end to their labors. (E.IV.XIV, 361)

When we do not have what Locke calls “knowledge,” which he defines as indubitable satisfaction with the agreement or disagreement of any ideas, the divine plan enables appropriate alternatives. God supplies us with the ability to make *judgments* about ideas in the mind or to give assent or dissent to truths delivered in words. We also have the ability to understand with *probability* when the proofs available are fallible. (E.IV.XIV, XV and XVI) These forms of

understanding and others, such “faith,” demonstrate that Locke is not a caricature of Enlightenment skepticism.

We are morally obliged, Locke argues, to realize that many things will not be known with certainty. Contentment would therefore rightly be called one of reason’s virtues, and it is necessary as we acknowledge the limitations of our earthly state. (E.IV.XI.8, 332) But contentment does not mean giving up inquiry. Rather, it means that we repair to other methods of understanding. That includes “the evidence of faith” where we cannot have universal and certain propositions.⁷⁴ (E.IV.XI.12, 337) It is also unavoidable, Locke argues, that we settle for opinions about matters wherein we will not have certain indubitable proofs. (E.IV.XVI.4, 371-372) Locke writes,

I think not only that it becomes the modesty of philosophy not to pronounce magisterially, where we want that evidence that can produce knowledge; but also, that it is of use to us to discern how far our knowledge does reach; for the state we are in, not being that of vision, we must in many things content ourselves with faith and probability. (E.IV.III.6, 195)

Where we cannot deductively discover things by certainty or probability, by sensation or reflection, we may have to rely on faith. Locke defines this as follows, “Faith, on the other side, is the assent to any proposition, not thus made out by the deductions of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God, in some extraordinary way of communication. This way of discovering truths to men, we call revelation.” (E.IV.XVIII.2, 416)

It is in Locke’s discussion of uncertain knowledge that one comes to understand, in large measure, his prescription for religious toleration. Locke does not advocate toleration for a plurality of religious opinions because he is skeptical of revelatory claims. Rather, he is skeptical

that anyone can claim infallible knowledge to much of anything, let alone revelation. Just as men should not be too quick to believe things upon insufficient demonstration, so they are not quick to take up the arguments of others when they cannot provide a certain answer or justification. Locke writes, “[I]t would, methinks, become all men to maintain peace, and the common offices of humanity, and friendship in the diversity of opinions; since we cannot reasonably expect that any one should readily and obsequiously quit his own opinion, and embrace ours, with a blind resignation to an authority which the understanding of man acknowledges not.” (E.IV.XVI.4, 372) Acknowledging the diversity of experiences and faculties requires patient forbearance, gentleness and fairness, particularly if we cannot claim to have reached the bottom of our own arguments. (E.IV.XVI.4, 371-374)

3.3 God and Spirits in the Essay

Locke’s warm accommodation of religion and the supernatural is demonstrated by his frequent references to spirits and by his constant assertions and arguments about God. There are, as Yolton has recently argued, “two worlds” in Locke’s *Essay*. Yolton summarizes it well in his most recent study of Locke:

There is another, different intellectual world that flits in and out of his discussion of the first one, the world of God, Angels and Spirits. That world has great importance for Locke and, he firmly believed, for everyone concerned about happiness and misery in the next life. It is rather surprising to discover how many references there are in the *Essay* to spirits, his frequent reference being to ‘separate spirits or ‘other intelligent Beings’. Scholars and readers, myself included, have not paid much attention, if any, to this feature of the *Essay*.⁷⁵

Though a discussion of God’s existence is not unusual for a text of this period, it is surprising to see so many references to “spirits.” The existence of both God and spirits, Locke argues, comes

from even the simplest reflection on oneself. In the case of God, we attribute “those simple ideas [we have of ourselves] to Him in an unlimited degree.” In the case of angels, who exist in many species, we reflect on our own nature and attribute those qualities to the spirits in a higher or lower degree. (E.III.VI.11, 66-67) Though the idea of spirits is available from reflecting on the ideas we have of ourselves, their real existence can only be known from divine revelation, Locke argues. (E.IV.III.27, 219; E.IV.XI.12, 337) But Locke’s discussion is not entirely rooted in human experience and reflection. He once repairs to the Church Fathers in his discussion of spirits. (E.II.XXIII.13, 405) The spirits become important examples for illustrating, defining, or justifying many parts of the *Essay*. (E.II.X.9, 199; E.II.XIII.18, 229, E.II.XXI.2, 310) Yolton writes, “For those who still cling to labeling Locke ‘empiricist’ (of whom there are fewer today), it may take some getting used to hearing Locke define natural philosophy as what we might term a ‘speculative science’, to say nothing about his application of that science to spirits.”⁷⁶

God’s existence is necessarily derived from reflection upon one’s own existence and upon all existence. (E.IV.X) The knowledge of God’s existence is certainly not, of course, innate. It must be acquired by thought and meditation, and a right use of faculties. (E.I.III.16, 105) But Locke argues that it is obvious enough to all who will but make even the simplest inquiry into the question. No truth is more evident, Locke argues, and he considers the proofs of God’s existence to be “impossible for a considering man to withstand.” (E.I.III.23, 114; E.IV.X.7, 311) Knowledge of God is the most “natural discovery of human reason.” (E.I.III.18, 106) This insistence on the almost self-evident fact of God’s existence, in part, accounts for Locke’s impatience with atheism in the *Letter* and the *Essay on Toleration*.⁷⁷

Locke is not always precise in his discussion of the attributes of God. Some of the divine attributes are demonstrated from argument. Others seem to be taken from Scripture without any evident philosophical demonstration.⁷⁸ Locke *always* argues that God is eternal.⁷⁹ He usually claims that God is *infinite* in “power, goodness and wisdom” though at other points he settles for arguing that the eternal being is “*most* powerful” or “*most* knowing Being.” One could certainly be the most powerful without necessarily being *infinitely* powerful, and a possible contradiction becomes apparent. But an infinitely powerful being is also the most powerful by definition. So perhaps Locke was thinking of them in the same way. There is no evidence from the text to suggest that he was sensitive to a contradiction.⁸⁰

The most essential fact for Locke is that God exists and that he eventually judges all persons, directing them to eternal reward or punishment. The reason that Locke insists so continually on God’s existence being obvious beyond anything else is because it leaves us without any moral excuse. Such knowledge is also “necessary to the end of our being, and the great concernment of our happiness.” (E.IV.X.1, 306) This claim of God’s existence as a first principle to any theory of morality becomes second nature to Locke throughout the *Essay*. But his method is clearly inductive and susceptible to criticism - a package argument. One does not reason back to a first cause and then attribute qualities to it. One must reason back to a particular kind of first cause, with particular attributes. On natural grounds alone, it is certainly susceptible to all of Hume’s nagging concerns about inductive reasoning from existence.⁸¹ That doesn’t necessarily demonstrate a failure of Locke’s argument. But given the fact that few philosophers of religion find it persuasive or logically valid, it is fair to say that Locke will only succeed if one

is willing to join him in presupposing the role of divine revelation in the discussion of God. Locke will need to sneak those revelatory premises in if his foundational argument is to hold. But that becomes problematic for Locke, who wants to also make knowledge of a particular God universally accessible. Thus, he never asserts that he is relying on divine revelation and instead implies that the argument is sound on the face of it – attempting to rely on rational and experiential demonstration alone. My purpose here is not to critique Locke’s apologetic. Locke would not be the first philosopher to assert something without a logically valid argument, or at least one that is today considered largely invalid. My purpose here is only to argue that it appears to be the case that divine revelation is essential to Locke’s conception of God and that it cannot be successfully rooted in natural theology alone. It is not to insist that Locke’s argument is logically coherent or that it should be accepted by the reader.⁸²

3.4 Basis of Morality: Divine Judgment

Locke’s speculation about the world of spirits is not essential for his discussion of moral conduct, but the existence of God most certainly is. The “true ground of morality,” Locke argues, is “the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender.” (E.II.II.6, 70) The claim of divine judgment is, to Locke, evident to us by natural revelation even if divine revelation were silent on the issue. (E.IV.XIV, 361) This sustains the role of the Final Judgment as central to morality in Locke’s overall philosophy, and reinforces its importance in the appeal to heaven.

Duties are important to Locke's ethics, and only laws can make our duties known to us. According to Locke, laws require a lawmaker who annexes rewards or punishments to the law. Consistent with his other works, Locke references a law of nature at various places in the *Essay*. He defines it in his Epistle to the Reader as "that standing and unalterable rule by which they ought to judge of the moral rectitude and gravity of their actions, and accordingly denominate them virtues or vices." (Epistle to the Reader, 19) But when Locke deliberately sets forth categories of law, he does not include the natural law as a category. He has only three categories of law – divine, civil, and opinion or reputation. (E.II.XXVIII.6 and 7, 474-475) Of particular interest to this thesis is Locke's discussion of divine law. The only reasonable place for natural law to be included in Locke's taxonomy is as a species of divine law. This is evident from Locke's argument that divine law contains both natural and divine revelation. He writes,

First, the divine law, whereby that law which God has set to the actions of men – whether promulgated to them by the light of nature, or the voice of revelation. That God has given a rule whereby men should govern themselves, I think there is nobody so brutish as to deny. He has a right to do it; we are his creatures: he has goodness and wisdom to direct our actions to that which is best: and he has power to enforce it by rewards and punishments of infinite weight and duration in another life; for nobody can take us out of his hands. This is the only real true touchstone of moral rectitude; and, by comparing them to this law, it is that men judge of the most considerable moral good or evil of their actions, that is, whether, as duties or sins, they are like to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the ALMIGHTY. (E.II.XXVIII.8, 475)

This passage emphasizes one of Locke's most consistently used arguments, the Workmanship Argument.⁸³ Because we are God's workmanship, he has a right to make laws for us. Natural law is a divine law not because it has the quality of Scripture, for example. It is still something evident from reason alone and not requiring any kind of special revelation. Rather, it is one way

by which God reveals his laws to persons. Hence, it is a “divine” law. The distinction so important to Aquinas’s taxonomy is ambiguous in Locke’s.

Without the rewards or punishments of law, our duties will be unknown to us. (E.I.II.12, 76) Because men are social, laws have both a public and private application, and Locke will not countenance a strict separation between public and private. Locke’s persons are unequivocally social. (E.III.I.1, 3) Virtue, public happiness, and preservation of society are inseparably joined by God, Locke argues. (E.I.II.6, 70) When discussing whether compacts ought to be kept, Locke distinguishes the moral desire of the Christian (“who has the view of happiness and misery in another life”) and a “Hobbist.” The former knows that “God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us.” The Hobbist’s justification is that “the public requires it, and the Leviathan will punish you if you do not.” (E.I.II.5, 69)

Locke’s belief in a Last Judgment with corresponding consequences is not a cursory or passing concern. It is important to all his discussions of both morality and personal identity. (E.II.I.11, 130) Locke believes that there will, after death, exist a “person” (though what exactly that means is ambiguous) who will have memory of what he has done. It is not important to Locke to determine with precision how the soul will retain the essence of the person’s moral status for judgment. It is only sufficient to know that God will use some vehicle to insure that there is a reward and punishment at the Final Judgment. Of the soul’s immateriality Locke writes,

I am not here speaking of probability, but knowledge; and I think not only that it becomes the modesty of philosophy not to pronounce magisterially, where we want that evidence that can produce knowledge; but also, that it is of use to us to discern how far our knowledge does reach; for the state we are at present in, not being that of vision, we must in many things content ourselves with faith and

probability: and in the present question, about the Immateriality of the Soul, if our faculties cannot arrive at demonstrative certainty, we need not think it strange. All the great ends of morality and religion are well enough secured, without philosophical proofs of the soul's immateriality; since it is evident, that he who made us at the beginning to subsist here, sensible intelligent beings, and for several years continued us in such a state, can and will restore us to the like state of sensibility in another world, and make us capable there to receive the retribution he has designed to men, according to their doings in this life. (E.IV.III.6, 195)

It is enough for Locke that there will be divine justice, and it only makes sense to him that justice can only be applied to particular persons.

The basis of this justice is the individual conscience. Locke (again, relying on the Bible more than philosophical demonstration) writes that “in the Great Day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of; but shall receive his doom, his conscience accusing or excusing him.”

(E.II.XXVII.22; also at E.II.XXVII.26, 468) Locke’s concept of conscience is intimately related to the notion of God as lawgiver. Though the conscience does not contain that law innately, it is no less obligated to obey the law of God for the sake of eternal happiness. Locke’s conscience is therefore probably best understood as a function of the consciousness that transcends earthly and bodily death. There is no clear idea of what exactly the resurrection means for Locke, leading some to argue that he is opposed to the orthodox understanding of a bodily resurrection.

(E.I.III.5, 94) But if Locke’s mechanism is unorthodox by the letter of the creed, the spirit of it is arguably not. If we are willing to define persons in terms of consciousness rather than substance, Locke argues, reward and punishment for earthly deeds still stand. (E.II.XXVII, 459)

Locke also believes that judgment, rightly understood, would require mercy in the Christian sense of the term. The idea of a Gospel is so important to him that it becomes a part of his argument against innateness. Arguing against the idea of an innate law (which Locke sharply distinguishes from a law of nature), Locke argues that a *truly* innate law would also make indubitably clear the punishment that would come from breaking that law. This is consistent with Locke's particular understanding of law, which he repeatedly emphasizes requires rewards and punishments to make it effectual. In the case of an innate moral law, Locke writes,

Let anyone see the faulty, and the rod by it, and with the transgression, a fire ready to punish it; a pleasure tempting, and the hand of the Almighty visibly held up and prepared to take vengeance, (for this must be the case where any duty is imprinted on the mind,) and then tell me whether it be possible for people with such a prospect, such a certain knowledge as this, wantonly, and without scruple, to offend against a law which they carry about them in indelible characters, and that states them in the face whilst they are breaking it? (E.I.II.13, 77)

What would then account for men breaking this law if it were truly innate, Locke asks? The only explanation would have to be an innate Gospel. Locke writes, "An evident indubitable knowledge of unavoidable punishment, great enough to make the transgression very ineligible, must accompany an innate law; unless with an innate law they can suppose an innate Gospel too." (E.I.II.13, 78) Locke denies that either is innate, of course, but it is essential to note the deeply Christian nature of Locke's moral epistemology here.

Locke's God is therefore not just one who judges, but one who can forgive. Locke never provides any philosophical justification for this claim either. If one presupposes that Locke would not make such assertions without some justification, why would he include it? The only explanation is that Locke is relying on divine revelation, and does not see the need to provide a

“natural theology” defense of every religious remark. That supports this thesis’s assertion that divine revelation plays an essential role in key areas of Locke’s philosophy.

3.5 A Teleological Conception of Reason

In the *Essay*, Locke is not interested in providing an epistemology of anything and everything, only those things which “concern our conduct.” (E, Introduction, 31) There is, he argues, no higher perfection of intellectual nature than the pursuit of true happiness. To the point of understanding Locke’s arguments for liberty, he argues that true liberty is the pursuit of true happiness. Locke writes, “The necessity of pursuing true happiness is the foundation of liberty. As therefore the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness; so the care of ourselves, that we mistake not imaginary for real happiness, is the necessary foundation of our liberty.” (E.II.XXI.52, 348) The *Essay* is not merely an attempt to provide a comprehensive framework for epistemology. It has a clearly intended focus on ethics and God. One example of this is in his reflection on pain and pleasure. Locke writes,

Though what I have here said may not, perhaps, make the ideas of pleasure and pain clearer to us than our own experience does, which is the only way that we are capable of having them; yet the consideration of the reason why they are annexed to so many other ideas, serving to give us due sentiments of the wisdom and goodness of the Sovereign Disposer of all things, may not be unsuitable to the main end of these inquiries: the knowledge and veneration of him being the chief end of all our thoughts, and the proper business of all understandings. (E.II.VII.6, 162-163)

In other words, while Locke may not have provided a comprehensive clinical understanding of pleasure and pain, he hopes that his discussion of its relationship to moral duties may direct us to God.

From the beginning to the end of the *Essay*, Locke asserts that human reason is to be a gift of God fitted for a particular purpose. Locke writes,

To conclude: some ideas forwardly offer themselves to all men's understanding; and some sorts of truths result from any ideas, as soon as the mind puts them into propositions: other truths require a train of ideas placed in order, a due comparing of them, and deductions made with attention, before they can be discovered and assented to. Some of the first sort, because of their general and easy reception, have been mistaken for innate: but the truth is, ideas and notions are no more born with us than arts and sciences; though some of them indeed offer themselves to our faculties more readily than others; and therefore are more generally received: though that too be according as the organs of our bodies and powers of our minds happen to be employed; God having fitted men with faculties and means to discover, receive, and retain truths, according as they are employed. The great difference that is to be found in the notions of mankind is, from the different use they put their faculties to. Whilst some (and those the most) taking things upon trust, misemploy their power of assent, by lazily enslaving their minds to the dictates and dominion of others, in doctrines which it is their duty carefully to examine, and not blindly, with an implicit faith, to swallow; others, employing their thoughts only about some few things, grow acquainted sufficiently with them, attain great degrees of knowledge in them, and are ignorant of all other, having never let their thoughts loose in the search of other inquiries. (E.I.III.23, 112-113)

This explains why Locke joins the attack on the Aristotelian tradition. The academic status quo imposed, he believes, an unnecessary roadblock between the God-given faculties and their intended fruits. Locke argues that to impose the traditional scholastic rules for discovering truth denies the efficacy or sufficiency of the divine gift. Locke wryly asserts, “But God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational.” (E.IV.XVII.4, 391) Furthermore, the goal of reason is not simply to (as in Aristotle) contemplate the divine or imitate the divine act of contemplation, but to inform our action in preparation for divine judgment. So while Aristotle’s rational person progresses by studied

sylogism and contemplating the greatest things, Locke's rational person progresses by a variety of reasonable processes and is directed toward the economy of eternal salvation.

The specific moral imperative for reason is revealed in part now and in full at the Last Day. Locke writes, "Men have reason to be well satisfied with what God hath thought fit for them, since he hath given them (as St. Peter says) *pana pros zoen kai eusebeian*, whatsoever is necessary for the conveniences of life and information of virtue; and has put within the reach of their discovery, the comfortable provision for this life, and the way that leads to a better." (E, Introduction, 29) Reason creates moral duties, particularly "the knowledge of their Maker, and the sight of their own duties." (E.IV.XII.11, 350-351) Echoing the medieval philosophers, Locke also argues that rational inquiry invites us to a better state for ourselves as rational creatures. (E.IV.XIV.2, 360)

Though moral principles are not innate and require demonstration, Locke leaves us without excuse if we do not know them. (E.I.II.1, 65) Locke denies that the refutation of innate principles leaves one only with positive law. Indeed, there is a great deal of difference between an innate law and a law of nature. The former is imprinted on our minds. The latter is something that we may be initially ignorant of but may "attain to the knowledge of, by the use and due application of our natural faculties." (E.I.II.13, 78) Moral principles, Locke argues, require reasoning and discourse (E.I.II.1, 64) God has given all persons with rational faculties the ability for both.

Given that Locke's study of human understanding is directed toward human happiness and the ethical use of knowledge, how does one come to discern moral duties? Locke essentially

argues that pleasure and pain are the basis of moral discernment. On the face of it, this is a significant claim and therefore has inspired a considerable amount of debate and commentary. Forster calls it “religious eudemonism” while Marshall calls it “hedonic.”⁸⁴ Strauss, for example, sees this as an extreme bit of Hobbesian hedonism.⁸⁵ Because of these controversies in Locke scholarship, the subject merits close attention in this chapter.

Locke argues that the motivating agent for our motion or rest and our choice among ideas (determining even our choice of inquiry) is the perception of delight within ourselves. Pleasure and pain, delight and uneasiness are not only in the body but in sensation and reflection as well. (E.II.XX.15, 306) These ideas (perceived or remembered), Locke argues, keep us from idleness in body or mind. But this is not to keep us in motion toward some base or vulgar pleasure as Strauss, for example, argues. Locke is especially emphatic that this joining of pleasure to objects and their ideas is to direct our intellectual faculties toward the right objects. (E.II.VII.3, 160-161) Pain has a similar use, though it is mainly for the preserving of our bodies more than the direction of our intellect. (E.II.VII.3, 161-162)

Pleasure and pain are so important to Locke’s moral scheme that he sometimes uses them synonymously with good and evil respectively. Locke says, “That we call good, which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us; or else to procure or preserve us the possession of any other good or absence of any evil... We name that evil which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure in us: or else to procure us any evil, or deprive us of any good.” (E.II.XX.2, 303) At another point, however, he clearly distinguishes these categories. (E.II.XXI.33, 334) All our passions, Locke argues, hinge on these simple ideas of pleasure and

pain.⁸⁶ (E.II.XX.3, 4, 303-304) Man is moved, Locke argues, by a kind of uneasiness when there is an absence of anything whose present enjoyment carries the idea of delight with it. This is desire. But it is not the case that any old desire can or should move us. Nor is it the case that we lose all volition in the face of pleasure and pain. Locke devotes a lengthy chapter (E.II.XXI) to a careful explanation of desire. The goal of this chapter is to encourage a right approach to desire, particularly a desire for eternal and divine happiness. Locke is evidently more interested in the passions and acts of the will that are produced from pleasure and pain than he is in exploring pleasure and pain itself. (E.II.XX.18, 307) Given Locke's self-professed emphasis on understanding leading to conduct over abstract inquiry, this makes sense.

Beyond the more obvious uses of pleasure and pain to direct mankind in simple affairs (such as bodily self-preservation), Locke argues, is a higher divine purpose. Because we find imperfection and dissatisfaction we are therefore led to seek these things in God. Locke asserts (with another Biblical allusion),

Beyond all this, we may find another reason why God hath scattered up and down several degrees of pleasure and pain, in all the things that environ and affect us; and blended them together in almost all that our thoughts and senses have to do with;- that we, finding imperfection, dissatisfaction, and want of complete happiness, in all the enjoyments which the creatures can afford us, might be led to seek it in the enjoyment of Him with whom there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.⁸⁷ (E.II.VII.4, 162)

Though it would be uncharacteristic of a medieval theologian to emphasize pleasure and pain as a divine mechanism, Locke is closer to his medieval predecessors in seeing a divine teleology for it than he is to the hedonist or the utilitarian.

Because any discussion of action requires consideration of the will, Locke takes up this subject in great detail. It is one of the most engaged discussions in the text. Locke is reticent, even hostile, toward directly answering the question of whether or not the will is “free” (as most persons approaching the question might understand the term). He dismisses that question by asserting that, as it is routinely understood, the question of the will’s freedom becomes the same as asking whether one power has another power. Locke asks, “For, who is it that sees not that powers belong only to agents, and are attributes only of substances, and not of powers themselves?” (E.II.XXI.16, 321) Freedom can only be attributed to a substance or an agent. The will is neither of those. It is a power.

For Locke, the only appropriate question is not “whether the will be free” but instead “whether a man be free.” (E.II.XXI.21.324) Locke returns to the will and argues that the will is not free to will anything. It must, when confronted with a choice, “will one or the other.” It is bound by the choices that confront it and it cannot escape by receding through a series of other powers to escape this inevitable imposition. Those who try to argue the freedom of the will invite an infinite regress. (E.II.XXI.23) In this respect, Locke’s vindication of volitionism is ambiguous at first.

After lengthy reluctance, Locke offers a theory of human action. What determines the choice (will) in a particular case? Locke at first argues that it is not “as is generally supposed, the greater good in view; but some (and for the most part the most pressing) uneasiness a man is at present under.” Locke defines this uneasiness as desire, “which is an uneasiness of the mind for want of some absent good. All pain of the body, of what sort soever, and disquiet of the mind, is

uneasiness.” Locke signals the goal of his discussion, and quickly seeks to discourage any suggestion of hedonism by following his definition with three Biblical allusions or citations.⁸⁸ (E.II.XX.31-34, 332-334)

The only solution for guiding our conduct is to substitute one uneasiness with another. Elsewhere in the text, for example, Locke argues that men (incorrectly) take the threat of public disgrace more seriously than the laws of God or the civil law. Locke writes that whereas men hold out hope for future reconciliation in the case of the divine law or impunity from civil law, they will rarely tempt the law of reputation. In short, uneasiness for reputation replaces uneasiness before God or the magistrate. (E.II.XXVIII.12, 479) This is an example of three different kinds of uneasiness (damnation, legal penalty, bad reputation) wherein the most immediate (reputation) takes precedence over the rest.

The point of all of this, as with many other discussions, is to direct us to the theme of heavenly happiness. Having presented the minimal description of the mechanism of desire, Locke soon directs his attention toward those who “are to be found that have had lively representations set before their minds of the unspeakable joys of heaven, which they should acknowledge both possible and probable too, who yet would be content to take up with their happiness here.” (E.II.XXI.37, 337) Why doesn’t happiness in heaven motivate persons as it should, Locke asks? The problem there, Locke argues, is that the good contemplated is not necessarily the good desired. He writes

Were the will determined by the views of good, as it appears in contemplation greater or less to the understanding...I do not see how it could ever get loose from the infinite eternal joys of heaven, once proposed and considered as possible...it is unavoidable that the infinitely greater possible good should regularly and

constantly determine the will in all the successive actions it directs. (E.II.XXI.38, 337)

Persons complicate the problem further by adding to their ordinary necessities “fantastical uneasiness” for riches or power or other desires spurred by fashion or education. The result is our neglect of an infinite good (heaven) for what Locke calls an uneasiness of desire pursuing “trifles.” (E.II.XXI.46, 343) Present pain always defeats the absent good. (E.II.XXI.45, 342) This accounts for what Locke would consider pathetic choices of the will.

But these pathetic choices are not always necessary, and Locke argues that the mind should suspend the execution and satisfaction of its desires until it can assess the moral standing of them. (E.II.XXI.48, 345) That claim requires a third standard above the ideas of pleasure and pain. Locke elsewhere argues for the existence of good and evil, especially as it relates to God as lawgiver.⁸⁹ But here, he simply presupposes without much more explanation that one can examine the content of one’s desires (initially governed only by pleasure or pain).

Given that it wouldn’t make much sense to charge that one should evaluate one’s own anticipation of pleasure or pain (which are themselves measures) without defining the third measure, a solution must be found. Locke implies that one should check one’s understanding of what can be *expected* to bring x pleasure or y pain to determine if it is reliable. Thus, the question turns to one of certainty or probability. Locke’s initial prescription reads as follows:

For, during this suspension of any desire, before the will be determined to action, and the action (which follows that determination) done, we have opportunity to examine, view, and judge of the good or evil of what we are going to do; and when upon due examination, we have judged, we have done our duty, all that we can, or ought to do, in pursuit of our happiness; and it is not a fault, but a perfection of our nature, to desire, will, and act according to the last result of a fair examination. (E.II.XXI.48, 345)

To do any less than make a full examination of the question of good and evil, Locke argues, is to succumb to the worst kind of misery and slavery.

Here Locke becomes the great patron of self-determination for the individual, though he is imprecise as to exactly how much power one has to have to rise above the considerations for the will. The more certain we are of the good, the more perfect the determination of the will. He argues, “And therefore, every man is put under a necessity, by his constitution as an intelligent being, to be determined in willing by his own thought and judgment what is best for him to do: else he would be under the determination of some other than himself, which is want of liberty.” (E.II.XXI.49, 346)

Locke’s treatment of liberty is worth pondering here. It is, he argues, slavery to simply act on our uneasiness without considering the moral status of that uneasiness. It is liberty to make these determinations ourselves. That is part of the moral teleology of divinely appointed reason. We must discern moral truth with the rational faculties. But are we constrained by a certain objective morality in determining the answer? We are, Locke argues. But this constraint is freedom, not slavery. There is no enslavement in acting toward what is best, Locke argues, indicating that this constraint has divine purpose. Even though a person can be distracted by a wrong view of the good, once he is able to see what is truly good, he is obliged by his nature to pursue it. That is the intent of God-given reason, rightly understood.

Locke returns to God and the angels. Angels “are more steadily determined in their choice of good than we” and God “cannot choose what is not good.” Locke writes,

If we look upon those superior beings above us, who enjoy perfect happiness, we shall have reason to judge that they are more steadily determined in their choice of good than we; and yet we have no reason to think they are less happy, or less free,

than we are. And if it were fit for such poor finite creatures as we are to pronounce what infinite wisdom and goodness could do, I think we might say, that God himself cannot choose what is not good; the freedom of the Almighty hinders not his being determined by what is best. (E.II.XXI.50, 347)

If we were as consistent as they were in choosing the good we would be no less free, Locke argues. We are not at liberty, Locke asserts, to play the fool and draw shame and misery on ourselves. Nor does our liberty extend to determining the terms of our own happiness. Locke writes,

Is it worth the name of freedom to be at liberty to play the fool, and draw shame and misery upon a man's self? If to break loose from the conduct of reason, and to want that restraint of examination and judgment which keeps us from choosing or doing the worse, be liberty, true liberty, madmen and fools are the only freemen: but yet, I think, nobody would choose to be mad for the sake of such liberty, but he that is mad already. The constant desire of happiness, and the constraint it puts upon us to act for it, nobody, I think, accounts an abridgment of liberty, or at least an abridgment of liberty to be complained of. God Almighty himself is under the necessity of being happy; and the more any intelligent being is so, the nearer is its approach to infinite perfection and happiness. That, in this state of ignorance, we short-sighted creatures might not mistake true felicity, we are endowed with a power to suspend any particular desire, and keep it from determining the will, and engaging us in action. This is standing still, where we are not sufficiently assured of the way: examination is consulting a guide. (E.II.XXI.51, 347-348)

The fact that different things appear good to different men *in this life* certainly complicates things. But as will be discussed later in the chapter, Locke attributes this to the variety of earthly pleasures and our shameful overemphasis on them. If we would see heaven as the true *summon bonum*, and realize that all our concerns are not terminated in this life, we would see things the same. (E.II.XXI.55-56, 350-352) The great privilege of finite beings, Locke argues, is to do our duty by suspending a desire until we have examined the good and evil of it. (E.II.XXI.53, 349)

The challenge for man, who does not always see the good, is to employ his reason to the

“true intrinsic good or ill that is in things,” not allowing a great good to slip from our thoughts. But how does one do this? Locke is not so clear here as to how we discern the standard, but the mechanism that uses the standard is clear enough. If we will but see what goods will make us truly happy, we will then have proportional uneasiness, and the will is steered accordingly. But we do not always see those goods, particularly if we have corrupted our moral understanding. If we have “vitiating our palate,” as Locke argues, our punishment is not for judging in error, but for judging hastily. (E.II.XXI.57, 353) While we cannot avoid bodily necessities outside our power (except to pray “Lead us not into temptation”), we can carry the mind forward to absent goods and keep ourselves from being content in present pleasures. We must look forward to the “joys of a future state.” Locke here is clearly talking about heaven (and hell). He writes,

For, whilst such thoughts possess them, the joys of a future state move them not; they have little concern or uneasiness about them; and the will, free from the determination of such desires, is left to the pursuit of nearer satisfactions, and to the removal of those uneasinesses which it then feels, in its want of and longings after them. Change but a man's view of these things; let him see that virtue and religion are necessary to his happiness; let him look into the future state of bliss or misery, and see there God, the righteous judge, ready to "render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto every soul that doth evil, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." To him, I say, who hath a prospect of the different state of perfect happiness or misery that attends all men after this life, depending on their behavior here, the measures of good and evil that govern his choice are mightily changed. For, since nothing of pleasure and pain in this life can bear any proportion to the endless happiness or exquisite misery of an immortal soul hereafter, actions in his power will have their preference, not according to the transient pleasure or pain that accompanies or follows them here, but as they serve to secure that perfect durable happiness hereafter. (E.II.XXI.59.62, 354-355)

Looking forward to that state requires a mix of both divine revelation and philosophical argument. Locke pulls out all the stops here, resorting to Scriptural quotations, philosophical

appeals, culinary metaphors, appeals for use of liberty, a variation of Pascal's Wager and exhortations familiar from other parts of the *Essay*.⁹⁰ The appeal is more passionate than methodical and precise. (E.II.XXI.62-72) Locke's sincerity is evident, but the exhortation often lacks precision. That means abandoning the warrant for a purely philosophical justification, just as Locke did in the previous case when he asserted the necessity of divine forgiveness. Locke writes,

But if any extreme disturbance (as sometimes it happens), as when the pain of the rack, an impetuous uneasiness, as of love, anger, or any other violent passion, running away with us, allows us not the liberty of thought....God, who knows our frailty, pities our weakness, and requires of us no more than we are able to do, and sees what was and what was not in our power, will judge as a kind and merciful father. (E.II.XXI.54, 350)

As in the case when Locke asserted that an innate moral law would require an innate Gospel, he provides no philosophical justification. (E.II.13, 78)

What Locke calls morality is clear enough to him, but he remains vague on how one comes to discern this moral good or evil in order to make the demonstration upon reflection. He argues that the mind is "easily able to observe the relation any action hath...and to judge whether the action agrees or disagrees with the rule; and so hath a notion of moral goodness or evil, which is either conformity or not conformity of any action to that rule." (E.II.XXVIII.14, 480) The obligation of our chosen rule "consists in their agreement or disagreement with those patterns prescribed by some law." (E.II.XXVIII.14, 481) The key determination seems to be whether we choose to judge by the divine law, the civil law, or the law of reputation.

Given the confusion apparent in the discussion of good and evil, it is now helpful to turn to the question of moral reasoning and revelation. Locke often asserts that moral rules are

capable of demonstration, though not without difficulty. (E.III.XI.15 and 16, 156; E.IV.III.18-20, 208-211; E.IV.XII.8, 347) He even argues that because moral ideas are archetypes as much as mathematical ideas are, they are not susceptible to the subjective variations of language, the problem of particularity, or the necessity of real external existence. (E.IV.IV.8, 233-234) This makes them even riper for demonstration. Locke distinguishes “demonstrative” from “intuitive” knowledge as follows:

For whatever ideas we have wherein the mind can perceive the immediate agreement or disagreement that is between them, there the mind is capable of intuitive knowledge; and where it can perceive the agreement or disagreement of any two ideas, by an intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement they have with any intermediate ideas, there the mind is capable of demonstration; which is not limited to ideas of extension, figure, number, and their modes. (E.IV.II.9, 183)

But this is not to say that moral demonstrations are simple and straightforward. Locke, himself, never followed through on this potential for moral demonstration. The reason for this will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

3.6 The Revelation of God

Locke has so far set forth two means of discerning good and evil. The first is law (divine, civil, reputation). The second is moral demonstration. Both of these require careful inquiry into what Locke means by revelation. Not surprisingly, Locke’s understanding of revelation is one of the most controversial areas within Locke studies. One side argues for a “secular” Locke or Lockean liberalism while the other argues for a “theistic” one.⁹¹ The debate is complicated by the fact that modern readers approach the discussion without a proper context. They do not always understand the debates of the period, the way in which the various positions were

typically argued, or what particular passages or phrases routinely meant in the debate. Modern readers also view the subject backward with a distinctively anti-supernatural lens. The word “reason,” used today, for example, carries with it centuries of arguments that are prejudicial against any possibility of supernatural or divine revelation. But one cannot simply impose our worldview or definition of terms on Locke.

The debate over the status of reason and revelation was a current one in the 17th century, to be sure. And Locke offers a lengthy and careful discussion of both means of understanding. An objective view demonstrates him to be so moderate and careful in his claims that he could easily be cited, with only the slightest manipulation of the text, to argue for either side. But taking *all* of the discussion into consideration, together with the larger text of the *Essay*, demonstrates Locke to be nothing but a friend of divine revelation. When one takes into account Locke’s work in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* or the *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Saint Paul*, one finds that divine revelation is essential for many of Locke’s key arguments and prescriptions.

In addressing the topic, Locke takes up the familiar dichotomy between natural and divine revelation. Locke argues that God reserves to himself the right to use either the “light of reason” or the “light of revelation.” The light of reason is best for matters appropriate to it through demonstration and certainty. The light of revelation may be used in “any of those matters wherein our natural faculties are able to give a probable determination; revelation, where God has been pleased to give it, must carry it against the probable conjectures of reason.” This is because the mind, when it has only probability available to it, “is bound to give up its assent to such a

testimony which, it is satisfied, comes from one who cannot err, and will not deceive.”

(E.IV.XVIII.8, 424) Locke takes this advice himself and the *Essay* has many Biblical allusions, paraphrases and quotations though few are cited by chapter and verse. Though Locke insists that ideas about God, spirits, or the eternal law might come by reason alone, he frequently repairs to Biblical details or premises without demonstration or apology. Locke describes the difference as follows:

Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties: revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately; which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. (E.IV.XIX.4, 431)

For Locke, all knowledge is “revelation” because it is informed by a divine teleology and is directed by divine imperatives for its proper use. This is why Locke is so critical of the “enthusiast” (who claims private and unreasonable revelation) when such a person puts aside reason “to make way for revelation.” Locke’s metaphor is instructive here. The enthusiast “puts out the light of both” in the same way that a man might put out his eyes so that he can better receive the remote light of a star through telescope. (E.IV.XIX.4, 431) Locke’s prescription is to have faith moderated by reason. This will preserve both means of God’s communication. And preserving that communication is Locke’s greatest motivation in the *Essay*.

Because Locke readily prescribes both kinds of revelation, he would be scandalized by some modern interpretations of his discussion of faith and reason. For example, neo-Straussian interpreters are quite fond of reciting variations on Locke’s assertion that “Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything” and ignore the care that he takes in elaborating on such an

idea. (E.IV.XIX.14, 438) This enables them to characterize Locke as hostile to divine revelation and the supernatural. If Locke is religious at all, they claim, he advocates only a purely “natural religion” known by reason alone. But in fact, Locke goes to great lengths to discuss what is meant by his claim that reason must “judge” revelation. We cannot simply look at the phrase and interpret it to our liking. He never makes such statements without immediate clarification and a larger context for understanding.

The simplest way to dismiss this secular characterization of Locke (one that he would surely find scandalous) is to *read the sentence that follows*. A closer reading of the paragraph demonstrates that Locke advocates the use of reason to protect divine revelation from being confused with what Locke and his contemporaries would have called “enthusiasm.” Locke’s intent is not to reduce revealed religion to the epistemological constraints of a wholly natural religion. The fuller quotation follows:

Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything. I do not mean that we must consult reason, and examine whether a proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it: but consult it we must, and by it examine whether it be a revelation from God or no: and if reason finds it to be revealed from God, reason then declares for it as much as for any other truth, and makes it one of her dictates. Every conceit that thoroughly warms our fancies must pass for an inspiration, if there be nothing but the strength of our persuasions, whereby to judge of our persuasions: if reason must not examine their truth by something extrinsical to the persuasions themselves, inspirations and delusions, truth and falsehood, will have the same measure, and will not be possible to be distinguished. (E.IV.XIX.14, 438-439)

If Locke were to mean by this anyone whatsoever who claims to communicate the divine revelation of God, such as the authors of the Bible, he would be invalidating key arguments within the *Essay*, questioning the prudence and efficacy of any Biblical exposition in the *First*

Treatise, entirely negating the *Reasonableness* (though this work comes later), and making *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* a work only explainable by senility. Add to this Locke's work on toleration (which affords no toleration to atheists and is mainly bound up in protecting religion rooted in divine revelation), and characterization of Locke as a purely natural theologian becomes absurd. In effect, the secular Locke would be scuttling the bulk of his most critical published work.

Given that Locke does not see faith and reason as inherently contradicting one another, what then is the relationship between them? How, most critically, do we use reason to discern what is a revelation and what is private fancy? Part of the answer is given directly in a discussion of the relationship between faith and reason. (E.IV.XVIII) The other part is discerned from Locke's condemnation of the "enthusiast," whom he presents as the antitype of the rational person. (E.IV.IV.1, 227; E.IV.XIX) The enthusiast pretends to revelation, cannot reconcile his divine guidance with ordinary knowledge and principles of reason, and asserts a greater familiarity with God than other men. Enthusiasm disrupts Locke's whole ethics of belief because it eliminates any need for rules in the operation and governance of reason. What's worse, enthusiasm may result in God becoming the author of contradictions; and Locke never misses an opportunity to defend the perfection of God's mechanisms. Locke's concern is that people not use claims of faith as an excuse to overrule the divine mechanism of reason. The goal is prevent both an imposition on revelation by an undisciplined and overreaching reason *and* to preserve reason from improper and violent claims to faith. He cites *Credo, quia impossibile est* as the claim of an enthusiastic and irrational man.

The challenge still remains to determine exactly what divine revelation is and to make sure that we understand it correctly. Given the degree to which his argument rests on the necessity for divine revelation, Locke's caveat here is best explained by something other than just skepticism. Locke is instead reflecting his particularly strong distrust of religious zealotry and its political consequences. Locke knows the ground on this battlefield, and he is quick to enter it as an opponent of those who place divine revelation "in contradistinction to reason." Revelation (because it is divine) is anything but unreasonable, Locke says. Instead, it is authoritative because it comes from the reason of God. Demonstrating both his own confidence in the existence of divine revelation and his distrust of enthusiasm, Locke writes,

Besides those we have hitherto mentioned, there is one sort of propositions that challenge the highest degree of our assent, upon bare testimony, whether the thing proposed agree or disagree with common experience, and the ordinary course of things, or no. The reason whereof is, because the testimony is of such an one as cannot deceive nor be deceived: and that is of God himself. This carries with it an assurance beyond doubt, evidence beyond exception. This is called by a peculiar name, revelation, and our assent to it, faith, which as absolutely determines our minds, and as perfectly excludes all wavering, as our knowledge itself; and we may as well doubt of our own being, as we can whether any revelation from God be true. So that faith is a settled and sure principle of assent and assurance, and leaves no manner of room for doubt or hesitation. Only we must be sure that it be a divine revelation, and that we understand it right: else we shall expose ourselves to all the extravagancy of enthusiasm, and all the error of wrong principles, if we have faith and assurance in what is not divine revelation. And therefore, in those cases, our assent can be rationally no higher than the evidence of its being a revelation, and that this is the meaning of the expressions it is delivered in. If the evidence of its being a revelation, or that this is its true sense, be only on probable proofs, our assent can reach no higher than an assurance or diffidence, arising from the more or less apparent probability of the proofs. But of faith, and the precedency it ought to have before other arguments of persuasion, I shall speak more hereafter; where I treat of it as it is ordinarily placed, in contradistinction to reason; though in truth it be nothing else but an assent founded on the highest reason. (E.IV.XVI.14, 383-384)

Thus, it would be unreasonable *not* to believe the content of divine revelation. Thus, Locke says that opposing reason to faith is “a very improper way of speaking.” Improper reason, because it holds divine revelation to lie outside our common experience, makes divine revelation altogether impossible. Improper faith, on the other hand, is built upon “fancies.”

Locke directly takes up the challenge of those who oppose either reason or faith. In authenticating revelation, Locke offers two conditions. First, there can be no new simple ideas presented.⁹² That applies only to what Locke calls “traditional revelation.” Locke still leaves room for the individual revelatory experience, bounded only by God’s power. But “original revelation” is nothing that can be supposed communicable to others. (E.IV.VIII.3, 416-418) Secondly, God’s revelation cannot be in contradiction to itself. This would render our faculties useless and disobey the divine charge to use them in the pursuit of truth. That is, the knowledge of divine revelation cannot be in contradiction to what one knows by natural revelation. Locke begins that claim by arguing that there is no necessity for divine revelation to repeat what is better known from our own sensation and reflection. (For example, there is no point in having Moses demonstrate Euclid’s proofs.) (E.IV.XVIII.4, 418) More to the point, revelation may not contradict clear evidence of “plain knowledge.” (E.IV.XVIII.5, 420)

Locke argues that understanding by faith can be available only when it does not do violence to what is known with certainty (as Locke has previously defined certainty). In subjects with uncertainty, and only probability, evident revelation ought to determine our assent even against probability to the contrary. (E.IV.XVIII.9, 424) Reason may speak only on matters in which it is qualified. Subjects such as the general resurrection and the rebellion of the angels, for

example, are things Locke says are “beyond the discovery of reason, are purely matters of faith, with which reason has directly nothing to do.”⁹³ (E.IV.XVIII.7, 423) They are “above reason.”

Locke is adamant that while Scripture is infallible, our understanding of it is not infallible. While Locke never questions that God is capable of imparting a perfect revelation, the means by which we come to know it is certainly subject to error. Though Jesus could not sin, this did not preclude his earthly revelation from being subject to the errors inherent in human conveyance. As Locke demonstrates in his works on toleration, he is greatly suspicious of human interpretation (which he characterizes as magisterial, imperious and imposing) and this prejudices him against “other revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages” because these vehicles are liable to the obscurities and difficulties of language. (E.III.IX.23, 120-121) Attempts at commentary and clarification are of little use, and often make the problem worse. (E.III.IX.9, 109; E.III.X.12, 131) Locke prefers to have as much communicated by natural religion as possible. But he is clear in the *Essay*, and emphatic in the *Reasonableness*, that this is not always possible. We must sometimes repair to Scripture. This will be explored further in Chapter Four.

The reliability of Scripture depends on miracles, and Locke is careful to suspend the rules he applies elsewhere to knowledge. If considered apart from their providential origin, miracles fail Locke’s criteria for reliable knowledge. But Locke argues that because of their divine origin and purpose (to confirm divine truths to men), their strangeness lessens not our assent to their testimony. God himself cannot deceive or be deceived. Thus, Locke argues, revelation carries with it “assurance beyond doubt, evidence beyond exception.” (E.IV.XVI.13-14, 382-383)

3.7 Wealth and Leisure: Building a Bridge to the Second Treatise

Locke presents the reader with a heavy load of responsibility and guidance in the *Essay*, so it only makes sense that he offers some practical advice on how to fulfill one's responsibilities. A significant part of this is Locke's discussion of leisure and study in the *Essay*, which provides some insight into Locke's praise of property in the *Two Treatises*. Locke has little to say about natural philosophy in the *Essay*, or the pursuit of wealth. Even his few discussions of wealth in the *Essay* are directed toward our moral responsibilities. To make the point again, Locke's epistemological and ethical efforts are not directed simply at possessive materialism, self-preservation, or earthly security. They are directed at what he sees to be a divine teleology that leads persons to heaven.

If we can successfully dismiss the assertion that Locke is a materialist or a selfish hedonist, this will clear the obstacles and biases that color readings of the *Second Treatise*. In charging Locke with "possessive individualism" or "hedonism" or "the joyless quest for joy," Locke's opponents look to his lengthy discussion of property to make their case. Locke, they charge, makes property by labor the goal of life. This is necessary because of the purposeless and painful existence that man is born to.⁹⁴ In light of the many textual examples in this chapter, that conclusion could only be drawn by someone who dismisses much of what the *Essay* says as disingenuous. Locke continually uses his subject to direct man toward a heavenly end, and makes the great concernment of human life to be learning by both forms of revelation.

Locke's treatment of a *summum bonum* is valuable to clarify this point. Strauss readily cites one of Locke's discussions on this topic but ignores the other. The striking conclusion when

one reads both is that *neither* supports Strauss's overall argument. Strauss provides a truncated version of the first passage together with an extended charge that Locke is not only a hedonist but also sees pleasure dictated only by power (and therefore with little thought to any potential for moral discernment). In Strauss's reading of Locke's *Essay* chapter on the will, he summarizes Locke as saying "the greatest happiness consists in the greatest power."⁹⁵ Strauss then imposes the framework of the ancients and ignores Locke's own assertion that a heavenly good can be known. Strauss writes,

Since there are no knowable natures, there is no nature of man with reference to which we could distinguish between pleasures which are according to nature and pleasures are against nature, or between pleasures which are by nature higher and pleasures which are by nature lower: pleasure and pain are 'for different men...very different things.'⁹⁶

Strauss concludes this argument by citing Locke's comment that "the philosophers of old did in vain inquire, whether *summum bonum* consisted in riches, or bodily delights, or virtue, or contemplation." The absence of a greatest good, as Strauss interprets Locke to say, leads him to conclude that the only remaining evil is death and the greatest desire merely self-preservation. In everyday terms, this is reflected in an aversion to want. Avoiding that uneasiness requires endless labor, unbounded property acquisition and the "joyless quest for joy."

Taking up Strauss's challenge requires two replies. The first elucidates Locke's discussion of a *summum bonum*. The second vindicates Locke's advocacy of labor and property where it is to be found. Because Strauss tends to select passages most helpful to his thesis, it would be best to quote the entire section. That is always advisable when reading Strauss on Locke, but this section will cite only the relevant passages and confidently refer the reader to the

larger discussion. Also examined is another of Locke's direct discussions of a *summum bonum*, the one that Strauss ignores.

Locke's discussion of "power" concerns the freedom of the will and the directing influence of pleasure and pain. Though Locke isn't always clear on how one apprehends what the law of nature dictates to be good and evil, he makes us nevertheless responsible for knowing and for suspending the will until it can be discerned. That, he says, is the great liberty and privilege of being rational. Furthermore, God is the author of pleasures and pains as directional indicators in the first place. If they were merely directing us toward hedonism, Locke would be deserting every assertion made in the *Essay* about the goodness and wisdom of God, the necessity of rationality, and our potential for eternal happiness.

In this section containing the lines Strauss quotes (set off here by italics), Locke begins by addressing the subjective difficulties of pleasure. Because earthly pleasures are endless, and Locke sees no fulfillment in earthly pleasures, he concludes that it is therefore fruitless to find a *summum bonum* in this life. He writes,

The mind has a different relish, as well as the palate; and you will fruitlessly endeavor to delight all men with riches or glory (which yet some men place their happiness in) as you would to satisfy all men's hunger with cheese or lobsters; which, though agreeable and delicious fare to some, are to others extremely nauseous and offensive: and many persons would with reason prefer the griping of an hungry belly to those dishes which are a feast to others. *Hence it was, I think, that the philosophers of old did in vain inquire, whether summum bonum consisted in riches, or bodily delights, or virtue, or contemplation: and they might have as reasonably disputed, whether the best relish were to be found in apples, plums, or nuts, and have divided themselves into sects upon it.* For, as pleasant tastes depend not on the things themselves, but on their agreeableness to this or that particular palate, wherein there is great variety; so the greatest happiness consists in the having those things which produce the greatest pleasure, and in the absence of those which cause any disturbance, any pain. (E.II.XXI.56, 351)

It now becomes necessary to clarify this passage then come to the line cited by Strauss about the vanity of a *summum bonum*. Locke says that there are reasons that there is no highest good on earth. There is too much diversity of pleasure to discern or persuade men of such thing. Locke shortly hereafter uses the metaphor of the palate to argue that men are capable of correcting or distorting their palate toward the right or wrong things. (E.II.XXI. 71, 362) What Locke is rejecting here is not a highest good altogether, but one that is anything but a heavenly highest good. Strauss will not accept this because it does not fit his template drawn from ancient thought.

It therefore becomes evident that the real argument of Strauss is not necessarily that a *summum bonum* exists or doesn't exist in Locke, but that it conflicts with what Strauss thinks a moral teleology should be.⁹⁷ But the fact that Locke is not working within Strauss's tradition is clear enough from the rest of the *Essay*. Locke's teleology is clearly not that of the ancients. This requires Locke to present his conception of the highest good in a way different from that of the ancients, and he has to argue that it transcends our earthly experience. Locke concludes the paragraph by writing,

Now these, to different men, are very different things. If, therefore, men in this life only have hope; if in this life only they can enjoy, it is not strange or unreasonable, that they should seek their happiness by avoiding all things that disease them here, and by pursuing all that delight them; wherein it will be no wonder to find variety and difference. For if there be no prospect beyond the grave, the inference is certainly right – 'Let us eat and drink,' let us enjoy what we delight in, 'for tomorrow we shall die.' (E.II.XXI.56, 351-352)

Locke is here criticizing the very prescription that Strauss charges him with making! Men naturally have different earthly pleasures, and we strive in vain to make them uniform or prescribe one for all. But Locke has no difficulty in prescribing, based on his understanding of

God's (natural) revelation, a common end for all persons and directing them to a heavenly *summum bonum*. It is the search for this heavenly *summum bonum* that Locke argues elsewhere is the whole point of man's existence. Locke writes,

For it is rational to conclude, that our proper employment lies in those inquiries, and in that sort of knowledge which is most suited to our natural capacities, and carries in it our greatest interest, i.e. the condition of our eternal estate. Hence, I think I may conclude that morality is the proper science and business of mankind in general, (who are both concerned and fitted to search out their *summum bonum*). (E.IV.XII.11, 351)

The passage here refers to the "natural capacities," but the interest to which those capacities carry us is our "eternal estate." Hence, we are to use our natural capacities to a divine end. This, Locke argues, is the intent of God.

My own assertions about Locke's piety collide with those of Strauss and Macpherson again in the concluding chapters of the *Essay*. The last chapter joins Locke's interest in method with his interest in religion. Locke there again praises the use of God-given faculties toward the study of religion and morality. This, Locke argues, must be done "when their ordinary vocations allow them the leisure." Locke scolds those who do not make right use of their leisure,

No man is so wholly taken up with the attendance on the means of living, as to have no spare time at all to think on his soul, and to inform himself in matters of religion. Were men as intent upon this as they are on things of lower concernment, there are none so enslaved to the necessities of life who might not find many vacancies that might be husbanded to this advantage of their knowledge. (E.IV.XX.3, 444)

That not only accounts for Locke's insistence on civil toleration, but also his praise of the material comfort that affords books and time to study. Locke also concludes with a discussion of property, a topic of great importance in the *Second Treatise*. Property has a moral end for Locke,

the attaining of eternal happiness. Locke scolds the many excuses that men make for the misuse of their reasonable inquiries. But he begins by indicting those who have the leisure and riches to put proofs before them, but instead devote their resources elsewhere. Locke (again, contrary to Strauss's claim) scolds "hot pursuit of pleasure, or constant drudgery in business." (E.IV.XX.6, 446) He asks out loud, "How men, whose plentiful fortunes allow them leisure to improve their understandings, can satisfy themselves with a lazy ignorance, I cannot tell: but methinks they have a low opinion of their souls, who lay out all their incomes in provisions for the body, and employ none of it to procure the means and helps of knowledge." (E.IV.XX.6, 447) This is not the voice of a hedonist or a possessive individualist.

3.8 Conclusion

Locke's *Essay* demonstrates him to be a philosopher continually taken up with arguments for humans to reach eternal happiness. It is not a work that praises human reason or understanding, natural science, or comfortable living for its own sake. Instead, it praises these things for the sake of one's divinely mandated moral duties. This is a theme which pervades the *Essay* and demonstrates it to be a multifaceted work.

The next chapter considers the last work of Locke's published in his own lifetime, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Though this work was published after the two works advocating revolution, the *Letter* and the *Second Treatise*, it is very helpful in explaining Locke's views on religion and morality and clarifying puzzles left over from the *Essay*. In particular, it helps us to see the particular significance for Locke of revealed and organized religion and its superiority to natural religion and traditional moral philosophy. Chapters Four and Five will thus serve first to

articulate human duties before God and second to provide a clearer explanation of how we come to understand those duties. If Locke is going to argue that revolution is an appeal to heaven, one must have a good idea of what heaven is saying first in order to make that appeal against the civil magistrate.

CHAPTER IV
LAW AND REVELATION IN
THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

4.1 Introduction

Having considered the *Essay*, we now turn to *The Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures* (hereafter referred to as the *Reasonableness*). It was the last work published in Locke's lifetime and published anonymously. Like the later *Paraphrase and Notes of the Epistles of St. Paul* (hereafter referred to as *Paraphrase*), published posthumously, the *Reasonableness* demonstrates Locke's growing interest in theology. Whereas the *Essay* broadly considered religious themes and in the larger context of epistemology and ethics, the *Reasonableness* elaborates on questions of revelation and divine judgment. It is also Locke's articulation of the significance of Christ for eternal happiness.

Before proceeding, it is important to again take up the thesis's argument and its plan for presentation. My general claim is that Locke's political philosophy has essential religious and theological content and that it is dependent on this content. The particular inroad for researching this claim is the "appeal to heaven" articulated in the *Second Treatise* and its two references to the Final Judgment. Presuming that this reference may have theological underpinnings, I have pursued Locke's philosophy of religion and the degree to which it relies on divine revelation, particularly Christian doctrines drawn from the Bible. That use of revelation is contrasted with a purely philosophical justification or "natural" theology. After a broader consideration of Locke's religious considerations in Chapters Two, Three and Four, I will return to political philosophy in

Chapters Five and Six with a better foundation for understanding of the role of God and revelation there.

Chapter Three suggested that Locke sees reason or natural revelation as a kind of divine revelation. It also noted with some fanfare that Locke offers no separate category of “natural law” or “law of nature” in his taxonomy of law in the *Essay*. Thus, natural law appears to be a kind of “divine law” for Locke. Does the thesis thereby turn merely on the equivocation of this term, revelation? In other words, am I suggesting only that Locke considered the use of reason to be equivalent with the use of divine revelation? That might appear to prove the point of the thesis. Locke’s understanding of commands of reason would therefore be (to him at least) equivalent to commands of divine revelation.

As I will argue in this and subsequent chapters, I think that this argument does have some merit. But if I were to rely on this argument alone, I would be making a claim about Locke that would attract the attention of an audience not only unfamiliar but also quite assuredly in disagreement with Locke’s own supposed ambiguity or equivalence. What the reader might conclude from such an argument is either that the author is confused or that Locke is confused – or both. If one were to have the argument turn on equivalence, it could also defeat the argument of the thesis. That is, if divine revelation and natural revelation are the same, what is the point of distinguishing them? The claim would therefore be of no consequence. Justifying that the argument turns on more than an equivocation, or exploitation of an alleged ambiguity in Locke, is an appropriate challenge to take up mid-way through the thesis.

Locke has *no* category of natural law in his *Essay*'s taxonomy. That much is clear. But it is true that one should not make too much of this. He certainly does clearly distinguish natural revelation and reason from divine revelation and he is emphatic that they not be confused. That is evident in the *Essay* and elsewhere. It must also be remembered that he does distinguish the law of God from the law of nature quite clearly and repeatedly throughout the *First Treatise*. Then to what degree can one call reason "revelation" (meaning divine revelation)? One cannot make this claim in terms of its mode of revelation, as Locke makes clear. Can one then simply say that because God is behind the revealing (whether natural or divine) and its intent that this constitutes essentially religious or theological content in Locke's philosophy? My answer to this question requires some qualification. Locke does distinguish between the two, and relies on divine revelation *qua* divine revelation in his work. Thus, some more explanation is necessary.

As to the intent and goal of the two kinds of revelation, Locke does use them in a seemingly equivalent way. Both reason and divine revelation are intended by God to direct us to heaven, and are similar in this respect, but their particular modes of communication are different. Because of their belief that only divine revelation was able to overcome the corruption of Original Sin, many 17th century divines would have emphasized divine revelation explicitly and prominently over natural revelation. Thus, while natural revelation would "echo" or "confirm" divine revelation, the primary appeal would be to divine revelation. This approach would have been especially favored by those of a more Lutheran or Calvinist persuasion, emphasizing the fallen nature of human reason. Locke, by contrast, prefers to rely on reason wherever possible. There is no reason to think that this is because Locke is suspicious of divine revelation's

authenticity. Rather, he wants to argue that God is merciful and leaves everyone without excuse.⁹⁸ That argument is not altogether inconsistent with certain articulations of Christian natural law. Reason, according to Locke, is universally accessible for persons unhampered by disability or youth. It is not only sufficient to leave us without excuse but is sufficient to direct men toward heaven. But if reason is truly sufficient, what does one make of the revelation of Christ? This is the question to be taken up in more detail in this chapter, but a few prefatory comments are appropriate.

Locke's answers to these questions made some contemporaries suspicious of his orthodoxy. One notable opponent was the English Anglican (and moderate Calvinist) John Edwards.⁹⁹ Locke does not appear to believe that there is a systematic and divinely mandated failure of reason necessitating the use of Christ and the Bible to bring men to success at the Final Judgment. Nor does his understanding of redemption seem to rely on the dogmatic understand of Christ's divinity. But this does not mean that Locke did not believe in a *practical* efficacy for the revelation of Christ in preparing for the Final Judgment, as we will see in this chapter. We can safely say that Locke would probably resist any *theoretical* claim that divine revelation is necessary – for his general argument or for our happiness. But as this chapter will demonstrate, he does not succeed in following or proving such a claim.

It is for two reasons that despite what may appear to be a preference for rational demonstrations, Locke winds up appealing to revelatory demonstrations. First, as will be discussed later, Locke's pessimism about our ability to *actually* pursue the direction of reason, coupled with his own belief in the practical superiority of Christ's revelation, led him to repair to

Christ and the Bible as the most efficacious and *practical* way for most persons to secure happiness. If Locke argues *de facto* that divine revelation is essential to human happiness because of some *commonly observed* (though not metaphysically imposed) natural insufficiency, this would then demonstrate divine revelation essential for his philosophy. Locke may certainly desire to claim that there is an essential theoretical overlap between the general moral instruction of reason and that of the Bible. But this does not address which form of revelation is more efficacious *in practice*.

4.2 Locke's Theological Individualism

We then turn to the *Reasonableness* to further elucidate the significance of divine revelation in Locke's philosophy. The *Reasonableness* is the work of an author very much at home in the details of Scripture, but not prepared to parrot the articulated doctrines of any particular church. Locke's explanation of Scripture is sometimes quite conventional and sometimes quite unorthodox. As Locke asserts on at least two occasions in the *Essay*, he believes that commentators make the message of Scripture cloudy rather than clear. (E.III.IX.9, 109; E.III.X.12, 131) So Locke is promising to offer us a straightforward reading of the text. That sentiment is consistent with Locke's distrust of conventional dogma and "priestcraft," evident from the works on toleration. (Letter, 226-22) Locke is an elusive and eschews association with any particular tradition. That is expected, given his emphasis in the *Essay* on individual responsibility for discerning truth. Though he was well-read in works of theology, he seems at times to possess a true gift for blissful ignorance when navigating theological traditions. One case in point is his question (while composing the *Paraphrase*) to his friend Limborch wherein

he asks for an articulation of the five points on which Remonstrants and strict Calvinists disagreed concerning predestination and freedom. Limborch responds, “I believed that our five articles...were known to everybody.”¹⁰⁰ This controversy was a central theological dispute of the day, but Locke seems generally unacquainted with it. In his later work, he even seems to equate Calvinism with antinomianism.¹⁰¹ That is puzzling given that Locke sat under one of Calvinism’s champions at Westminster, John Owen. Perhaps it seemed logical to Locke that any doctrine of predestination would ultimately conclude in antinomianism, or perhaps his reading of Socinian or Arminian authors reformulated his understanding of Christian virtue. But any reasonable first hand acquaintance with Puritan writing would have taught Locke differently. In short, Locke does not seem to be someone swept along in the tide of contemporary theological debate or content with sitting dogmas. Instead, his priorities appear to be set by his own personal and political curiosity and by his own scholarly agenda.

Consistent with that independence, the *Reasonableness* is neither a traditional apologetic work nor a traditional commentary. But neither is it a text on natural religion, devoid of divine revelation. It is, as Nuovo expresses it, a statement about the *advantageousness* of Christianity and Christ. Nuovo summarizes Locke’s thesis thus, “To all who are concerned with their moral duty and the possibility of eternal bliss, which are the great concerns of life, Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures offers assurance and direction that surpasses every other religious doctrine.”¹⁰² That argument, as Nuovo also points out, is for Locke more narrative than doctrine.

In the *Reasonableness*, Locke engages in a struggle with conventional dogma to define the message of the Gospel. Locke opposes the traditional articulation of Original Sin. He also

denies the orthodox understanding of Christ that makes necessary a propitiatory sacrifice. That immediately puts him at odds with most of the Protestant world, which retained those doctrines from Roman Catholicism after the Reformation. Locke did faithfully attend Anglican worship and took communion on his deathbed, but discussing Anglicanism in the 17th century requires a scorecard to keep track of the factions. Without delving into that minutia, it can generally be said that Locke could certainly be called an Arminian and was no friend to Calvinism.¹⁰³ Locke had friends who were Socinians and he is thought to have read prominent works by Socinians.¹⁰⁴ Locke himself never attacked the doctrine of the Trinity, though he never articulated belief in it beyond the late 1660s. Because of the implications of his theological writings, and the *Essay*, he came under significant attack.¹⁰⁵ This prompted responses from Locke in kind until his death, defending his faithfulness to the church and to the Scriptures.

4.3 Clarifying Law and Morality

As chronicled in Chapter Three, Locke makes a number of assertions in his philosophy pertaining to morality and how we come to discover it. To inform the upcoming discussion of morality and law in the *Two Treatises*, more clarity should be sought in the matter. Locke makes extensive and repeated claims in the *Essay* about our ability to discern our moral duties, even arguing that moral rules are capable of demonstration, similar to the demonstration within mathematical proofs. (E.III.XI.15 and 16, 156; E.IV.III.18-20, 208-211; E.IV.XII.8, 347) But he himself provides very little demonstration. Instead, he offers something that can best be described as a motivation for morality. That motivation is the Last Judgment. For example, Locke takes up the moral rule that we should keep our compacts and contrasts the moral

motivation of a Christian with that of a “Hobbist.” He writes, “If a Christian, who has the view of happiness and misery in another life, be asked why a man must keep his word, he will give this as a reason: - Because God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us. But if a Hobbist be asked why? He will answer: - Because the public requires it, and the Leviathan will punish you if you do not.” (E.I.II.5, 69) But such a motivation doesn’t apply only to Christians, and is not revealed exclusively in the Bible. Locke writes, “It being highly rational to think, even were revelation silent in the case, that, as men employ these talents God has given them here, they shall accordingly receive their rewards at the close of the day, when their sun shall set, and night shall put an end to their labors.” (E.IV.XIV.2, 361)

Locke stresses that the divine imperative of reason is to discern our duties before God. (E.II.VII.6, 163) But relying simply on reason and natural revelation will mean a natural religion, and the *Essay* is critical of those who discard the veracity or wisdom of divine revelation. (E.IV.XVI.14, 383) Furthermore, Locke has emphasized divine judgment and even suggested divine forgiveness without any persuasive argumentation. (E.II.XXI.54, 350) In the claim that God rewards at “close of day,” he offers no careful proof. One would expect that a work devoted to Christianity will elaborate on the importance of divine revelation. Locke does offer clarification in the *Reasonableness* on these matters. But it is important to see how Locke engages two theological pillars of historic creedal Christianity: sin and redemption.

4.4 Locke’s Theology of Sin and Redemption

Because Locke rejects the traditional doctrine of Original Sin, one would suspect that his understanding of the economy of salvation changes as well. Locke’s rejection of Original Sin is

not offered on any metaphysical grounds – e.g., “How does the sinful nature get communicated?” Rather, Locke selects appropriate texts, and argues that the “plain direct meaning of the words and phrases” does not indicate any such doctrine. Locke offers a political defense against Original Sin, and one that reflects his arguments for consent in the *Two Treatises*. That is, there was no consent to Adam’s rule. Locke writes that Adam could not doom his posterity because “no one had authorized to transact for him, or to be his Representative” in the divine economy. (R, 91) Locke argues that he recalls from Scripture only that “ones sin is charged upon himself only.” (R, 93-95)

When approaching passages Genesis 2:17, Romans 5:12, or I Cor. 15:22, Locke offers very little that is orthodox. There is no rational justification, Locke argues, for reading “death” to be “Eternal Life in Misery.” (R, 92) He opposes the conclusion that each person after Adam is assigned a default position of damnation after Adam. The Fall kept Adam from bliss and immortality, Locke argues, and this meant toil and sorrow, drudgery, anxiety, and frailties of mortality. (R, 93) Locke also denies that Original Sin unavoidably puts each person in rebellion against God. (R, 93) Sounding a bit more orthodox, Locke does acknowledge that Adam (and his kin) died eventually, though not immediately. He also believes that death comes to all persons by way of sin. In one of the rare moments when Locke sounds like a Calvinist, he consents that all this was within God’s right. It would be unjust to deny us life by no fault of our own. But beyond that, Locke argues, we are not entitled to any particular *kind* of life. Locke writes, “If God afford them a Temporary Mortal Life, ‘tis his Gift, they owe it to his Bounty, they could not claim it as their Right, nor does he injure them when he takes it from them.” (R, 94)

Under the economy of death and life, as Locke describes it, persons can only be restored to life, specifically Eternal Life, by keeping the law. (R, 93) Locke cites Romans 3:23: “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Echoing conventional doctrine further, Locke writes, “He that offends in one Point sins against the Authority which established the Law.” Perfect obedience to the law is required. (R, 96) And whatever God requires to be done, without making allowance for faith, is part of the “Law of Works.” (R, 99) Death comes by not keeping the law of nature. That is necessary, Locke argues, because the “Purity of God’s Nature” required this for his rational creatures. God must demand perfect obedience to the Law of Reason/Nature. Otherwise, he would have to allow the Rule of Reason to be broken in every point. (R, 96-97)

What Locke intends here is the law of nature. Here Locke appeals to Scripture to articulate a theory of natural law from Romans 2:14. He quotes the passage with a short bit of interpretation inserted:

For when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do (i.e. find it reasonable to do) by nature the things contained in the Law; these having not the Law, are a Law unto Themselves: Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their Consciences also bearing witness, and against one another their thoughts accusing or excusing. (R, 99)

Locke argues that it is this law under which all persons are condemned, because it “obliges Christians and all men everywhere, and is to all men the standing Law of Works.” (R, 100) Thus, all men are under this law of nature, and it is sufficient to condemn all persons who do not keep it in every point.

What Locke says next should further discourage any hope of calling his theology a purely natural one. He argues that we do not keep this law; he offers no case of anyone who did or any

hope that any person will. Though Locke resists the doctrine Original Sin as such, the practical result is the same. Because mankind is practically unable to keep this law, there is need of redemption. Locke is quite adamant about this and explicitly argues against purely natural theologies such as deism. Citing I Cor 15:22 and John 5:21, Locke writes “Whereby it appears, that the Life, which Jesus Christ restores to all men, is that Life, which they receive again at the Resurrection.” (R, 95) Redemption from the “Law of Works” is found in what Locke calls “Law of Faith.” Whereas the Law of Works makes no allowance for failing, the Law of Faith does. (R, 99) Faith, Locke argues, remedies the defect of imperfect obedience to the Law of Nature. (R, 100) This then is the great privilege of Christianity in Locke’s philosophy. Under the law of works, persons face death. (R, 100) But by the revelation of Christ, eternal life is possible.¹⁰⁶

Locke does consider the fate of those born outside of Biblical revelation or with a pre-Christ (Old Testament) revelation. Before the revelation of Christ, Locke says, Jews were justified for believing the promise of the Covenant. (R, 101, 186-187) That much is probably orthodox enough. No Christian theologian would condemn any Jew who kept the covenant he was given. But Locke’s treatment of those completely outside of any Biblical revelation may reveal inconsistency and thus merits some further consideration. Those who did not possess the particular divine revelation of the Old Testament and the promised Messiah, Locke says, God will judge based on what they knew by the “Light of Reason, revealed to all Mankind.” Reason, Locke argues, will demonstrate to them a host of moral duties required by a Creator who gave them reason and holds them to account. The salvation of persons outside of revelation, he argues, is never denied by divine revelation and leaves them to stand or fall to God “whose Goodness

and Mercy is over all his Works.” (R, 190) It should be stated that this is not necessarily inconsistent with Christian doctrine as it is articulated within the Roman Catholic tradition, for example.¹⁰⁷ But if it were true that persons could be saved by adhering to the moral dictates of reason alone, would this not negate the necessity for Biblical revelation?

Although Locke never wants to deny that reason is a sufficient means of “divine revelation” (a means for God to communicate his law and judgment) this is not the same as saying that it is *likely* that persons will be saved by obeying reason alone. Locke argues that it would be practically impossible to find someone who will be saved by reason alone. The historical exhibit of persons, and the failure of their philosophers and pagan priests, demonstrates as much. So while Locke will defend the theoretical adequacy of reason alone for salvation, he does not think that it is at all likely that it will enable salvation for anyone. Though this does not account for the theoretical inconsistency, it enables Locke to maintain his particular belief in the overlap of reason and revelation, reject Original Sin, and defend his understanding of natural law all at the same time.

For those appealing to the Law of Faith, which Locke holds to be the more efficacious route to salvation, Locke offers a minimalist creed: Jesus is the Messiah. (R, 102-113) How does one know that Jesus is the Messiah? Locke has not forgotten his advice in the *Essay*. He must make a rational demonstration that what divine revelation has pronounced, Jesus is the Messiah, is believable and does no violence to reason. Articulating the person and work of the Messiah is done through a narrative of texts from the Old and New Testaments. Locke sees no need to establish that the canonical books of Scripture can be trusted. That he takes as a given, contrary

to any claim that Locke embraces a wholly natural theology or is dubious of the truth of any claims to divine revelation. It is particularly noteworthy that Locke accepts the truth of both Jesus's miracles and resurrection.

Locke's understanding of Jesus' office as Messiah does not depend upon any claims about his divinity. That is not to say that Locke anywhere denies Jesus' divinity or status in a Trinity, only that this is not an essential characteristic of his work as redeemer. Locke therefore does not have to address the person of Jesus so much as address his work. He cites, among other things, the miracles of Jesus and the apostles to confirm supernatural claims. (R, 115, 153, 191, 201) That is consistent with his own discussion in the *Essay* wherein he argues that miracles are a testimony to divine revelation. (E.IV.XVI.13-14, 382-383) Locke devotes a very lengthy discussion to the way in which Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, a claim which Locke seeks to establish from the Bible's "plain and direct words." (R, 114-166) This conforms to his advice in the *Essay* that divine revelation must not contradict our simple ideas nor contradict our plain knowledge nor provide any new simple ideas to the mind. (E.IV.VIII.3, IV.XVIII.5, 420)

Locke objects to any who claim that some kind of metaphysical argument is necessary beyond the historical narrative in the Scripture. Understandably, Locke knows that there will be objections to his argument. He writes,

That I allow the makers of Systems and their followers, to invent and use what distinctions they please; and to call things by what names they think fit. But I cannot allow to them, or to any man, an Authority to make a Religion for me, or to alter that which God has revealed....they must have a care how they deny it to be a Justifying or Saving Faith, when our Savior and his Apostles have declared it so to be. (R, 166)

What Locke's opponents were getting at, of course, is Locke's avoiding any reference to the Trinity or the metaphysics of the incarnation. Locke skirts this, relying on the proof texts composing his historical narrative. He says simply that the faith he has described is a saving faith because it requires repentance. (R, 167, 169)

The only essential doctrine in Christianity is therefore that Jesus is the Messiah. Anything beyond this claim requires interpretation and controversy. But that is necessary, he reasons. If persons were not free to disagree about the remaining doctrines, the consequence would be the existence of contradictions in Divine Revelation, and Locke always denies that such a thing is possible. Locke does not say that the disputants are all wrong, and he cannot countenance the epistemological impossibility that they are all right. Thus, he simply asserts that additional controversies have no impact on the terms of salvation.¹⁰⁸ God is free to determine the terms of salvation, Locke argues, because that is by grace and faith and not by any human right. What is always certain is what Scripture says about Christ's work being sufficient for salvation. That is essential to the Law of Faith, and must be believed. (R, 208) Locke is very suspicious of additional doctrines, believing that they are generally culled from a selective interpretation of Scripture. He writes, "We must not cull out, as best suits our System, here and there a Period or a Verse; as if they were all distinct and independent Aphorisms; and make these the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith, and necessary to Salvation, unless God has made them so." (R, 205) This enables Locke to disassociate himself from standing theological systems and political intolerance. It also fulfills his promise that divine revelation is ideally suited for those with little

education. In his attack on both natural theologians (particularly deists) and theological

“sytematizers,” Locke writes,

And indeed both sides will be suspected to have trespassed this way, against the written Word of God, by any one, who does but take it to be a Collection of Writings designed by God for the Instruction of the illiterate bulk of Mankind in the way to Salvation; and emphasizes that it is therefore generally and in necessary points to be understood in the plain direct meaning of the words and phrases, such as they may be supposed to have had in the mouths of the Speakers...without any learned, artificial, and forced senses of them, as are sought out, and put upon them in most of the Systems of Divinity, according to the Notions, that each one has been bred up in. (R, 91)

But the question remains as to why persons could not simply use reason to discern what God commands for reconciliation and atonement? If, as Locke argues repeatedly in the *Essay*, reason is necessary for discerning our moral duties then why could it not teach us a way of reconciliation? What advantage does a revealed theology have over a purely natural one? Locke sees the objection here and asks himself the question, “What Advantage have we by Jesus Christ?” (R, 191) Locke returns to a long natural history of morality and the need for Christ’s example. His discussion shows an evident tension between what is theoretically efficacious (by Locke’s understanding) and what is practically efficacious in human morality and redemption.

4.5 Improving Upon Morality and Worship: The Significance of Christ

As argued earlier, Locke is unorthodox not merely for arguing against Original Sin and muting the divinity of Christ, but also for hinting that salvation may not be exclusive to Christ’s revelation. Citing Scripture to make his case, Locke writes,

Yet what shall become of all the rest of Mankind, who having never heard of the Promise or News of a Savior, not a word of the Messiah to be sent, or that was come, have had no thought or belief concerning him. To this I answer; that God will require of every man, according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. He will not expect the Improvement of Ten Talents, where he

gave but one; Nor require any one should believe a Promise, of which he has never heard. The Apostle's reasoning, Rom X.14. is very just: How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?...Many, to whom the Promise of the Messiah never came, and so were never in a capacity to believe or reject that Revelation; Yet God had, by the Light of Reason, revealed to all Mankind, who would make use of that Light, that he was Good and Merciful. (R, 190)

While it is true that Locke only devotes two paragraphs to this possibility while devoting dozens of pages to establishing Christ as the Messiah and the merits of the Law of Faith, the fact that Locke will not turn his back on natural revelation demonstrates consistency with the rest of his work – especially the *Essay*. It would serve him to overthrow everything he said there about the sufficiency of reason for our moral duties and eternal bliss if he were to turn around in the *Reasonableness* and assert, as the founders of the Reformation did, that reason was insufficient for morality or salvation.

Locke must address the appearance of inconsistency. He wants to remain consistent with his stated belief in the sufficiency of reason. But he also wants to assert a need for divine revelation. And more than merely assert its need, he must argue that it is made necessary by vast human failure *without* acknowledging Original Sin. What Locke must do is demonstrate that reason is both sufficient *and* insufficient at the same time. He does this by arguing that while reason was sufficient as God provided it, mankind misused it. What God gave was good, but was misused by persons. So while the idea that reason *could have* brought mankind to redemption appears unorthodox, what Locke argues to be evident *from experience* arrives at the same practical conclusion as traditional theology and Scripture.¹⁰⁹ Locke does deny that the whole of mankind is morally corrupted by Original Sin, but he does not deny a commonly observed condition of irrationality – a more accessible kind of “fallen” state. He writes, “Though the

Works of Nature, in every part of them, sufficiently Evidence a Deity; Yet the World made so little use of their Reason, that they saw him not; Where even by the impressions of himself he was easy to be found. Sense and Lust blinded their minds in some; And a careless inadvertency in others.” (R, 192) This then, is Locke’s version of Original Sin. It isn’t a metaphysical condition. It’s a lazy misuse of reason. Locke blames it on “Men’s Necessities, Passions, Vices, and mistaken Interests; which turn their thoughts another way.”

Two particular groups become important in Locke’s narrative about the common failure of human reason: priests and philosophers. Locke writes, “The Priests every where, to secure their Empire, having excluded Reason from having anything to do in Religion...in the crowd of wrong Notions, and invented Rites, the World had almost lost sight of the One only True God.” (R, 192) He adds, “Every one went to their Sacrifices and Services: But the Priests made it not their business to teach them Virtue.” (R, 194) While some individuals saw the truth of the “One Supreme, Invisible God,” only the Israelites prevailed upon the truth as a group *because of the divine revelation given to them*. (R, 192) Noting the need for divine revelation, Locke writes, “The Belief and Worship of One God, was the National Religion of the Israelites alone: And if we will consider it, it was introduced and supported amongst that People by Revelation. They were in Goshen, and had Light; whilst the rest of the World were in almost Egyptian Darkness, without God in the World.” By contrast, the Athenians had a greater light of *reason* than all the others. But Locke laments that there was only one Socrates to laugh at their polytheism. Even Plato, he says, went with the herd according to all outward appearances. (R, 192)

Because redemption appears to be concerned with virtue in Locke's philosophy, one should expect the heroes to be philosophers. But Locke's narrative demonstrates otherwise. The philosophers, Locke argues, did provide persons with knowledge of their duties. But their impact was diminished by the priests, who assured the people that all was well. (R, 194) And even if the philosophers could have succeeded in demonstrating all moral rules, they would still lack moral authority. (R, 196-197) Also, Locke says that some light cannot penetrate by reason alone. Alas, Locke writes, "These incoherent apothegms of Philosophers, and wise men; however excellent in themselves, and well intended by them; could never make a Morality, whereof the World could be convinced, could never rise up to the force of a Law that Mankind could with certainty depend on." (R, 197) Locke summarizes the problem of authority and virtue being divorced by philosophers and priests when he says,

The Priests that delivered the Oracles of Heaven, and pretended to speak from the Gods, Spoke little of Virtue and a good Life. And on the other side, the Philosophers spoke from Reason, made not much mention of the Deity in their Ethics. They depended on Reason and her Oracle; which contain nothing but Truth. But yet some parts of that Truth lie too deep for our Natural Powers to easily reach, and make plain and visible to mankind, without some Light from above to direct them. (R, 199)

Locke also ties the light of divine revelation to the use of reason and will as he discussed it in the *Essay*. In the *Essay*, Locke had argued that the key to right conduct was to retain uneasiness about securing the greatest good and not to be distracted by present but trivial pleasures and the small pleasures which satisfy them. More precisely, we should feel greater uneasiness about affirming our place in heaven than we feel about our place on earth. Locke writes,

This, I think, any one may observe in himself and others,- That the greater visible good does not always raise men's desires in proportion to the greatness it appears, and is acknowledged, to have: though every little trouble moves us, and sets us on work to get rid of it. The reason whereof is evident from the nature of our happiness and misery itself. All present pain, whatever it be, makes a part of our present misery. but all absent good does not at any time make a necessary part of our present happiness, nor the absence of it make a part of our misery. If it did, we should be constantly and infinitely miserable; there being infinite degrees of happiness which are not in our possession. All uneasiness therefore being removed, a moderate portion of good serves at present to content men; and a few degrees of pleasure, in a succession of ordinary enjoyments, make up a happiness wherein they can be satisfied. If this were not so, there could be no room for those indifferent and visibly trifling actions, to which our wills are so often determined, and wherein we voluntarily waste so much of our lives; which remissness could by no means consist with a constant determination of will or desire to the greatest apparent good. That this is so, I think few people need go far from home to be convinced. And indeed in this life there are not many whose happiness reaches so far as to afford them a constant train of moderate mean pleasures, without any mixture of uneasiness; and yet they could be content to stay here for ever: though they cannot deny, but that it is possible there may be a state of eternal durable joys after this life, far surpassing all the good that is to be found here. Nay, they cannot but see that it is more possible than the attainment and continuation of that pittance of honor, riches, or pleasure which they pursue, and for which they neglect that eternal state. But yet, in full view of this difference, satisfied of the possibility of a perfect, secure, and lasting happiness in a future state, and under a clear conviction that it is not to be had here,- whilst they bound their happiness within some little enjoyment or aim of this life, and exclude the joys of heaven from making any necessary part of it, - their desires are not moved by this greater apparent good, nor their wills determined to any action, or endeavor for its attainment. (E.II.XXI.45, 342-343)

Locke ties his discussion of the will in the *Essay* to the revelation of Christ in the *Reasonableness* when he argues that Christ provides evidence of all those things necessary to direct the will toward the greatest human good. Before Christ's revelation, having only their reason, there were only rewards that were "doubtful; and at a distance. Mankind... Could not but think themselves excused from a strict observation of Rules, which appeared so little to consist with their chief End.... Their thoughts of another life were at best obscure: And their expectations

uncertain.” (R, 202-203) Philosophers did not adequately tie virtue to the consideration of another life, exalting only the perfection of humanity by virtue. Priests spoke only of the supernatural in the context of superstition and idolatry. Locke says, “Before our Savior’s time, the Doctrine of a future State, though it were not wholly hid, yet it was not clearly known in the World. ‘Twas an imperfect view of Reason; Or, perhaps the decayed remains of an ancient Tradition; which rather seemed to float on Men’s Fancies, than sink deep into their Hearts.” (R, 203) Heaven and Hell can now replace the calculations of present life and direct men to the “enriching purchase” of virtue. (R, 204) In other words, Christ and the divine revelation he brings provides the testimony necessary to direct the will away from what natural revelation sees only faintly. What’s more, Locke adds, Christ promises the aid of “his Spirit” to those who direct themselves seriously toward the course of virtue and “the practice of true religion.” (R, 204-205)

The real significance of Christ, Locke therefore argues, is to bring “Evidence and Energy” for God’s plan of redemption that polytheism and idolatry and reason’s dim vision cannot withstand. (R, 193) This was done for the whole world, and prudently committed at first to unlearned men also equipped to do necessary miracles. (R, 194) This group of ignorant but inspired fishermen, Locke says, articulated a better system of moral rules than those delivered by all the collected philosophers. (R, 196) The Bible therefore becomes the most coherent and authoritative statement of the Law of Nature. (R, 91, 96, 197-198, 201) Locke also speaks to Christ reforming worship, something which would be insignificant in a purely natural theology. Locke writes, “Our Savior, with the knowledge of the infinite, invisible supreme Spirit, brought a Remedy; in a plain, spiritual, suitable Worship,” and quotes John 4:21 as a proof text. Locke

repeats his argument found in the *Two Tracts* (and paraphrased from Scripture) that worship is an act of the heart (Tracts, 29) A spiritual being requires spiritual worship. Insofar as worship is in public assemblies (which Locke never denies and often affirms), reform was to concentrate on edification, decency, and order rather than outward appearance. “Praises and Prayer, humbly offered up to the Deity, was the Worship he now demanded.” (R, 202)

This then is the reason why Locke never attempted the moral demonstration promised in the *Essay*: it would not persuade the great mass of people. The Bible is a necessary text of moral instruction and redemption for all mankind, *even those of the highest rational capacities*. Its significance for the world cannot be overstated. (R, 200-201) But Locke is especially emphatic about its value for “Day Laborers and Tradesmen, the Spinsters and Dairy Maids.” (R, 200) Because common laborers (who no doubt made up the bulk of Locke’s countrymen) are generally illiterate and devote their lives to labor, they lack the leisure to follow proofs. Thus, the best thing for their obedience and practice is to hear plain commands that will set them right in their duties. (R, 209) The Bible becomes for Locke, therefore, the clearest and most effectual articulation of morality.

4.6 Returning to Locke’s Political Philosophy

As argued heretofore, Locke accepts the reality and significance of sin and redemption, though he denies the traditional account and explanation of both. In the *Reasonableness*, Locke places himself outside of two mainstream interpretations of sin and redemption. The one interpretation he rejects signals his distaste of Reformed theology. Locke characterizes this position as having “all Adam’s Posterity doomed to Eternal Infinite Punishment for the

Transgression of Adam.” The other position that he rejects, a clearly deistic approach, would make “Jesus Christ nothing but the Restorer and Preacher of pure Natural Religion; thereby doing violence to the whole tenor of the New Testament.” Both, Locke argues, have “trespassed this way, against the written Word of God.” (R, 91) Locke thus finds himself between orthodoxy and certain unorthodoxy.

Locke clearly denies the doctrine of Original Sin, and that presents significant complications for any conventional understanding of a propitiatory sacrifice by Christ. He is also, as noted earlier, mum on the subject of the Trinity. This means that the two great theological controversies within historic Christianity (and in Locke’s own time), soteriology and anthropology, find Locke surveying the major alternatives and checking the box marked “none of the above.” That is a common phenomenon in Locke. That is not to say that Locke’s opinions don’t ever resemble established schools of religious thought, only to assert that his positions don’t display him to be enlisting on either side in major controversies waged between Anglicans and Catholics, or Calvinists and Arminians, for example.

As someone trying to encourage tolerance and epistemic self-sufficiency, it isn’t surprising that Locke steers away from most traditional and mainstream dogmas. But it is significant that Locke’s arguments for his unorthodox “creed” are defended not on secular skeptical grounds. His arguments are rooted in Scripture. And where he is perhaps politically expedient in neutralizing controversy about theological dogma, that does not justify reading an atheistic politics in Locke. Locke’s political philosophy may not be a continual biblical polemic. But this in no way denies the significance of revealed religion for Locke. As I argued in the

introduction to this chapter, some of Locke's assertions about God and judgment can be attributed only to Biblical revelation. What's more, the *Reasonableness* makes it clear that Locke sees great significance in the necessity of Christian revelation.

It is important now to consider these points and begin to move in the direction of Locke's political philosophy. There are generally two opposite ways of looking at the intersection of religion and political thinking in Locke, and both are relevant here. One is the recurring Straussian thesis (echoed most clearly in Zuckert and Pangle) that Locke is subtly skeptical or even critical of supernatural divine revelation. The other, most recently offered by Forster, suggests a sincerely Christian Locke. Both arguments must be brought to bear on Locke's unorthodox (and individualistic) religious positions and the need to reconcile his theology, epistemology, and political philosophy. Though these two views are very different, they do come to the same point.

Zuckert and Pangle see no significance for revealed religion in Locke. According to Zuckert, Locke is never really serious about revealed religion and supernatural Christianity being true or significant. Locke's religion is, at most, a natural religion.¹¹⁰ Part of Zuckert's thesis even foreshadows the Forster thesis when he cites Locke's hope that the *Reasonableness* would bring peace between warring Christian factions.¹¹¹ But Zuckert also sees a wholesale (if esoteric and sometimes subtle) criticism of divine revelation in Locke.¹¹² If anything, Zuckert argues, Christianity becomes only a civil religion for the simple and illiterate. Locke interprets Christianity to serve his larger project, which is "unleashing human labor to transform the world

and society for the sake of making life more ‘convenient’ for man.”¹¹³ This is the old Straussian thesis, not much different from the McPherson thesis.

Pangle’s argument hinges on a (Straussian) misreading of both the *Essay*’s discussion of unhappiness and the *Reasonableness*’s discussion of Christ’s revelation. He paraphrases Locke as follows:

By making this life a “pursuit” of happiness, Locke denies the attainability of anything like the classical *summum bonum* but retains the idea that life is oriented toward some positive goal – an elusive positive goal. In effect, Locke says: ‘Happiness eludes us in this life, as Christianity teaches; so why worry about, or try to figure out, the good or our true fulfillment? – God will show us that in the next life. For the time being, we are free to devote our energies to what we all can see are essential means to the lessening of unhappiness. But we can do so without abandoning the comforting conviction that our lives are devoted to fulfillment, that our existences still have a positive goal, since reason establishes the existence of a god of reason who presides over a heaven where we may later achieve that goal – if we follow reason’s rules of behavior.’¹¹⁴

I fundamentally disagree with Pangle; Locke’s project is about anything but denying human guilt. And as evidenced by the lengthy quotation of E.II.XXI.45, 342-343 above, Locke does not say that we can merely lessen our unhappiness on the pretence of some supposed moral ambiguity by God, call that a “positive goal,” and mark time until the Final Judgment. Instead, we must not content ourselves with such trivial earthly pleasures. And as Locke says in the *Reasonableness*, part of Jesus’s purpose is to demonstrate to us that salvation is possible and not merely some distant good. Pangle’s Locke is an advocate of a rational politics to the exclusion of any significance for revealed religion whatsoever. Like Zuckert’s Locke, Pangle’s Locke urges us to earthly comfort and economic prosperity. Given everything Locke says about divine revelation and eternal happiness, such a thesis is unsustainable.

Forster reconciles Locke's theology, epistemology, and political philosophy by arguing that he has a goal of moral consensus. By offering an accessible and sympathetic moral philosophy that is generally theistic but accommodating, Locke provides a political and moral philosophy that will neutralize the particular (and bloody) controversies of the day.¹¹⁵ Locke's foundational theistic metaethic (which is Christian, but not militant against other religions for any theological reason) remains intact while his core philosophical works provide the boundaries for social engagement among discriminate theologies and ideologies. Forster's argument makes for a pretty strong thesis when one remembers that Locke's objections to other theologies and religions are indeed on political rather than metaphysical or theological grounds. Roman Catholics and Muslims, he insists, swear allegiance to other rulers. Atheists, of course, are also not extended toleration by Locke. But as much as Locke insists on the obvious existence of God in the *Essay*, for example, his civil objection to them is never on metaphysical or epistemological grounds. The argument has a political motive. Locke simply thinks that atheists cannot be trusted because they have no God to see them in the dark and enact justice for all their vices. Because trust is essential for political order, and atheists cannot be trusted, they cannot be tolerated by the political order. (R, 246; *Essay*, 137)

Though Zuckert, Pangle and Forster disagree about the genuineness of Locke's theism, all suggest that Locke's Christianity is a civil religion. That is, it is a religious political philosophy articulated for the service of social goals. The first two see it as a natural theology while Forster sees it as having a small, but inclusive and pluralistic, revealed component. If Zuckert and Pangle are right, what significance does God play in Locke's politics except perhaps to serve as an

obligatory bogey man for the simple or to be an uncaused cause of reason and thus the law of nature? Is there any significance for the Biblical content at all, one might ask? If Forster is right, revealed religion may indeed have some significance for Locke. But one must logically ask why a purely natural theology would not be more inclusive than a theology rooted in divine revelation? Forster's thesis implicitly recognizes the same point that I am emphasizing throughout the thesis. That is, Locke's politics and ethics rest on a thesis about divine judgment that is essentially more Biblical than it is purely philosophical. It rests not merely on divine judgment, but divine judgment that is Biblical in character. These arguments will be pursued in the following chapters.

4.7 Conclusion

It is evident by his appeal to Scripture and to Christ that Locke himself acknowledges an essential role of divine revelation. He is therefore unable to follow through on his own hope that natural revelation alone is sufficient for happiness. That is, he cannot justify his own claims through reason alone, nor can he find reason alone to be efficacious in practice. Because ethics (as the study of happiness) ultimately intersects with politics (creating the society that will best enable us to pursue happiness), Locke's reliance on divine revelation will also become important in his political philosophy. As Locke's later work on toleration demonstrates and as the *Reasonableness* demonstrated, Locke's defense of religion is more than just a defense of a natural theology. Locke is defending religious *practice* and a pious theology of corporate worship rooted in the revelation of Christ. Worship and piety are characteristic of revealed religion – certainly of the Christianity of Locke's day. The same cannot so easily be said of a purely natural religion. Thus, we see the practical significance of *revealed* religion for Locke's philosophy.

There is also still the question of Locke's characterization of the moral duties that inform the judgment criteria at the Divine Tribunal. Locke's reliance on divine revelation here is both explicit *and* implicit. I will contend in Chapters Five and Six that Locke's *explicit* use of the "dominion mandate" of Genesis 1:28 demonstrates him relying on the Bible in a clear and explicit way. This dominion mandate, together with the Workmanship Argument, explains Locke's political trinity of life, liberty and property in the *Second Treatise*. It also informs the call for resistance and revolution. More *implicit* is Locke's use of divine revelation, demonstrated in Chapter Three, to argue for a particular conception of God as Judge. There Locke offers no substantial philosophical justification. Notably weak are Locke's claims about mercy, forgiveness and the necessity of a "Gospel." Also notable (as Biblical) are Locke's claims (offered without philosophical justification) that tolerance and charity are among the criteria at the Last Judgment. Unlike the basic claim that there is divine judgment, or the consequence of torment or reward, these particular claims about mercy or tolerance seem to be uniquely Christian. At least, they are not substantiated by any argument in Locke's published writings. The only reasonable explanation is that Locke was drawing on essentially Christian theological and religious sources to make these claims. Perhaps he still believed that they could be discerned by reason alone. But he offers no attempt at this and did not pursue that line of reasoning in his own work.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND REVELATION: DISCERNING DIVINE IMPERATIVES AND WARRANTS

5.1 Introduction: Discovering Locke's Use of Religion

When attempting to justify oneself before a judge, it is necessary to know both the law and the way in which its cases will be adjudicated. Locke's God is both a lawgiver and a judge. The previous chapters were devoted to understanding how Locke views God and God's revelation and the significance of this for law and morality. Locke's arguments are directed ultimately toward eternal happiness, which Locke understands to be the proper end of all human endeavors.

Though Locke's work on toleration makes it clear that eternal happiness is not a concern of the earthly magistrate as such, God remains quite relevant to politics. The magistrate certainly cannot impart belief in Jesus as the Messiah or improve on the failure of priests and philosophers. But the magistrate can direct the laws so as not to impede our religious pilgrimage. That includes insuring that religion is not unreasonably infringed upon. The civil magistrate must also respect divine moral imperatives and warrants. These imperatives and warrants become the root of Locke's understanding of "rights."

Where possible, Locke prefers to rely on reason alone. But in the case of some questions, Locke relies on divine revelation implicitly or explicitly. It is confusion about this point that inspires some to claim a "secular" politics in Locke. It is true that Locke does not consistently propose a theory of politics rife with Scriptural citations, as one might expect from a Scottish Covenanter for example. For reasons articulated throughout his work, Locke does not want a

“Biblical” politics. He writes in the *Letter*, “There is absolutely no such thing, under the Gospel, as a Christian commonwealth.” (R, 239) He says in the *First Treatise*, “The Scripture says not a word of their rulers or forms of government, but only gives an account how mankind came to be divided into distinct languages and nations.” (T I.145, 87) Locke’s claim that “Jesus is the Messiah” involves a lengthy exegesis of Biblical texts, but its political significance is indirect. Locke offers no Biblical polemics in his political works other than in his reply to Filmer in the *First Treatise*.

In this sense, Locke’s politics do appear secular. On the other hand, if one sees the divine teleology of reason behind Locke’s work, toward duty and eternal happiness, Locke’s political philosophy is anything but secular. If thought of in that way, Locke does not articulate an atheistic political philosophy in the *Two Treatises* any more than he articulates an atheistic epistemology in the *Essay*. Neither can be characterized as a “godless” philosophy. Locke also emphasizes that success at the Last Judgment requires conformity to divine moral imperatives together with piety and worship. Locke’s Final Judgment is founded on a Biblical conception of judgment and God. As argued in the *Reasonableness*, he also believes that happiness is *practically* impossible without the work of Christ as Messiah. All of these points pertain to happiness, and will therefore have political significance as well.

To understand whether there is “religion” in Locke, one must first determine what is meant by “religion.” I intend the phrase in two ways. By talking about “religion” in Locke, I first mean natural revelation. Insofar as natural revelation is the gift of God for specific ends, moral warrants and imperatives are communicated by God and discerned by reason and other “natural”

means. Anywhere that Locke says that something is the work of God or indicative of God's moral purposes, even if those purposes are strictly earth-bound, we can say that Locke is making a "religious" claim. Though Locke would argue (as explained in Chapter Four) that the Bible is a superior moral revelation, it is not necessarily the best medium for defending every particular of one's political philosophy. So insofar as Locke's moral theology is not a strictly revealed theology, it is best to call this "thin" religion in Locke, enabling one kind of divine warrant or imperative. To summarize the first meaning of "religion": anything clearly evident to reason or other *natural* means (such as the study of history) can still, in one sense, be called a *divine* warrant or imperative. Although these revelations are practically insufficient to lead men to heaven, Locke gives no indication that natural revelation is insufficient to enable earthly happiness and civil order or to legitimize civil law.¹¹⁶

The second meaning of "religion" in Locke, what one might call a "thick" religious claim, relies explicitly in presentation or argument on Scripture. Thick religious claims are less frequent, but still evident. They come at critical junctures in Locke's work. That includes Locke's characterization of the final judgment and his cataloging of virtues such as tolerance and charity. Divine revelation will also inform his understanding of the political imperatives of self-preservation and equality as well as the warrant for private property. Just as he did in the *Essay*, we should expect Locke will make some thick religious appeals in the *Two Treatises*, particularly when he is emphatic about something that may not lend itself to philosophical demonstration.¹¹⁷

When he is not addressing theological subjects head-on, as he did in the *Reasonableness*, Locke should be expected to rely on thin religious claims more than thick religious claims for a

number of reasons. First, consistent with the Forster thesis, and to some degree a softer version of Zuckert's "civil religion" thesis, Locke is wary of making exclusive revelatory claims that could be divisive. Locke says this much himself quite clearly in the works on toleration. Second, while Locke does make the case that Christ and the Law of Faith (revealed by divine revelation) are the best means to heaven, he clearly excludes the civil magistrate from the responsibility to lead men to heaven. Thus, the civil magistrate's cause is not Christ's cause and vice versa. Third, Locke is wary of the threat of "enthusiasm" to both faith and reason. Fourth, Locke is adamant that Scripture is routinely misused and misunderstood by ambitious persons. Locke's distrust of Biblical polemics for political purposes is clear from his discussion in the *Reasonableness* and the *Letter*. He sees Sir Robert Filmer, his opponent in the *First Treatise*, as someone who is ignoring the plain meaning of Scripture to make a political argument. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reason is God's standing gift to *all* men. Though Locke holds the New Testament to be an unparalleled statement of moral principles, it remains something of an exclusive gift in Locke's day – not yet having traveled the globe. It is therefore most prudent for Locke to use the second manifestation of the divine law, the "law of nature."

This chapter will look directly at the *Two Treatises*. It does not presume to enter into every controversy therein, or to entertain and reply to every secondary study. The particulars of the debate with Filmer will not be explored in any detail; there will be no attention paid to the historical context of the *Two Treatises*. Rather, the intent is to discern Locke's particular view of law, morality and revelation in these two essays and clarify what Locke would consider grounds for an "appeal to heaven." Special attention is paid to the use of religious justifications.

5.2 The First Treatise and Biblical Polemic: Revelation Elucidated for Politics

Upon first acquaintance, Locke's *First Treatise* appears to be something of a Biblical polemic for a thick religious politics. As demonstrated by the *Reasonableness* and the *Paraphrase* (though both were composed a bit later in Locke's life), Locke is not a stranger to Biblical polemics. But Locke is not arguing for a thick religious politics in the *First Treatise* so much as he is arguing for a political theory moderated by *both* reason and divine revelation. This is keeping with Locke's fear both of a rational discounting of divine revelation on the one hand and an "enthusiastic" discounting of reason on the other hand. Locke utilizes both sources of justification throughout both treatises, often appealing simultaneously to the "law of God and nature." (For example, T I.116, 72 or T II.3, 100)

Filmer's argument is conditional on the Biblical account of Adam. Hence, Locke engages Filmer's exegesis with an exegesis of his own. Locke's reply is intended to have two results. First, it is intended to criticize "thick" religious justifications which are, in Locke's judgment, *exclusive* of reason and common sense. Where Filmer engages Scripture, Locke engages the same Scriptures and demonstrates that Filmer's exegesis and application conflict both with reason and with a reasonable interpretation of other Scripture. Locke's second aim is to use these same Scriptures to argue for his own political theory. Locke is not arguing against *any* use of the Bible to justify political prescriptions. Rather, he is arguing against what he sees as Filmer's use of the Bible to articulate a political theory inconsistent with the text itself (divine revelation) and with reason and experience (natural revelation). Locke is therefore not advocating an ascriptural politics. Rather, he is arguing against misinterpretations - whether thick or thin. It is important to

Locke that both forms of revelation agree. Locke repudiates the misuse of divine revelation because the misuse of it contradicts reason and other Scripture. This misuse will thereby undermine both forms of revelation.¹¹⁸ Locke repeats this argument in his refutation of Filmer. (T I.126, 77; T I.137, 83)

Locke's objections to Filmer are on hermeneutical and practical grounds, arguing that Filmer's particular interpretation of Scripture would put an end to all civil government and human means to establish it. (T I.126, 77) He engages Filmer's patriarchal politics repeatedly on the use of Genesis 1:28. This is a text that Filmer claims established a hereditary monarchy (patriarchy) with Adam and set the succession of absolute monarchs. Locke's objection to Filmer has two prongs of attack, reflecting the two modes of revelation. (T I.119, 74) Locke first replies from Scripture, whose legitimacy he defends vigorously. (T.I.29 and 30, 22-23) Locke's response can be quite flippant where he judges Filmer to be convoluting or contradicting the plain meaning of a text. In one case, Locke replies to Filmer,

Sir Robert would persuade us, against the express words of Scripture, that what was here granted to Noah, was not granted to his sons in common with him... The sum of all his reasoning amounts to this: God did not give to the sons of Noah the world in common with their father, because it was possible they might enjoy it under or after him. A very good sort of argument against an express text of Scripture: but God must not be believed, though he speaks it himself, when he says he does any thing which will not consist with sir Robert's hypothesis. (T I.33, 24-25)

After engaging Scripture and setting its use aright, Locke then appeals to the law of nature to confirm his own particular interpretation. It is very important to Locke that God's two means of revelation are congruent. In that sense, Locke is repeating his argument in the *Essay* by applying it to the case of Filmer's particular errors.

As Locke argued in the *Reasonableness*, it is only rational to understand Scripture on the clear and plain face of it. Just as Locke jokes that God did not make men simply so that Aristotle could make them rational, so he would reject any implication that God gave Scripture so that systematic theologians and commentators could make it sensible and thereby accomplish what God intended. Incorrect (and convoluted) interpretations, Locke argues, are motivated by poor assumptions and cannot contradict the plain text of the Bible. He writes, “The prejudices of our own ill-grounded opinions, however by us called probable, cannot authorize us to understand Scripture contrary to the direct and plain meaning of the words.” (T I.36, 26) Locke is passionate in arguing that if we continue in such errors, the revelation of God becomes of no effect. What God says cannot be nonsensical. He writes,

God, I believe, speaks differently from men, because he speaks with more truth, more certainty: but when he vouchsafes to speak to men, I do not think he speaks differently from them, in crossing the rules of language in use amongst them: this would not be to condescend to their capacities, when he humbles himself to speak to them, but to lose his design in speaking what, thus spoken, they could not understand. (T I.46, 32)

If one were to take Filmer at this word, Locke argues, either language or revelation would cease to become meaningful. The same would happen if one were to articulate doctrine from obscure passages. (T I.112, 70)

In addition to Scripture and reason, Locke proposes a third kind of revelation in the *First Treatise*, and it is a theme that he carries into the *Second Treatise*. Locke argues that God’s appointment (intent) can be discerned by three methods: providence (history and generalized human experience), the law of nature, or divine revelation. (T I.16, 15; T I.56, 38; T I.137, 83) The latter two are familiar from the discussion of the *Essay* and the *Reasonableness*, but Locke

now adds the discovery of history. Locke connects the progression of history to God's providence early on in the *First Treatise* and later uses it to justify three important arguments in the *Second Treatise*. He uses this argument from history to justify the legitimacy of social contract theory, reject absolute monarchy, and reply to objections that articulating a moral warrant for revolution will lead to anarchy. (T II.103, 144; T II.92, 139; T II.230, 201)

Locke does not mean to argue that any particular historical practice is necessarily an unerring guide for imitation. Consistent with his suspicion of the law of reputation/custom in the *Essay* and the *Reasonableness*, Locke does not argue that just any old observed social habit should direct how things are done. Custom and habit must always give way to the commands of God (reason and divine revelation). This is the difference between *providence* (God's government of human affairs) and human history that merely evidences human corruption. Against Filmer's thesis that precedent could show something to be divinely warranted, Locke argues (quoting Psalm 106: 38, 40) that God is always wiser than human practice.¹¹⁹ (T I.58-59, 38-39) Thus, we can take historical examples as one form of revelation but still must judge them against reason and clear Biblical commandments. Locke offers the example of human sacrifice in the Old Testament as a case in point. (T I.147, 89) Though nature seems to will the "increase of mankind, and the continuation of the species in the highest perfection" and God condemns such practice explicitly, this did not stop numerous societies from practicing such barbaric acts.

5.3 Three Foundational Moral Principles in the Two Treatises

Having considered the use of thick and thin revelation in the *First Treatise*, we can now move to the particulars of political morality in both treatises. An examination of these two essays

reveals three key arguments that ground the law of nature for politics and become the basis for divine warrants and imperatives. In other words, they may create both permissions and authorizations or create moral obligations. Warrants become the grounds for rights. Imperatives are duties. These three points are rooted in the argument of the *First Treatise* and essential for the more famous argument of the *Second Treatise*. To the point of the thesis, they provide detail on the moral imperatives that inform the warrant for revolution.

Two potential misconceptions about the *First Treatise* should be addressed at this juncture. The first misconception is that the *Second Treatise* is essentially a stand-alone argument in its own right and therefore the *First Treatise* is only of marginal significance. The second misconception is that while Locke was engaged in a prolonged effort in the *First Treatise* to defeat the particular exegesis (thick religion) of Filmer, he was offering no religious argument of his own. That is, Locke was merely clearing the ground of a particular argument for patriarchy and nothing more. To the contrary, Locke needs arguments in the *First Treatise* to lay the ground for the more familiar arguments in the *Second Treatise* and it is difficult to understand the *Second Treatise* apart from the *First*. What's more, Locke has his own religious project evident in the *First Treatise*.

First, Locke begins his *Second Treatise* with a statement that presupposes the reader to have learned important premises from demonstration in the *First Treatise*. He writes,

It having been shown in the foregoing discourse, 1. That Adam had not, either by natural right of fatherhood, or by positive donation of God, any such authority over his children, or dominion over the world, as is pretended: 2. That if he had, his heirs, yet had no right to it: 3. That if his heirs had, there being no law of nature nor positive law of God that determines which is the right heir in all cases that may arise, the right of succession, and consequently of bearing rule, could not have been certainly determined:...All these premises having, as I think, been

clearly made out, it is impossible that the rulers now on earth should make any benefit, or derive any the least shadow of authority from that, which is held to be the fountain of all power, “Adam’s private dominion and paternal jurisdiction;” so that he that will not give just occasion to think that all government in the world is the product only of force and violence, and that men live together by no other rules but that of beasts.” (T II.1, 100)

The second point of justification emphasizes the care that Locke takes in the *First Treatise* to not only refute Filmer’s Scriptural arguments about Adam’s dominion, but to construct his own arguments (and exegesis) from the same Scripture. The third argument addresses the care that Locke takes in the *First Treatise* to establish principles essential for his presentation in the *Second Treatise*: the Workmanship Argument, the warrant for property (or right to property), and the preservation of human life. These three principles underlie Locke’s familiar conception of liberty and equality. (T II.4, 101)

Locke’s Workmanship Argument asserts that because persons are God’s workmanship, God has a sovereign right over his creation and can dictate the terms under which those lives are lived. Locke’s understanding of those terms denies slavery and creates an imperative for equality and liberty. The second principle is the warrant for property. Property becomes the key means to maintaining liberty and equality. The third principle is the preservation of human life, which is the most important general political imperative. All three arguments are interrelated and are foundational principles of the law of nature. They inform a proper understanding of natural rights and establish the moral imperatives necessary to establish, guide and curb the civil magistrate.

The Workmanship Argument is architectonic for Locke, recurring in most of his texts.¹²⁰ It also enables Locke’s most famous arguments for human liberty and equality. Locke asserts God to be owner of all. (T I.85, 55-56) His ownership is like that of a sovereign, and no person

can claim sovereignty over himself or another in conflict with this sovereign right. For example, against Filmer's claim that a father's right over his children is absolute because he gave them life, Locke makes a thick religious claim for God's sovereignty. Quoting Acts 17:28 (uncited), Locke calls God, "the author and giver of life: it is in him alone we live, move, and have our being." Locke replies to Filmer's assertion of human sovereignty by asking, "How can he be thought to give life to another, that knows not wherein his own life consists?" Adding "thickness" to the defense of man as God's workmanship, Locke explicitly cites Psalm 94:9 and alludes to other passages of Scripture as well.¹²¹ (T I.52-53, 36)

The fact that persons are God's workmanship is the basis for their equality. Locke addresses human equality as a function of God's ownership on two occasions early in the *Second Treatise*. He writes,

For men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one sovereign Master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorize us to destroy another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours. (T.II.6, 102)

Our equal status is a result of our common nature as God's creations. Locke reinforces this point by arguing that only God can, by clear decree, contradict this natural equality. (T II.4, 101) We may not rule one another without consent, says Locke. This equality creates an obligation to "mutual love amongst men" that obliges justice and charity. (T II.5, 102) Locke denies anyone the right to harm "another in his life, health, liberty or possessions" explicitly on grounds of the fact that we are God's workmanship. Locke writes,

Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind and may not, unless it be to do justice to an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of life, the liberty, health, limb or goods of another. (T II.6, 102)

The Workmanship Argument also denies any moral license. Locke argues that the very essence of freedom is to be ruled by the law of nature.¹²² (T II.22, 109) Locke thereby joins both liberty and equality in this Workmanship Argument. Anyone who would violate either principle violates the law of nature. (T II.7-8, 102-103) Liberty is violated through moral license. Equality is violated through any undue threat to life, liberty or property.

From God's ownership, articulated as the Workmanship Argument, is derived the second key principle, the right to property. Locke believes the first step toward property rights is the Owner of all things giving the earth to all men in common. In the *Second Treatise*, he will distinguish how common things become particularly owned. Locke roots property in a thick religious claim, arguing the root of property to be the "dominion mandate" of Genesis 1:28, a verse most frequently used by Filmer to argue for Adam's monarchy. In this contest over the meaning of Genesis 1:28, two things make it clear that Locke is not simply protesting the validity of any "thick" religious politics. First, Locke uses Scripture (rather than reason alone) to discern the correct interpretation of Scripture. Second, Locke argues for a particular interpretation of Genesis 1:28 that enables him to establish not only a contrary understanding of political dominion but also to justify his discussion of property in the *Second Treatise*.¹²³

It can be said that Locke's entire work in the *Two Treatises* hinges on this verse in Genesis 1:28. Given that the verse addresses "dominion," an essentially political concept, this

should come as no surprise. “Dominion” is referenced 86 times in the *Two Treatises*. But Locke is not simply interested in arguing that Filmer’s conception of dominion is an invalid interpretation of the text. It is also important to Locke that he demonstrate that his own political theory is supported by this dominion mandate. Locke’s contest with Filmer concerns the grants given to Adam and Noah. Filmer contends that God’s grant to Adam in Genesis 1:28 gave him political dominion. Filmer claims that this grant made Adam both (in Locke’s words) “monarch” and “proprietor” of the world. (T I.16, 15) Filmer cites John Selden’s assertion,

The first government in the world was monarchical in the father of all flesh. Adam being commanded to multiply and people the earth, and to subdue it, and having dominion given him over all creatures, was thereby the monarch of the whole world. None of his posterity had any right to possess any thing, but by his grant or permission, or by succession from him. The earth, saith the Psalmist, hath he given to the children of men, which shows the title comes from fatherhood. (T I.21, 19)

Locke emphatically contests this claim on many grounds. Locke writes,

I shall show, 1. That by this grant, Gen. i.28, God gave no immediate power to Adam over men, over his children, over those of his own species; and so he was not made ruler, or monarch, by this charter. 2. That by this grant God gave him not private dominion over the inferior creatures, but right in common with all mankind; so neither was he monarch upon the account of the property here given him. (T I.24, 19-20)

Two lines of argument are essential for my purpose. First, Locke uses Scripture to contest Scripture. It is important to Locke that the Scripture “speaks not nonsense.” (T I.31, 24) He refutes Filmer by citing Scripture, writing, “Therefore David says, in the 8th Psalm above cited, ‘Thou hast made him little lower than the angels; thou hast made him to have dominion.’ It is not of Adam king David speaks here; for, verse 4, it is plain it is of man, and the son of man, of the species of mankind.” (T I.30, 23) Locke also cites the example of God’s charge to Noah in

Genesis 9:1-3 as complicating Filmer's thesis, given that Noah and his sons are given a charge similar to Adam's. Locke's objection is therefore not against a thick religious politics. Rather, it is that Filmer has ignored the plain meaning of the text. Locke writes, "The prejudices of our own ill-grounded opinions, however by us called probable, cannot authorize us to understand Scripture contrary to the direct and plain meaning of the words." (T I.36, 26) Locke sees this as a contest between Scripture and Filmer, and Locke considers himself a defender of the rational integrity of the Scripture.

Locke sees the grant to both Adam and Noah as a grant of property, whereas Filmer sees only Adam himself as receiving a positive grant from God. (T I.38-39, 27) Setting up his discussion of property in the *Second Treatise*, Locke writes,

I confess, I cannot see anything in them tending to Adam's monarchy, or private dominion, but quite the contrary. And I less deplore the dullness of my apprehension herein, since I find the apostle seems to have as little notion of any such, 'private dominion of Adam' as I, when he says, 'God gave us all things richly to enjoy' which he could not do, if it were all given away already to monarch Adam, and the monarchs his heirs and successors. (T I.40, 28-29)

The battleground is an important one for Locke because he understands this right to property to be the basis of political liberty and maintenance of human preservation. (T I.92, 59) Locke argues,

God, who bid mankind increase and multiply, should rather himself give them all a right to make use of the food and raiment, and other conveniences of life...than to make them depend upon the will of a man for their subsistence, who should have power to destroy them all when he pleased, and who, being no better than other men, was in succession likelier, by want and the dependence of a scanty fortune, to tie them to hard service, than by liberal allowance of the conveniences of life to promote the great design of God, 'increase and multiply:' he that doubts this, let him look into the absolute monarchies of the world, and see what becomes of the conveniences of life, and the multitudes of people. But we know

God hath not left one man so to the mercy of another, that he may starve him if he please. (T I.41, 29)

Locke links liberty with property in both treatises, seeing them as inseparable in practice. But he establishes this connection firmly in the *First Treatise*. Using an argument that emphasizes the overlap between divine law with natural law, Locke writes,

Property, whose original is from the right a man has to use any of the inferior creatures, for the subsistence and comfort of his life, is for the benefit and sole advantage of the proprietor, so that he may even destroy the thing, that he has property in by his use of it, where need arises: but government being for the preservation of every man's right and property, by preserving him from the violence and injury of others, is for the good of the governed: for the magistrate's sword being for a "terror to evil doers," and by that terror to enforce men to observe the positive laws of the society, made conformable to the law of nature, for the public good, i.e. the good of every particular member of that society, as far as by common rules it can be provided for; the sword is not given the magistrate for his own good alone. (T I.92, 59)

Locke argues in the *Second Treatise* that a thief, for example, in having designs on a person's property therefore is evincing designs on a person's liberty. (T II.18, 108) That ultimately means a threat to life.

From all of this it becomes evident that property rights are not merely for accumulation. Rather, they serve the moral imperative given by God to preserve human life and the divinely ordained equality. Rightly understood, property then becomes a warrant for the sake of imperatives. Those imperatives are the preservation of human life, human liberty and human equality. And just as Locke asserted in the *Essay* that property was not cause for idleness in the study of morality and heaven, Locke's right of property is moderated by a moral duty of charity. This ties the right of property to the duty to preserve human life. He writes, "No man could ever have a just power over the life of another by right of property in land or possessions; since it

would always be a sin, in any man of estate, to let his brother perish for want of affording him relief out of his plenty.” (T I.42, 29-30)

Locke’s final principle, the preservation of human life, is a corollary of the first two and his most important imperative in politics. Locke argues that preservation of human life is a direct conclusion of God’s workmanship, and evident by both senses and reason. (T I.86 and 88, 56-57) It is enabled by property rights, correctly understood. Note that this is not quite the same thing as simple “self preservation,” an imperative that Locke does not hold to be as evident in Creation. (T I.56, 38) Humans are not simply egoists bent on survival. We are designed by God to preserve our own life for moral purposes and to preserve other lives out of respect for God’s workmanship. (T II.6, 102) A moral imperative for mere self-preservation might give ground for charges of hedonism and Hobbesianism. But Locke discourages such an argument in many places.¹²⁴

The preservation of human life is so important to Locke that any violation of it merits death. Locke uses both thick and thin religious justifications for such a penalty, citing “the dictates of nature and reason, as well as his revealed command.” (T I.56, 38) He quotes verbatim (but does not cite) Genesis 9:6, calling it “that great law of nature.”¹²⁵ He also cites the case of Cain and Abel: “And Cain was so fully convinced that every one had a right to destroy such a criminal, that, after the murder of his brother, he cries out, ‘Every one that findeth me shall slay me;’ so plain was it writ in the hearts of mankind.”¹²⁶ (T II.11, 105) Those who would make designs on the lives of others, Locke argues, prove themselves to be no more than beasts, denying the “common law of reason.” This threat is not just limited to those who would initiate

immediate force without appeal, as in the case of a thief. It also includes those who appear to have a “sedate, settled design upon another man’s life.” (T II.16, 107)

5.4 Conclusion: Rightly Understanding Rights and Revolution in Locke

Two sets of arguments are essential for a clear understanding of Locke’s political philosophy of rights and equality. To the point of this thesis, they are specifically preconditional to understanding Locke’s theories about revolution. The first set of arguments, examined in Chapters Three and Four, articulates the significance of a divine lawgiver and the two complimentary means of divine revelation. Both the moral code of Scripture and the law of nature reveal the same moral code, though the former does a clearer job of it. This means that what persons rightly discern to be their moral duties are given to them by God. That is important not only for their earthly happiness but also for their eternal happiness. All can expect, Locke argues, to stand before God at the Last Judgment.

The second set of arguments concerns cornerstone divine warrants and imperatives. The most important warrant is the right to property. The most important imperative obligates individuals to preserve the life, liberty and property of themselves and their fellows. This is what ties Locke’s theory of rights together and makes it coherent and teleological. Otherwise, Locke simply becomes a proponent of rights without duties. That would make the *Essay*’s emphasis on duties and divine judgment practically superfluous. It would make the *Reasonableness*’ emphasis on moral obligation and eternal happiness nonsensical. It would also burden liberty and equality with the nonsensical role of being ends in themselves, rather than instrumental goods.

The central issue in Locke, therefore, is not some bit of abstract or autonomous freedom. Rather, the issue for Locke is a teleological freedom. Thus, “*Freedom for what?*” becomes the question that must be asked. Because revolution is the most violent and disorderly means of obtaining freedom, it is critical that one asks the “Freedom for what?” question before examining Locke’s theory of revolution. That has been done in this chapter and the two preceding it. We can now move to the particular places in Locke’s political philosophy where he advocates resistance and revolution to see how Locke’s revolution is a divinely warranted one.

CHAPTER VI

APPEALING TO HEAVEN: REVOLUTION RECAST

6.1 Introduction: Thin and Thick Warrants in the Appeal to Heaven

The previous chapter summarized the foundational principles of Locke's law of nature. The law of nature is founded on the Workmanship Argument. As products of God's workmanship, we are subject to imperatives communicated by God. The two most important imperatives are the preservation of human life and equality. These imperatives are the logical result of God being sovereign over His creation. Human equality, modified only by direct divine command, and preservation of life both respect God's sovereignty and enable persons to obey other laws of nature. Locke defends these principles when he writes,

To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature; without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man. A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection; unless the Lord and Master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty. (T II.4, 101)

According to this formulation, liberty and property are clearly natural rights. But that must be moderated by the fact that Locke's formulation sees them as means rather than ends in themselves. Locke emphasizes this when he writes,

But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of license: though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession, but where some nobler use than its bare preservation calls for it. The

state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions: for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one sovereign Master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorize us to destroy another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours. Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice to an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another. (T II.6, 102)

Liberty or property may not be used to violate the law of nature.¹²⁷ Because they are not ends in themselves, neither can rightly be called "imperatives."

Locke's discussion of property illustrates this point. Property is the basis of human preservation because it preserves us from tyranny and the hardships of life. Locke discusses the role of property as a solution to the hardships of life when he writes,

God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labor was to be his title to it), not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious." (T II.34, 114)

In that respect, one cannot say that property is merely something that we *may* possess.

Practically, we *ought* to possess it. Locke considers it so important that we may defend it with deadly force. (T II.19, 108) But Locke knows that property is not something that may always be sufficiently possessed by everyone, as evidenced by his mandate for charity. (T I.42, 29-30)

Thus, it would not make sense to call property an imperative.

We are entitled to liberty and property (as natural rights) so that divine imperatives can be fulfilled. The two clear foundational political imperatives are equality and preservation of human life. Combining these rights (warrants) and imperatives explains the Locke's famous formulation combining life, liberty, and property. None can be considered on its own. Each is dependent, in justification or practice, on the others. All are rooted in Locke's Workmanship Argument, which relies on both thin and thick religious justifications.

With these principles in mind, it is now appropriate to closely examine Locke's "appeal to heaven" and his justifications for revolution in the *Second Treatise*. The goal of this chapter is to define what the appeal means, what it requires, and its relationship to the warrants and imperatives presented in Chapter Five. The chapter's goal is also to make some sense of Locke's remarks about revolution in the *Letter*. Locke is obliged to argue a clear moral case for an act which, by his own imperative to preserve life, is potentially quite deadly and therefore potentially immoral. As Locke says, we have an obligation to preserve the rest of mankind and not to do violence to them except in the case of self defense. (T II.6, 102) Because Locke takes the Final Judgment so seriously, it can safely be said that sending men to their eternal reward is no small matter. Locke must also be careful not to fall into the very trap that he accuses others of, using religion as a means to disturb the polity without moral cause. God is behind Locke's arguments for happiness and political imperatives and warrants, and will remain at the bottom of Locke's arguments for resistance and revolution. But Locke does not want to advocate a Christian polity nor incite religious conflict. The solution to this problem requires Locke to provide "thin" and "thick" religious warrants for revolution. That is, he must devise a resistance theory that appeals

to *both* reason and revelation. A moderate and balanced approach will avoid extremes repugnant to Locke: atheism or enthusiasm.

So, just as Locke makes “thick” and “thin” religious claims in his ethical theory (as discussed in Chapter 5), he also has thick and thin religious warrants for resistance and revolution. Thin warrants include the protection of life, liberty and property against an aggressor – particularly the civil magistrate. These are “thin” because they direct us toward divinely mandated political imperatives that have moral and political consequences, but they are not argued from divine revelation. Also, while they are “religious” because they are tied to God’s command, they have nothing explicitly to do with the practice of piety or worship. A “thick” warrant, by contrast, concerns religious “practice” – fulfilling the obligations of piety or worship. Thick warrants are also argued from divine revelation. It is safest to call these *warrants* for resistance and revolution rather than duties because Locke never explicitly argues that we *must* exercise these rights, only that we may. They are not an “offense” before God if rightly used. (T.II.196, 187) Locke moderates the exercise of the right by asserting that persons who do exercise it will have to give an account at the Final Judgment for how it is used. (T.II.21, 109)

6.2 Defining the Appeal to Heaven

Before addressing Locke’s “appeal to heaven” in more detail, it is important to address the discussion of force in the opening chapters of the *Second Treatise*. Locke’s argument begins by addressing the basic problem of force or a declared intent of force, particularly when there is no “common superior” on earth to appeal to for relief. Take the case, Locke suggests, of a thief that threatens his victim’s life. The threat comes not necessarily from direct violence against

person but perhaps from a desire to rob horse or coat. For Locke, there is essentially no difference. The threat against property is a threat against life because property is an extension of one's life through the investment of labor. It is a threat against liberty because property is a safeguard of liberty. Locke writes,

This makes it lawful for a man to kill a thief, who has not in the least hurt him, nor declared any design upon his life, any farther than, by the use of force, so to get him in his power, as to take away his money, or what he pleases, from him; because using force, where he has no right, to get me into his power, let his pretence be what it will, I have no reason to suppose that he, who would take away my liberty, would not, when he had me in his power, take away everything else. (T II.18, 107-108)

Even in a condition wherein civil law exists, the immediate threat to the victim's life authorizes deadly force for self-defense. Locke argues that if the civil law has not the opportunity to interpose itself against the aggressor, or if hope for reparation is lost, a state of war exists. Locke summarizes the difference between the state of nature and the state of war as follows: "Want of a common judge with authority puts all men in a state of nature: force without right, upon a man's person, makes a state of war, both where there is, and is not, a common judge." (T II.19, 108) Almost immediately upon the heels of this discussion of thieves, which makes the connection between liberty (explicitly mentioned), property (implicitly referenced because this is what a thief desires) and human preservation, Locke not-so-subtly suggests the same threat from magistrates. Positive laws may not be a sufficient check against the state of war. Locke writes,

When an appeal to the law, and constituted judges, lies open, but the remedy is denied by a manifest perverting of justice, and a barefaced wresting of the laws to protect or indemnify the violence or injuries of some men, or some party of men; there is hard to imagine anything but a state of war: for wherever justice is used, and injury done, though by hands appointed to administer justice, it is still violence and injury, however colored with the name, pretences, or forms of law, the end whereof being to protect and redress the innocent, by an unbiased

application of it, to all who are under it; wherever that is not bona fide done, war is made upon the sufferers, who having no appeal on earth to right them, they are left to the only remedy in such cases, an appeal to Heaven. (T II.20, 108-109)

When the civil magistrate has abandoned his fiduciary responsibility, there is no more appeal on earth. Where there is no appeal on earth, an appeal to heaven is necessary.

Locke's rational person has a warrant to defend himself against immediate threats to liberty and property. But recall that neither is an end in itself. Both property and liberty are means to the preservation of life and equality under God's sovereignty (per the Workmanship Argument). More precisely, property is a means to liberty and liberty is a means to self-preservation. Absolute power, the kind of power that denies sufficient liberty, is therefore also equivalent to the state of war. This is the case even if no force is immediately threatened. Locke argues,

And hence it is, that he who attempts to get another man into his absolute power, does thereby put himself into a state of war with him; it being to be understood as a design upon his life: for I have reason to conclude, that he who would get me into his power without my consent, would use me as he pleased when he got me there, and destroy me too when he had a fancy to it; for nobody can desire to have me in his absolute power, unless to compel me by force to that which is against the right of my freedom, i.e. make me a slave. To be free from such force is the only security of my preservation. (T II.17, 107)

This is why Locke says elsewhere that persons have no right to enslave themselves by compact or consent. (T II.23, 110) They would have no more right to do this than they would to take their own life, an act forbidden by the Workmanship Argument. (T II.6, 102)

Locke writes, "Where there is an authority, a power on earth, from which relief can be had by appeal, there the continuance of the state of war is excluded, and the controversy is decided by that power." (T II.21, 109) But Locke cannot simply be calling for *any* particular

“power on earth” to decide controversies. The state of war is not merely brute force. The force of arms must be motivated by right. That is, Locke’s authorization for “relief” must be considered in light of what Locke says everywhere else about the law of nature. The law of nature (as divine law) stands above civil law and the law of reputation. Locke writes, “For so truly are a great part of the municipal laws of countries, which are only so far right, as they are founded on the law of nature, by which they are to be regulated and interpreted.” (T II.12, 105) Thus, Locke is not asking for just the creation of *any* adjudicating law. An adjudicating law already exists in the law of nature, and it is reasonably evident to all persons (if they choose to follow it). Locke is calling for a civil law that effectively enforces the law of nature with respect to life, liberty and property. If the civil law does not regard those cornerstone principles of the law of nature, persons are better off without the civil law. Being ruled by the law of nature in the state of nature is preferable to arbitrary rule. Locke writes,

The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule. The liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established, by consent, in the commonwealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it...Freedom of men under government is, to have a standing rule to live by, common to every one of that society, and made by the legislative power erected in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, where the rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man: as freedom of nature is, to be under no other restraint but the law of nature. This freedom from absolute, arbitrary power, is so necessary to, and closely joined with a man's preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his preservation and life together: for a man, not having the power of his own life, cannot, by compact, or his own consent, enslave himself to any one, nor put himself under the absolute, arbitrary power of another, to take away his life, when he pleases. (T II.22-23, 109-110)

Not just *any* mediating standard will suffice. It is therefore more correct to say that the civil law, rightly understood, is the temporal institutionalizing of the natural law.

When that institution of civil government fails, the right of enforcement is returned to every rational individual who can rightly discern the natural law. This explains the use of Locke's "thick" religious appeal to Judges 11:27, his very first mention of the "appeal to heaven." (T II.21, 109) Individuals will always remain under the rule of God, who gave the natural law in the first place. According to Locke, every rational person is charged with enforcing the natural law. Locke writes,

And that all men may be restrained from invading others' rights, and from doing hurt to one another, and the law of nature be observed, which willeth the peace and preservation of all mankind, the execution of the law of nature is, in that state, put into every man's hands, whereby every one has a right to punish the transgressors of that law to such a degree as may hinder its violation; for the law of nature would, as all other laws that concern men in this world, be in vain, if there were nobody that in the state of nature had a power to execute that law, and thereby preserve the innocent, and restrain offenders. (T II.7, 102-103)

The reason why Locke emphasizes enforcement with a passage from the Bible is that he sees the natural law to be no different from the divine law in its moral instruction. The New Testament is surely a concise and clearer presentation, and the Law of Faith a surer means to heaven. But in terms of common political application, the moral and natural law are the same. The significance of the Biblical allusion is that it emphasizes the providential nature of revolutionary outcomes and also reminds readers of the Final Judgment awaiting those who misuse the right of resistance and revolution.

Locke acknowledges that this notion of individual enforcement of the law of nature may appear a "strange doctrine" and one that invites partiality and abuse. He agrees with those who

claim that government is the divinely appointed means for arresting men's "ill-nature, passion, and revenge." But sometimes there is no other choice than to return to the state of nature and risk those hazards. Tendencies for the abuse of law are no less evident in men as magistrates than in anyone else. At least in the state of nature, Locke argues, persons will be held accountable to the law of nature. (T II.13, 105-106) Furthermore, the natural law has the advantage of being universally known (as opposed to particular civil laws), demonstrated by the fact that aliens abroad are punished by governments (not their own) by right under the law of nature. They could not be punished otherwise if civil law was the only justification for punishment: aliens would not necessarily have consented to the laws. (T II.9, 103-104)

What all this makes quite apparent is that Locke's "appeal to heaven" is rooted in the enforcement of the law of nature against the magistrate, no less than any other offender. What it also makes quite apparent is that the appeal is not a plea for some kind of direct divine intervention. In other words, Locke is not leaving things up to God to remedy. The "appeal to heaven" in no way diminishes human responsibility for appropriate action according to the law of nature. Rather, it is the warrant for human action. If a person is crippled by an offender and he cannot defend or redress himself, or has no children to seek redress (all of which are warranted under the law of nature) there is no appeal. (T II.176, 179) Thus, the appeal is a warrant for human action. It is not an appeal for divine action, though persons who exercise the right must eventually give an account to God for its use. In that sense it is an "appeal." It is an appeal to the law of God, reflected in the divine and natural law. That law creates a warrant and means of justification *and* an accountability mechanism – the Final Judgment.

The appeal thus requires human action informed by divine commands, most readily found in the natural law but echoed in the divine law. The reason for Locke's warrant is both to encourage the use of the law of nature and to limit abuses of it. Locke is reminding the reader that persons should be encouraged by the divine warrant to fight for the divine imperatives. But it is also a reminder that the law of nature, as the divine law, informs the Final Judgment. This is the ultimate accounting for human responsibility. Citing the case of Jephthah's appeal, Locke writes, "That question then cannot mean, who shall judge whether another hath put himself in a state of war with me, and whether I may, as Jephthah did, appeal to Heaven in it? of that I myself can only be judge in my own conscience, as I will answer it, at the great day, to the supreme Judge of all men." (T II.21, 109) One appeals to heaven because it is the law of nature's source. The appeal thus reinforces Locke's whole metaethical structure – the notion of the final judgment. That echoes his arguments in the *Essay* and the *Reasonableness* and the works on toleration.

6.3 Cases for the Appeal in the Two Treatises

Thus far, Locke has basically asserted that appeals to heaven become necessary as a means of enforcing the law of nature. The appeal becomes necessary when there is no civil law, when the civil law will be too little and too late, or when the civil law fails to enforce the law of nature. God, who gave the divine law and reason, therefore stands above the civil law. God is the only one allowed to rule as an absolute monarch. (T II.166, 174) Furthermore, it is God who will finally enforce the law of nature. Thus, it stands to reason that even the most rational persons cannot consider themselves *final* arbiters of the law of nature. But Locke does not simply leave

the question as a general remedy against civil magistrates who violate the law of nature. He applies it to particular institutional cases.

The first case is the abuse of prerogative. This is a discretionary power of the executive described in Chapter XIV of the *Second Treatise*. Prerogative power is consistent with the law of nature, Locke argues, because it may be necessary for the common good. And the preservation of the common good is the ultimate measure of prerogative power. Locke writes,

Where the legislative and executive power are in distinct hands (as they are in all moderated monarchies and well-framed governments) there the good of the society requires, that several things should be left to the discretion of him that has the executive power: for the legislators not being able to foresee, and provide by laws, for all that may be useful to the community, the executor of the laws having the power in his hands, has by the common law of nature, a right to make use of it for the good of the society, in many cases, where the municipal law has given no direction, till the legislative can be conveniently be assembled to provide for it. (T II.159, 171)

What if prerogative power is abused, perhaps as a justification to deny legislative power? Locke says the abuse of power, whether by legislative or executive, is an appropriate case for the appeal to heaven. He writes,

Between an executive in being, with such a prerogative, and a legislative that depends upon his will for their convening, there can be no judge on earth; as there can be none between the legislative and the people, should either the executive or the legislative, when they have got the power in their hands, design or go about to enslave or destroy them. The people have no other remedy in this, as in all other cases where they have no judge on earth, but to appeal to heaven. (T II.168, 175)

Thus, Locke argues, revolution is justified for the loss of liberty or the defense of life. Locke here even extends this warrant to “any single man” to make such an appeal (in addition to the obvious right of the people). This appeal is available even if recourse by positive law is denied. Locke argues that acts of the people, or an offended individual, against the abuses of their governors are

rooted in “a law antecedent and paramount to all positive laws of men.” This is the law of “God and nature” that requires self-preservation and denies any type of suicidal agreement to the contrary. (T II.168, 175)

The second case of the appeal is that by which persons resist their conquerors. In this, Locke argues, they attempt to recover the “native right of their ancestors,” a majority-approved legislative. Against those who assert that this is troublemaking without cause, Locke compares the appeal to heaven to any appeal to justice. Furthermore, Locke believes that he is moderating revolutionary sentiments by inserting the threat of the Last Judgment. In this case, Locke argues, “He that appeals to heaven must be sure he has right on his side, and a right too that is worth the trouble and the cost of the appeal, as he will answer at a tribunal that cannot be deceived, and will be sure to retribute to every one according to the mischiefs he hath created to his fellow-subjects.” (T II.176, 179) This warning appears directed both at revolutionaries and at conquerors, an interesting twist insofar as successful revolutionaries sometimes commit the abuses of conquerors.

The final specific case in the *Second Treatise* is the loss of trust. This is a more nebulous problem than the ones previous, however, so Locke has a different argument on his hands. A loss of trust is not the same as a clear threat to life, liberty or property. Those problems are more readily identified. Thus, Locke’s answer both encourages and moderates. Locke replies, “For where there is no judicature on earth, to decide controversies amongst men, God in heaven is judge. He alone, it is true, is judge of the right. But every man is judge for himself, as in all other cases, so in this, whether another hath put himself in a state of war with him, and whether he

should appeal to the supreme Judge, as Jephthah did.” (T II.240-241, 208) Locke asserts the same thing about any conflict between people and prince wherein it is thought that prince acts contrary to the trust of the people. (T II.242, 208) Locke concludes by arguing that miscarriages of law result in the forfeiture of authority, which then reverts back to the people.

6.4 The Case of Eternal Happiness as Grounds for Revolution

Locke does not confine his warrant to life, liberty and property – the “thin” religious warrants. As evidenced from his work on toleration, he is very sensitive to potential conflicts of religious practice (necessary for eternal happiness) and civil law (necessary for earthly order). This explains why Locke’s resistance theory in the *Second Treatise* is “thick” on only three occasions. The first is Locke’s one reference to revolution for the sake of religion. (T II.209, 192) The second and third are his reference to Judges 11 and 2 Kings 18. (T II.21, 109; T II.196.187) The reference to Judges 11 is Locke’s very first reference to the appeal and clearly refers to a deliberate act of civil violence. His reference to 2 Kings emphasizes the superiority of right over force in the case of revolution. Both supports a claim that is oft-cited in the *Essay* – God is the final judge. Revolutionaries who abuse claims to right, no less than tyrants, will have to face divine punishment for violations of the law of nature.

So much for punishment; but Locke is also quite emphatic elsewhere that eternal happiness is also a possible consequence of Judgment. This is not something that can be secured by the law of nature, as Locke argued in the *Reasonableness*. Eternal happiness is best enabled by the Law of Faith. It would seem then that there should be some defense of religious exercise insofar as faith and worship accompanies the Law of Faith. This would require not just a thin

warrant for life and property, but a thick warrant for religious practice. Locke offers this defense of religious faith and practice in the *Letter Concerning Toleration*, and asserts a divine warrant for resistance and revolution to protect religious practice. This is what Locke calls the first “practical concern” of the *Letter*. Because the civil government is charged with protecting a “good life,” it must therefore consider the significance of religion and “true piety.” In this effort, the magistrate as “outward court” must cooperate with the “inward court” – the individual conscience. But Locke warns the reader, “Here therefore, there is great danger, lest one of these jurisdictions entrench upon the other, and discord arise between the keeper of the public peace and the overseers of souls.” That will not happen, Locke argues, if his boundaries for each are respected. These jurisdictions must be respected because, as Locke argues, “Every man has an immortal soul, capable of eternal happiness or misery; whose happiness depending upon his believing and doing those things in this life, which are necessary to the obtaining of God’s favor, and are prescribed by God to that end.” This salvation is the responsibility of each individual for himself, and it is each individual’s highest obligation. (L, 241) Thus, Locke argues, if the magistrate makes a law that lies not within his authority, citizens are not compelled to obey. Locke writes, “But if the law indeed be concerning things that lie not within the verge of the magistrate’s authority; as, for example, that the people, or any party amongst them, should be compelled to embrace a strange religion, and join in the worship and ceremonies of another church; men are not in these cases obliged by that law, against their consciences.” (L, 243)

Just as in the *Second Treatise*, this may become a contest of force against reason. And, as in the *Second Treatise*, Locke argues that God must become the ultimate judge. There is a

warrant for revolution, necessitated by the reality of eternal life. But it is a warrant that cannot be exercised without care. It is also moderated by that same Judgment. Acting in the name of God without proper warrant will surely bring eternal punishment. Using language similar to the “appeal to heaven” in the *Second Treatise*, Locke asks,

But what if the magistrate believe that he has a right to make such laws, and that they are for the public good; and his subjects believe the contrary? Who shall be the judge between them? I answer, God alone; for there is no judge upon earth between the supreme magistrate and the people. God, I say, is the only judge in this case, who will retribute unto every one at the last day according to his deserts. (R, 244)

At this point, the thinner, natural and more general imperative of public peace and human preservation gives way to the thicker and more supernatural imperative of eternal happiness.

Locke writes, “The principal and chief care of every one ought to be of his own soul first, and in the next place, of the public peace.” (L, 244)

6.5 Conclusion: Integration of the Divine Mandate

Locke has indeed provided a moral defense of what may certainly appear to be treasonous rebellion and is most certainly a violent and bloody act. Locke writes in his discussion of rebellion against conquerors, for example,

Notwithstanding whatever tile the kings of Assyria had over Judah, by the sword, God assisted Hezekiah to throw off the dominion of that conquering empire. ‘And the Lord was with Hezekiah, and he prospered; wherefore he went forth, and he rebelled against the king of Assyria; and served him not,’ 2 Kings xviii.7. Whence it is plain, that shaking off a power, which force, and not right, hath set over any one, though it hath the name of rebellion, yet is no offense before God, but is that which he allows and countenances, though even promises and covenants, when obtained by force, have intervened. (T II.196, 187)

Resistance against tyrants is directly warranted by divine law, as cited above in 2 Kings 18, or Judges 11, as cited previously. It is warranted by the natural law, as determined by threats to life, liberty or property. This makes the acts justified before God.

Locke has thus staked out a theory of resistance that has moderate reliance on religion and Divine Judgment, but avoids making religion the cause of civil strife as such. This keeps him consistent with his own claim that religion should not be the business of the civil magistrate or that there is no such thing as a “Christian commonwealth.” Foreshadowing Madison in Federalist 10, he argues that strife is caused not by the diversity of religious opinions, but the refusal of toleration for them. In reality, Christianity has the effect of moderating civil strife because it “carries the greatest opposition to covetousness, ambition, discord, contention, and all manner of inordinate desires; and it is the most modest and peaceable religion that ever was.” (L, 250) Indirectly tying Christian virtue to the Final Judgment, Locke writes, “I esteem toleration to be the chief characteristical mark of the true church.” (L, 215)

Locke thus strikes a balance. While Christianity urges virtues generally contrary to civil strife, there also exists a religious mandate for revolution in the name of liberty, property and religious practice. Locke recognizes the charge of contradiction here, and responds accordingly. He writes,

Now as it is very difficult for men patiently to suffer themselves to be stripped of the goods, which they have got by their honest industry; and contrary to all laws of equity, both human and divine, to be delivered up for a prey to other men’s violence and rapine; especially when they are otherwise altogether blameless; and that the occasion for which they are thus treated does not at all belong to the jurisdiction of the magistrate but entirely to the conscience of every particular man, for the conduct of which he is accountable to God only; what else can be expected, but that these men, growing weary of the evils under which they labor, should in the end think it lawful for them to resist force with force, and to defend

their natural rights, which are not forfeitable upon account of religion, with arms as well as they can? (L, 250-251)

As Locke has argued elsewhere, it is the *right* understanding of religion that enables its correct application. Recall that Locke is emphatic that natural and divine revelation agree with one another. One can argue that Locke has done just that with his theory of civil resistance. He has provided a thin religious warrant (for liberty and property), rooted in reason and the natural law and the idea of God's "Workmanship." He has also provided a thick religious warrant, found in Scripture and religious practice.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction: The Question Reviewed

The importance of studying the political philosophy of revolution cannot be understated. Its first principles are found in engaging important practical questions: Why and when may persons defy civil authority? As a theoretical inquiry, it is the most forceful and radical expression of modern political philosophy. In practice, it is a warrant for violent action and an invitation to political disorder and social anarchy. Its arguments and prescriptions have accelerated regime change more in the last three hundred years than in the previous two thousand. Given all this, careful study should be devoted to its proponents, founders and practitioners.

This thesis seeks to clarify John Locke's justification for revolution. In particular, it seeks to explain the apparently religious nature of Locke's revolutionary political philosophy – the “appeal to heaven.” What does Locke mean by this appeal and why is it an appeal to *heaven*? Given the political import and the obvious religious implications, this question can only be answered by exploring Locke's major texts on both religion and politics. Chapters Two through Six did just that, systematically working through Locke's major texts on both subjects and offering an analytical explanation for the intersection of religion and politics in Locke's philosophy. More precisely, it examines the meaning and importance of appealing to heaven.

At issue in this inquiry are a number of questions both central and collateral. Central questions include Locke's understanding of God, law, religious practice, human happiness, toleration, revelation, and reason. Answering these questions enables a clearer understanding of

how Locke would understand divine moral warrants, their communication to human beings, and their political significance. Collateral questions include disputes about such things as Locke's natural rights theory, supposed hedonism or Hobbesianism, views of property, particular theological (un)orthodoxies, and his intersection with other political philosophies and political theologies.

7.2 Locke's Moderate But Muscular Theism

This study demonstrates a muscular but moderate theism in Locke. Locke's God is not a background figure to politics, simply enabling civic virtue or providing convenient myths. His God is Creator, lawgiver, judge, and providential monarch. All of this has important political consequences. Locke's God enables man to participate in the divine plan. This requires communication of moral principles through both natural and divine revelation. Locke essentially offers two categories of law – that established by God and that established by his rational creatures. Law established by God is called the divine law, and is revealed by both supernatural means in Scripture and by natural means as the law of nature. One can loosely call natural law a "divine" law because it is always in agreement with revealed law and is directed at the same purposes. Law established by God's rational creatures is called civil law or the law of reputation. Locke also calls this "positive law."

Because God alone rules as an absolute monarch, he alone has the right to set the terms of both law and judgment. All who trespass against this law deserve punishment. Victims deserve justice and reparation. Locke also considers the deterrence of future crimes to be important. Every rational creature able to discern the intent of God, whether by natural or divine revelation,

thus has the right to enforce it. The best political means to this preservation is liberty (within the bounds of the law of nature) and property (within the bounds of charity and equality). This accounts for the famous trinity within Locke's political philosophy of life, liberty and property. Together they are the sum of the law of nature. Preserving human life is the most important political imperative. To fulfill this imperative, the rights of liberty and property become important moral warrants. These are justified by thin and thick religious claims.

To understand Locke's justification for revolution, it is important to see God behind the revelation of the law of nature. Because the enforcement of the law of nature may direct persons to resistance and revolution, this means that God will be the ultimate arbiter of the rightness or wrongness of such acts. And because God is lawgiver and judge, it is important that any appeals be directed to him and with the knowledge that all persons will have to give an account at the Last Judgment for what is done in their earthly existence. The threat of eternal reward or punishment not only informs how the law of nature is applied, but also how the Law of Faith becomes necessary for redemption from sin and death. Because the Law of Faith is divinely revealed, and is directed exclusively toward eternal rather than earthly happiness, all that it requires from the magistrate is appropriate toleration. But if toleration is not extended, the Law of Faith takes priority over earthly imperatives, including the ones that lead to civil peace. Eternal happiness, Locke argues, is far more important than political order. Thus, Locke's justification for revolution comes from both thin and thick religious warrants. Locke's God is a political God.

But this is not a call to zealotry. Locke's political philosophy offers both the most powerful incentive and disincentive for radical political action. On the one hand, persons are able

to resist the magistrate on the ultimate ground of a divine imperative. On the other hand, persons are bound to remember that no violation of the divine law will go unpunished. So while the magistrate is clearly kept on a leash, so is the revolutionary. Both will have to give an account for themselves at the Last Judgment.

Against those who might seek to take this connection between religion and politics too far, and use it for the civil imposition of religion, Locke argues that this Judge will also not allow intolerance of others intent on finding their own path to heaven. Without this threat of divine judgment, the argument for resistance and revolution fail to serve a moral purpose. And along with that failure would come the collapse of most of Locke's moral and political philosophy. It is all predicated on a divine lawgiver who presides at the Last Judgment.

7.3 Conclusion: Questions for Further Review

There is much more to pursue on these questions. First, there is the question of works not thoroughly explored in this study. Notable and relevant works would include *On the Conduct of the Understanding*, *Paraphrase and Notes of the Epistles of St. Paul*, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and also Locke's additional letters on toleration and his defenses of the *Reasonableness of Christianity*.¹²⁸ These works will provide additional insights into Locke's views on religion and also its political significance. Insofar as both religion and education are preparations for citizenship, Locke's work on education may also prove insightful.

Second, there are particular questions in Locke that would reward deeper investigation. Can more precise content be determined in Locke's law of nature? The answer to this question may come from a more precise examination of the content of the law of nature or the means by

which it is learned. Why are some expected to know the law of nature clearly while most are viewed pessimistically by Locke? (That, after all, justifies creating government and leaving the state of nature.) In the case of moral action, how does Locke explain why some are able to make a good judgment while others are not?

Third, there is the question of tipping points in Locke. Can more precision be gained about the terms under which religiously motivated revolution is appropriate, for example? What, precisely, are the impositions on religion that are intolerable? Which impositions would be perfectly legitimate? Perhaps Locke is unacceptably ambiguous about these things. Perhaps, on the other hand, this is a demonstration of his prudence - given what he says elsewhere in his work.

Fourth, there is the question of how successful Locke is in justifying some of his cornerstone assertions. When, precisely, is Locke presupposing first principles from divine revelation (as an Anglican Christian) and when is he providing purely rational or experiential justifications? Locke may use reason and experience alone to adequately demonstrate the existence of God, for example. What about his discussion of miracles or the Last Judgment? Are these sufficiently demonstrated from philosophical demonstration or not? If these rely implicitly or explicitly on divine revelation, and one is not prepared to accept that content as epistemologically legitimate, what does that mean for the success of Locke's overall project?

Fifth, there is the obvious significance of Locke for contemporary political philosophy. If Locke's theism is essential to his prescription for resistance and revolution, can this be accommodated by contemporary liberalism?¹²⁹ Though the question of resistance and revolution

are not at the forefront of liberalism today, justifications for those acts do speak to the heart of what liberalism is. Also, what are the implications of Locke's theism for natural rights within liberalism? Is enough attention paid to the law of nature as a divine law, as Locke argues it to be? Does Locke's theism force a rethinking of the current trajectory of contemporary liberal or democratic theory? Finally, what are the implications for the historical significance of Locke's political philosophy? Locke was certainly influential in the political world of the 18th century and beyond. How did these persons view Locke and what is the significance of his theism in that influence? All of these questions are also important.

ENDNOTES

1. Simmons, A. John, *The Lockean Theory of Rights*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992; Simmons, A. John, *On the Edge of Anarchy: Locke, Consent, and the Limits of Society*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993; Grant, Ruth W. *John Locke's Liberalism*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Dunn, John, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
2. Skinner, Quentin, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume Two: The Age of Reformation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978; Marshall, John, *John Locke : Resistance, religion and responsibility*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Zuckert, Michael, *Launching Liberalism: On Lockean Political Philosophy*, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002; Ashcraft, Richard, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986; Harris, Ian, *The Mind of John Locke: A Study of Political Theory in its Intellectual Setting*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
3. Forster, Greg, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Waldron, Jeremy, *God, Locke and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
4. Strauss, Leo, *Natural Right and History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953; Strauss, Leo, "Locke's Doctrine of Natural Law," *American Political Science Review*, 52 (1958), 490-491; Macpherson, C.B, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
5. Yolton, John W, *The Two Intellectual Worlds of John Locke*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004; Tarcov, Nathan, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984; Chappell, Vere, ed., *Locke*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
6. Spellman, John. *John Locke and the problem of depravity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988; Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Forster, Greg. *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Parker, Kim Ian, *The Biblical Politics of John Locke*, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press: 2004; Sell, Alan P.F. *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*. Cardiff: Wales University Press, 1997.
7. Grant, Ruth W, *John Locke's Liberalism*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Forster, Greg, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Waldron, Jeremy, *God, Locke and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
8. For discussions of a "Lockean Founding," See Pangle, Thomas L, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988; Zuckert, Michael P. *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994; Huyler, Jerome. *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas,

1995; Dworetz, Steven M, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism and the American Revolution*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

9. Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 1

10. Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, 192.

11. Ibid. 135.

12. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, 165.

13. Ibid, 179.

14. Dunn exacerbates the confusion by cryptically referring to a “psychological dependence” felt by people who erect the fiduciary government.

15. Ibid, 173, 180.

16. Ibid, 185. Dunn relies on Walzer’s analysis, asserting that Knox makes the grounds of resistance accessible only to the “religious enthusiast” in contrast to Locke’s more obvious motivation of the “destruction of the climate of trust.” One wishes that Dunn had taken the trouble to engage Knox himself and to examine the contrasting positions of Knox’s contemporary Christopher Goodman (a proponent of revolution and individual resistance) and Knox (who distanced himself from Goodman and advocated a more traditional Calvinist theory of revolution).

17. Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, 150.

18. Ibid, 151-155.

19. Ibid, 155-157.

20. Ibid, 161-173.

21. This includes considering the rights of individual persons and minorities. Simmons, 1993, 149, 173-181.

22. Notably: Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*; Grant, *John Locke's Liberalism*; Waldron, *God, Locke and Equality*; Forde, “Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke.”

23. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 215, 227, 229.

24. See Tierney, Brian. *The Idea of Natural Rights*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997 on the use of both by Catholic political theorists. See Rutherford, Samuel, 1644, *Lex, Rex, or The Law and the Prince*. Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982, for an example of the use of both by a Protestant political theorist. See also Skinner, Quentin, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume Two: The Age of Reformation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

25. Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 3-21.

26. Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, 197-198, 238-239, 241-242.
27. Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights*, 79-89, 117, 227, 295-297 and Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 150-173.
28. Simmons, *The Lockean Theory of Rights*, 34.
29. Ibid, 36-46, 60-67.
30. Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 193-195.
31. Waldron, *God, Locke and Equality*, 156-158.
32. Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, 135
33. *ibid*, 124. Simmons suggests an alternative approach to the question, placing religious questions in the context of Locke's intent for the ends of civil society. That is pregnant with meaning, inviting deeper exploration of the whole question of what politics *is* for Locke.
34. Foster, Herbert D, "International Calvinism Through Locke and the Revolution of 1688," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (April 1927): 475-499.
35. Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 239, 347-348.
36. Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, 182, 149.
37. *ibid*, 181-182 and Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 239.
38. Ashcraft, Richard, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986, 295. Peardon writes, "It can safely be supposed that Locke was familiar with the celebrated treatise, *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, published anonymously in 1579 and republished in Leyden in 1648." Peardon writes that Locke had contact with Huguenot thinkers when he was in exile on the Continent. See Peardon, Thomas P, Introduction to *The Second Treatise of Government* by John Locke, Edited by Thomas P. Peardon, New York: Macmillan, 1952, xi. Coffey denies any influence by Rutherford on Locke.
39. Becker, Carl, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas*, New York: Vintage Books, 1958, 33-36. Amos thinks that both are wrong. Becker is indeed over his head in discussing political theology. But Amos also does not appreciate the depths of Locke's rejection of the mainline Reformed articulation of resistance theory. See Amos, Gary T. *Defending the Declaration: How the Bible and Christianity Influenced the Writing of the Declaration of Independence*, Brentwood: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1989, 50-55.
40. Another reference to religion is made at T II.210 as well.
41. Ashcraft, Ashcraft, Richard. *Revolutionary Politics*, 487.

42. Ibid, 22.

43. Some of these are included in Nuovo, Victor, ed., *John Locke and Christianity: Contemporary Responses to The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997; Goldie, Mark, *Political Essays*, Edited by Mark Goldie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

44. Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, 157.

45. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 234.

46. Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, 124.

47. Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 51.

48. Or “There is no necessity why David should be thought less zealous when he danced with all his might in a linen ephod than when he was clad in his shepherd’s coat.” Tracts, 44, 57-58.

49. Locke repeats this in the *Letter*, 230.

50. To consider this correctly, it is important not to completely conflate the question of alienable liberty with the broader question of consent. As in the *Second Treatise*, what one may consent to is preceded by the question of what liberty one naturally possesses.

51. In the *Second Tract*, Locke explicitly considers the idea of the people being used as the agent of divine appointment, as Rutherford and others did earlier. But he refuses to consider the matter critical, asserting that God established magistrates for “order, society and government among men” and that all considerations had to place this first. See Tracts, 69-71.

52. Locke’s ideal regime is probably elective monarchy.

53. Rutherford, *Lex, Rex*, 1-2, 25.

54. Locke uses the famous Workmanship Argument throughout his work on toleration. See T II.6, 225. Frequent use should give pause to skeptics of Locke’s sincerity, like Zuckert, particularly since Locke offers no alternative theories of self-ownership in the works on toleration (as Zuckert alleges are given in the *Second Treatise*).

55. Locke was not averse to arguing against his own former positions on matters. One might expect that he would now include freedom in external religious matters as an inalienable natural right in the *Second Treatise*, but he does not. Perhaps it was because of a general sensitivity to emphasizing religious differences in a revolutionary tract, given his sensitivity to religious politics. He may also have had his fill of revolutionary political-religious treatises that he associated with consequentially destructive claims to liberty of conscience. Besides, he did articulate his argument on the subject in the *Letter*, 241-244.

56. One could perhaps argue a parallel between the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

57. *Adiaphora*, for which because God has not commanded in particulars, may be commanded. Locke engages in an extended argument about what has been abrogated by Christ, what has been denied to the magistrate, etc. Tracts, 15-20. See the extended discussion about law, including law from social contracts, in *Second Tract*.
58. Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 146-147, 211.
59. Goldie adds in a footnote that Locke used “propriety” and “property” interchangeably.
60. Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights*, 322. Grotius may be thinking of Cicero’s assertion that nature has “endowed every species of living creature with the instinct of self-preservation.” See *De Officiis*, Book I.IV, section 12.
61. See Pufendorf *De jure et gentium libri octo*.
62. This is, in part, the argument of Tierney.
63. See Madison’s discussion of faction in *Federalist* 10.
64. As one approaches the *Letter*, a few points should be kept in mind. The fact that it is written within a few years of the *Two Treatises* means that its political content should be considered “mature.” As far as its religious opinions, however, it is followed by the *Reasonableness* and the *Paraphrase*. Its religious opinions are not necessarily “immature,” but a more comprehensive study of Locke’s religious opinions would have to consider these last works on Christianity. Also, this thesis does not examine the much-neglected defenses of the *Letter*.
65. This is an explicit application of Protestantism’s anti-authoritarian inclinations.
66. *Letter*, 216. Though it is not definitive to argue that an author’s practice should be used to clarify the sincerity or meaning of a text concerned with religion, it will be noted here that Locke regularly attended corporate worship, took the sacrament, and took communion at his death.
67. Locke uses his attack on the idea of innate morality to address “infallibility” in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. See E.I.II.20, 85.
68. It is important to note that in the discussion of indifferent things that follows, Locke is not condemning indifferent practices so much as condemning the imposition of indifferent practices by any human authority. This is because “indifferent things” cannot ‘propitiate the Deity.’ See *Letter* 233-234.
69. Tracts, 11. See also Tracts, 23 and Locke’s distinguishing between what is necessary for salvation versus “ordinances of men and the products of their authority.” In Tracts 26-27, Locke uses the example of Jesus and a traditional argument about what he abrogated.
70. Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 151, 153.

71. Locke seems to join other tolerationists in defining the conscience not as the voice of God to discern objective truth but as a subjective faculty. This is certainly reinforced in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.
72. Because the focus is on political philosophy, the intent of this thesis is to ask what Locke thought was important to learn and important to do. The mechanics of *how* one learns and decides are therefore of only secondary importance.
73. This phrase, ethics of belief, is used as a title of Passmore, J.A. "Locke and the ethics of belief" and Wolterstorff. *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief*. I am not quite using it in the same way here.
74. Locke distinguished this from "blind" or "implicit" faith, which he would have called "enthusiasm." See E.IV.XII.6, 346.
75. Yolton, *The Two Intellectual Worlds of John Locke*, 2.
76. Ibid, 137.
77. As will be argued later in the chapter, Locke's fondness for asserting the Last Judgment as a threat against subversive political behavior would fall deaf on the ears of atheists.
78. Locke's verbatim quotations, allusions, and paraphrases are frequent, but he usually does not cite chapter and verse.
79. The volume of passages asserting this are too numerous to cite. But unlike the other attributes, this never wavers and is demonstrated at length on two occasions from the necessity of something having existed from all eternity. Locke argues that this is impossible to conceive of, though Hume disagrees.
80. See E.IV.X.4, 308; E.IV.X.6, 309 for examples of God merely being the most "something." See E.IV.III.18, 208; E.IV.X.10, 315 for examples of God as infinitely "something."
81. Hume, for example, directly engages Locke's main argument for the existence of God in *A Treatise of Human Nature* 1.3.3. The argument against inductive reasoning to the existence and attributes of a Creator is sustained in Section 11 of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Incidentally, Hume also fundamentally questions Locke's assertion that belief in future reward and punishment will undermine the foundations of society.
82. I am also not comfortable crafting a theory about a supposed esoteric motive in Locke's demonstration. In other words, because Locke's argument lacks validity he never really meant it at all. Given all that Locke seems to predicate not merely on the existence of God, but on the existence of a particular kind of God, this would require quite a bit of philosophical sophistication to provide all the necessary esoteric and exoteric damage control.
83. See also E.IV.III.18, 208 for another use of the Workmanship Argument.

84. Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, Ch. 6; Marshall, *John Locke : Resistance, religion and responsibility*, 170.

85. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 249-251.

86. Locke explains a simple idea as clear “when they are such as the Objects themselves, from whence they were taken, did or might, in a well-ordered Sensation or Perception, present them.” E.II.XXVIII.2, 487.

87. Psalm 16:11, though Locke here, as elsewhere, alludes to Scripture without direct citation.

88. Proverbs 13:12; Genesis 30:1; I Corinthians 7:9.

89. Yolton notes comments to this effect in the *Two Tracts* and the *Essays on the Law of Nature*. But these are earlier works and the second wasn't even intended for publication. See Yolton, *A Locke Dictionary*, 82. The better solution is to look within the *Essay*.

90. Matt 16:27, Romans 2:7.

91. Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, or Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* would be exemplars of the first camp. Forster *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, Parker *The Biblical Politics of John Locke*, or Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine*, would be exemplars of the second.

92. To bolster his case of one who refuses revelation where it would transgress this principle, Locke offers the case of St. Paul in I Corinthians 2:9.

93. Note that Locke does not just make up two claims that do not have to do with our sensation or reflection and say that they are beyond reasonable inquiry. He takes two claims from Christian revelation. The reason for that will be examined later in the project.

94. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 248-251.

95. Strauss tries to get some mileage out of a comparison to Hobbes by trying to make Locke's understanding of power equivalent to Hobbes. He cites Hobbes's *Leviathan* I.X.1, wherein Hobbes mainly refers to coercive power in the form of civil power. Locke here means nothing of the sort.

96. Strauss, *Ibid*, 249.

97. Whether or not Strauss's teleology is true to that of the ancients, I will leave for others to decide.

98. Contrasting human justice with divine justice, Locke tells the reader, “But in the Great Day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of; but shall receive his doom, his conscience accusing or excusing him.” E.II.XXVII.22, 463-464.

99. Nuovo, *John Locke and Christianity*.

100. Locke, *Correspondence* VII, 2935, 2953 cited in Marshall, *John Locke*, 430.
101. Ibid, 429-430.
102. Nuovo, Introduction to *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, p. xiv.
103. In a letter to Limborch, Locke says that he consulted Reformed authors and found that he could “by no means grasp what they say or what they mean; so discordant does everything in them seem to me with the sense and simplicity of the Gospel that I am unable to understand their writings, much less reconcile them with Holy Writ.” Letter to Philip van Limborch, 10 May 1695, de Beer (1826), vol. 5, no. 1901. Cited in Ibid, p. viii.
104. For a discussion of Locke and Socinianism, see Marshall (1994) pp. 342-350.
105. Various responses to the *Reasonableness* are excerpted in Nuovo, *John Locke and Christianity*.
106. Locke also seems to argue clearly for damnation, but this is not essential to the argument at hand.
107. This is not outside of Christian orthodoxy. “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.” --Vatican Council Document *Lumen Gentium*, 367. Also cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Section 847.
108. Locke elsewhere argues that such differences may be necessary, but are only important to the adherents within a particular denomination. See Letter, 232-233.
109. See Romans 1, for example.
110. Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 148.
111. Ibid, 149.
112. Ibid, 142-144.
113. Ibid, 164.
114. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 207-208.
115. Forster, *John Locke’s Politics of Moral Consensus*, 26-39.
116. T II.9, 103
117. Locke makes some thick appeals in his *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*. That includes, but is not limited to, repeating a popular argument of Reformed political theorists that Romans 13 only grants authority to legitimate rulers and never to tyrants. Though Forster gives no

evidence of knowing the Reformed discussions of this verse (in Rutherford, for example), he does catch another of Strauss's errors in presuming that there was only one interpretation of Romans 13 – to mandate unconditional support for religion. See Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, 237-239

118. Locke says of enthusiasm that “laying by reason [it] would set up revelation without it. Whereby in effect it takes away both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of them the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and conduct.” E.IV.XIX.3, 430. Locke writes, “I do not mean that we must consult reason, and examine whether a proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural principles, and if it cannot that then we may reject it.” E.IV.XIX.14, 438-439

119. This discussion of human sacrifice, oddly enough, contains a passage used by neo-Straussians to argue that Locke sees reason as “our only star and compass” to the exclusion of anything else – particularly Scripture. It is true enough that Locke contrasts reason with fancy and passion. But it is also true that he condemns the practice of human sacrifice from the intent of the Creator (nature) *and* from Scripture.

120. When Zuckert asserts that it is not a sincere argument, he must not only contend with Locke's use of this argument in the *Second Treatise*, but also his use of the argument in the *First Treatise* and all of Locke's other major works. See Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 193-5.

121. “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?”

122. This is similar to what he says in the *Essay* about God and the angels being no less free because they are governed by the necessary condition of goodness. E.II.XXI.50-51, 347-348

123. Though Locke says in T II.5 that natural reason acknowledges our right to self-preservation and subsistence, he emphasizes repeatedly that it is given and bounded in its use by God. The discussion alludes back to the *First Treatise* and the contest over what the Scripture says there.

124. In fact, Locke's first reference to an “appeal to heaven” is to protect and redress the innocent. T II.20, 109

125. “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”

126. Genesis 4:14

127. Locke explicitly prohibits using freedom to be a tyrant, for example.

128. These additional letters and defenses are listed in Chapter 2.

129. For example, Waldron in *God, Locke and Equality* asserts that Locke's Christianity is essential to his defense of equality and thus wonders about its metaethical implications for contemporary liberalism.

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VITA

Glenn A. Moots is an associate professor at Northwood University in Midland, Michigan. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan, a Master of Arts degree from Louisiana State University (in political science), and a Master of Science degree from Walsh College, and a doctorate from Louisiana State University (in political science). He has also taught at Louisiana State University, Saginaw Valley State University, and Walsh College. He regularly contributes to professional conferences and has been published in academic journals.