THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Early Stages of John Locke's Intellectual Development and the Theory of Adiaphora, or Things Indifferent

by

Troy Michael Wason

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2007

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-34049-3
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-34049-3

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the historical contextualization of John Locke's early intellectual development within the framework of the Restoration settlement debate concerning adiaphoristic matters. In particular, it looks at Locke's tolerationist compositions during this period of English history from 1660 to 1667. The *Two Tracts on Government*, written in the early years of the Restoration, were constructed within the set doctrines of the Church of England, steeped in ceremony and tradition, and safeguarded by secular authority against chaos and anarchy. Locke's formative years during the English civil war had taught him respect for authority and conformity. The predisposition of modern scholars to ignore these early works, or worse, place them outside the greater and lesser writings of the period has led to an inadequate explanation for Locke's ultimate defence of religious toleration and liberty of conscience. It is only by placing Locke's writings solidly inside the Restoration discourse surrounding the theory of *adiaphora*, where it is virtually nonexistent in secondary historical sources, is it possible to appreciate the philosophical shift from secular absolutist to religious tolerationist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance, guidance, advice, and direction provided by a range of wonderful and gifted individuals. My greatest debt of gratitude is to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Margaret J. Osler for her patient, tireless efforts in supervising not only this thesis, but also the obvious shortcomings of her student, who grew immensely under her guidance. I would also like to thank Dr. Martin Staum, Dr. Jack Macintosh and the administrative staff of the Department of History of the University of Calgary for their support and understanding.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been supported by many friends and colleagues in Calgary, both within and without the university community. Thanks then, to Judy Hinshaw, Richard Raffai, and Karen Vermette. I would also like to thank two long-time friends, Steve and Jane Wigglesworth, for hospitality received while writing my thesis.

I owe a particular debt of appreciation to two special individuals who were not able to see the completion of my work, my grandmother, Natalia Mayer and, my friend, Michael Beaton. Both of these individuals inspired me in ways they could never imagine. I can only hope they approve of my writings and understand the motives for my research.

My final expression of indebtedness goes to my mother, Pauline Mayer, who taught me the meaning of inward strength and determination. She has not always understood or approved of my decisions in life, but she has always fiercely supported me in everything I have done. This is truly the definition of those things deemed essential in life—love, charity, benevolence and justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

But death certainly, and life, honour and dishonour, pain and pleasure, all these things equally happen to good men and bad, being things which make us neither better nor worse. Therefore they are neither good nor evil.
~ Marcus Aurelius[1]

In 1660, when Richard Baxter, the Presbyterian divine, published *Catholick Unity: Or the only way to bring us all to be of one Religion*, it was not so much a matter of establishing order within the religious state as it was an effort to specify the terms he felt were fundamental to the inclusion of all Christian parties into a peaceful and unified Church. Once these essential principles were agreed upon, Baxter wrote, simple reason dictated that "it is the will of God that the Unity of the Church should not be laid upon *indifferent*, small, and doubtful points."[2] These indifferent things, designated *adiaphora* by the ancient Stoics, were originally neither good nor evil.

But, in the wider historical context of Restoration England, with its obvious Christian emphasis, the term takes on a slightly different meaning. A writer of this period, in other words, would be more inclined to classify as *adiaphora* those traditions and customs that were not deemed necessary for salvation (i.e. neither commanded nor prohibited by Scripture), but could be used for the edification of the Church and to glorify God. Or, as Gabriel Powel clearly defined them in the early years of the seventeenth-century, those things the Christian "may safely use, or abstaine from without any damage to our religion, or hurt to our conscience; which of themselves commend not a man the

---

[1] Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The Life, Philosophy, and Thoughts*, Trans., George Long, (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1853), II. 11.
[2] Richard Baxter, *Catholick Unity: Or the only way to bring us all to be of one Religion* (London, 1660), 323.

more before God being used, neither being refrained from, doe they make the abstainer the more acceptable unto the divine Majestie."[3]

It is in fact surprising that more inquiry has not been devoted to this topic, but from such scholarship as exists, there is little doubt that John Locke's early writings on religious toleration cannot be properly examined without positioning them squarely in the midst of this very same adiaphoristic context. In this study, therefore, it will be my intention to show that Locke's tolerationist compositions and respective intellectual developments were solidly grounded in the Restoration discourse surrounding adiaphoristic matters. They were not, as one biographer would have us believe, forged in the relationship between Locke and his future patron, Lord Ashley, whose political motivation for attacking the practice of religious persecution rested primarily in England's economic self-interest and not in the humanistic pursuit of adiaphoristic freedom and liberty of conscience for the Christian men and women of the nation.[4] This assertion makes it all the more probable that Locke's acceptance of intellectual tolerance was shaped by a close friendship, formed at the outset of the Restoration, between him and the Oxford moderate and virtuoso, Robert Boyle. But this demonstration has yet to be proved and will require further investigation to allow us to support this conclusion decisively.

To some extent, there has always been at least one distinct school of thought with respect to John Locke and religious toleration. The earliest perspective, spread and

---

[3] Gabriel Powel, *De Adiaphoris: Theological and Scholastical positions concerning the Nature and Use of Things Indifferent* (London, 1607), 4.
[4] Maurice Cranston, *John Locke: A Biography*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1957), 107.

promoted by the biographer, H.R. Fox Bourne, was that Locke had been a tolerationist at the onset of the Restoration and continued to be one throughout the remainder of his life. In the *Life of John Locke*, written in 1876, Fox Bourne made use of what proved to be faulty evidence to show that Locke continuously approved of a broader spiritual tolerance and the merits of a deeper understanding of the principles of Christian humanism. This hypothesis was then further perpetuated by scholars throughout the early decades of the twentieth century and has underscored the fact that little was known at the time of Locke's earliest thoughts on religious toleration.[5]

The evidence found in a mistakenly ascribed essay was eventually discredited in 1914 by H.F. Russell Smith, but the fallacy of this claim continued well into the 1950s until von Leyden, edited Locke's recently acquired letters and manuscripts, known as the Lovelace Papers, and laid to rest, what has been called the "myth of Locke's perpetual liberalism."[6] In turn, the newly discovered information offered intellectual biographers the promise of a fresh interpretation and corresponding conclusions, which they could use to displace Fox Bourne's flawed understanding of the subject.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Maurice Cranston's claim proved to be poles apart from Fox Bourne's theory. Initially, Cranston was of the certain opinion that there was little or no "evidence of Locke's holding liberal views before his introduction to Lord Shaftesbury in 1666."[7] But, by 1957, he had revised his position, a move which may

---

[5] Frederick C. Giffin, "John Locke and Religious Toleration," *Journal of Church and State*, 9 (1967), 378.
[6] Cranston, *John Locke*, 59.
[7] Maurice Cranston, "The Politics of John Locke," *History Today*, II (September 1952), 620. The reference to Lord Shaftesbury is an anachronistic mistake on Cranston's part, as Anthony Ashley

or may not have been a result of further analysis of the Lovelace Papers, but was clearly a softening of the conclusive tone in his initial findings. Thus, in *John Locke: A Biography*, Cranston says this:

> The world remembers Locke as a great theorist of toleration, but Ashley was a champion of toleration before Locke was, when Locke's views on toleration were indeed quite otherwise. This is not to say that Locke acquired his mature opinions on toleration from Ashley, for by the time he met Ashley Locke's views had come into line with his, but it was Ashley who made Locke give systematic attention to the subject and furthered his evolution as a liberal.[8]

He reiterated the now familiar viewpoint when he introduced some of Locke's writings in a collection: "The thing which set Locke on the road to revolutionary liberalism was a chance meeting at Oxford with a politician—a great statesman, as he later became, Anthony Ashley Cooper, afterward first Earl of Shaftesbury."[9]

In 1967, Frederick C. Giffin wrote an article entitled, "John Locke and Religious Toleration," where he cites the paragraph above and points out the obvious flaw in Cranston's approach to identifying the individuals or events responsible for "Locke's mature views on toleration." The difficulty with this line of reasoning, Giffin argues, is that although Cranston had shown that there were noticeable similarities in their later thoughts on toleration, he had not shown Shaftesbury to be the cause of Locke's change of mind on the subject.

> Yet neither Cranston nor any other authority on Locke has satisfactorily explained what led Locke to come out in favor of toleration. Was it because he was a

---

Cooper, raised to the peerage as Lord Ashley in 1661, did not have the title of 1st Earl of Shaftesbury created for him until 1672.

[8] Cranston, *John Locke*, 111.

[9] John Locke, *Locke on Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. M. Cranston (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 7.

> rationalist, a free thinker, an opponent of royal absolutism? Or was it for practical reasons? The problem remains open to conjecture.[10]

Unfortunately, this important matter of conjecture was not only left unresolved by Giffin, but also, one may argue, it has not been effectively dealt with in the four decades since he posed the questions.

In this sense, it would stand to reason that a new and very different model in which to place Locke's unpublished documents should have already emerged from the ashes of Fox Bourne and Cranston. Yet, we can see from many of the latest publications that invoke Cranston's vague description of the Locke-Shaftesbury tolerationist comparability, how persistent these scholarly traditions have become, even today. The problem, according to Jacqueline Rose, has been that most modern intellectual historians, including John Marshall, have exclusively treated Locke's early writings as preparatory texts to his later published works, and, thus, have been guilty of isolating his preliminary thoughts from the central polemical issue of Restoration adiaphorism, which I claim to be the foundation on which all else is built.[11]

The solution, therefore, must necessarily be found in the reconsideration of the vast differences of opinion found in both the greater and lesser works of the period. Only then can we truly comprehend how the different players interacted throughout the Restoration debates concerning adiaphoristic liberty and how Locke personally came to modify his own political and religious contentions.

---

[10] Giffin, "John Locke and Religious Toleration," 382.
[11] Jacqueline Rose, "John Locke, 'Matters Indifferent', and the Restoration of the Church of England," *The Historical Journal*, 48:3 (2005), 603.

By the seventeenth century, the onset of civil war had unleashed the twin destructive forces of persecution and intolerance. The calm and rational urgings of the Great English religious moderates, such as Viscount Falkland, William Chillingworth, and John Hales, were for the moment overwhelmed by a wave of zealous fanaticism. Religious sects, as they had been so often before, were persecuted for their failure to comply with the non-essential religious doctrines of the secular magistrate rather than finding common cause in the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. The following chapters will outline how intolerant acts of religious persecution and the inevitable shock of civil disorder profoundly influenced the early beliefs of John Locke. As Chapter 1 will explore, Locke was certainly affected by the events of the civil war, which led him to the irrational conviction that conformity in religious matters was essential to national unity and civil peace. But, perhaps even more importantly, he learned a life-long appreciation for strong government in the interest of civil and ecclesiastical stability.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine two distinct approaches to understanding the theory of *adiaphora*. First, the writings of Edward Bagshaw are analyzed to reveal many of the relevant issues surrounding the Restoration Settlement debate from the perspective of the nonconformists. Next, Locke's methodical refutation of Bagshaw's *Great Question* touches upon the almost paranoiac belief that unrestricted adiaphoristic liberty in ecclesiastical matters leads to civil unrest and religious disunity. The purely authoritarian position, favoured by Locke, was an apparent response to the traumatic events that preceded the Restoration. It was only when the monarchy is brought back to power and

the polemical fires of the settlement debate are momentarily doused that we begin to see his movement towards a doctrine of limited toleration.

Chapter 4 looks at some of the people and events that may have prompted Locke to alter his convictions with respect to the question of unconditional religious liberty and the subsequent rejection of unwarranted persecution by secular authorities. Just as the civil war focused Locke's attention on the problems associated with too much freedom of worship, the legislative reforms instituted during the Restoration showed him the dangers of placing too much power over the Christian conscience in the hands of an arrogant and absolute authority. At the same time, travel on the continent, intellectual discourse with learned and tolerant men like Robert Boyle, and further study of moderate writers such as Falkland, may have given Locke the inspiration to redefine his views of religious toleration.

CHAPTER I

THE YEARS OF PREPARATION

> *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.*
>
> *~ Titus 3:1*

On 28 June 1658, John Locke, then a young man of twenty-five, met the requirements as a Master of Arts at Christ Church, Oxford. This was a turning point in his life where he achieved recognition as a traditional scholar. The classical education he received from the University provided endless opportunities for ambitious young men, and Locke was no exception. The obvious decision would have been a career in law, as his father was an attorney and his brother, Thomas, had settled on a similar profession at the time. At Christ Church, the prospect of becoming a member of the clergy was also a viable option for those students willing to forego more lucrative positions in the professional world.[12] And, finally, the introduction of experimental philosophy, under the guidance of men like John Wilkins and Thomas Willis, as an alternative to classical texts of medicine had given students a new opportunity. That the young Locke was uncertain at the time of making any life altering decisions is a profound understatement, and, given the dramatic events that were to surround the restoration of the monarchy in the coming days and months, this diffidence should not be surprising or unexpected.

Some of the answers to Locke's future development may be found in a letter, responding to a request for his opinion on the subject of toleration made soon after he

---

[12] Cranston, *John Locke*, 74.

attained his degree. He made it clear that although toleration for men of different faiths was a commendable ideal and worthy of pursuit, it was simply not realistic. More practically, for obvious civil purposes and quite unconnected with religion, Locke reasoned, the "opinion of infallibility" professed by the papists was in direct conflict with the "security of the Nation" and, therefore, Catholics should never be afforded liberty of conscience or toleration.[13] Here were two themes that were to occupy his attention for the rest of his life. From that day onward his fame and influence steadily grew.[14]

The explanation and account of this undisputed growth and transformation will occupy our attention in subsequent chapters; in this chapter we examine the experiences of the first three decades of his life, which provided the intellectual foundations for much of his mature thinking and stimulated many of the ideas he carried with him throughout his life. That Locke made it into Oxford and received an education at all is one of those events in history that biographers, like Maurice Cranston, attribute to a fate, which provided "the indispensable preliminary to all that he achieved."[15]

Family Origins and Early Life

John Locke's unexceptional birth on 29 August 1632 at Wrington, Somerset, a small town south of Bristol, is often surprising to those who see only the greatness he achieved later in life. His father and mother each came from Puritan trading families, clothiers on the father's side and tanners on the mother's. The economic ascendancy of

---

[13] John Locke to S H [Henry Stubbe], [mid-September? 1659], *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols. + index, ed. E. S. De Beer, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), I, 75.
[14] Unlike many of his contemporaries, Locke did not seek out the notoriety usually given to those that published their works for public consumption.
[15] Cranston, *John Locke*, 7.

the county was already in the past, and the Puritan trading class settled much of the area.[16] The thatched cottage of Locke's birth is evidence of his modest beginnings and religious upbringing. The cottage, built next to the main north gate of Wrington Church, was especially convenient for attending lectures and services. There is little evidence available concerning the religious beliefs of Locke's mother Agnes, but the rebellious rector of Wrington Church, Dr. Samuel Crook, likely influenced her. This was the same individual who baptized Agnes Locke's firstborn into the hierarchical Church of England and probably questioned infant baptism as a sacrament.[17] Dr. Crook's Calvinism, founded in his mistrust of the Book of Common Prayer, does not provide sufficient evidence to prove estrangement from the mother church, but there were many instances of doctrinal difficulties between him and the Laudian bishop of Bath and Wells, William Piers.[18]

The people of Wrington had been bred on Dr. Crook's evangelism for many years and his puritanical influence in the region was notable. Thus, when Locke's mother brought him to be baptized in August 1632 there is no reason to suspect that Crook would have followed the historic liturgy and ceremonies as set forth in the common prayer book.[19] In turn, it is difficult to gauge the effect of Calvinist beliefs, taught by the gifted rector of Wrington County, upon Agnes Locke, but there is strong evidence that she might have brought up her two children as moderate Presbyterians in this unsettled

---

[16] Ibid., 2.
[17] Ibid., 1.
[18] John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.
[19] Cranston, *Locke*, 2; Puritans traveled for miles to hear Dr. Crook's sermons, which seldom occurred fewer than three times a day, as early as 1620.

period.[20] The story of Locke's paternal upbringing provides us with substantially more information on the religious and political influences affecting the philosopher in his early life.

Locke's father, John Locke senior, an attorney and small landowner, was not a financial success. He did, however, provide a comfortable existence for his family from his land holdings and work as a clerk and magistrate to the Justices of the Peace of the district. The foremost of the elder Locke's employers was the wealthy and influential Alexander Popham. The relationship between these two men, which lasted for the better part of twenty years, would be significant in the life of the younger Locke.

In 1634, Charles I of England issued the first writ for Ship Money. This tax, based upon an Elizabethan tariff, was imposed upon the country under the pretext of national defence. The truth was that the King, in 1629, had chosen to rule without the guidance of Parliament. The difficulty was that in the previous year Parliament had passed the Petition of Right, which forbade the ruler from taxing his subjects without their consent except in a state of emergency. The weakness of the Royal Navy and the constant threat of pirates on England's shores provided Charles with the desired crisis. If all went as planned he might never need to recall the peers and representative commoners again. The only piece missing in this obvious subterfuge was the collecting of the tax in the port towns and counties throughout the land.[21] This process fell upon the Justices of the Peace,

---

[20] Agnes Locke had three children; John being the eldest. The other two children were Peter, who died in infancy, and Thomas, who was born not quite five years after the birth of her first son. She died in 1654, when John was just twenty-two. In his lengthy writings, Locke made little reference to his mother or his brothers.

[21] Cranston, *Locke*, 15.

or their local representatives, who would be responsible for assessing proportionate tax rates for their territory of the country.[22] In the example of Bristol and the surrounding seaports, the individual whose sole duty it was to collect the tax locally was none other than the elder John Locke.

Prior to the imposition of Ship Money in 1634 Charles had often employed tax-farmers to collect his levies, but found that this method had been wasteful and unsatisfactory. In an ideal sense, the utilization of Justices of the Peace would likely prove to be more efficient and provide the monarchy the needed revenues to wield his powers without Parliament. In most instances, however, his attempts were met with harsh disapproval from the local magistrates, and this was particularly true in Somerset. That the fiscal policies of the Crown were censured is not particularly surprising given that the notion of Ship Money flew sharply against everything Parliament had stood for at the time and the individuals chosen to be tax collectors were likely to be of the parliamentary class.[23] As a result, Charles received only a fraction of the money he expected from this considerably wealthy district. The elder Locke himself was assessed only eight shillings and nine pence, an amount that was among the highest contribution of all the rateable persons in Publow, Pensford and the neighbouring parishes.[24]

By the appearance of the fourth writ in 1640, Charles was desperate for revenues to fight the Bishops' War with Scotland's Covenanters and invoked a measure brought on by dire circumstances. He was forced to call the Long Parliament for the first time in

---

[22] H. R. Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, 2 vols., (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1876), 6.
[23] Cranston, *Locke*, 15.
[24] Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, 7.

eleven years.[25] In his position as Justice of the Peace, Alexander Popham, the elder Locke's friend and patron, became the sitting member for Bath. In 1641 Parliament challenged the King's authority and fitness to rule in what has become known as the Grand Remonstrance, and civil war broke out shortly before Locke's tenth birthday.

Locke's father was made captain of a troop of horse in the regiment of volunteers raised by the now Colonel Popham in the Parliamentary Army. In the beginning this unit, with the aid of other cavalry units, did well in holding back the Royalist armies. Then, in the early months of 1643, the Royalists, backed by highly effective fighting forces and superior commanders proceeded to recover all of Somerset for the King.[26] In July, Colonel Popham and Captain Locke, fighting under Sir William Waller, were routed near Devizes by Royalist forces, under the leadership of Prince Rupert.[27] The only notable feat of Colonel Popham's regiment was the hostile anti-popery attack at Wells Cathedral in 1643.[28]

After the defeat of 1643, both men withdrew from military life. This fact is confirmed by the lack of evidence that they were part of the Parliamentary Army engaged in the recapture of Bristol in September 1645. Colonel Popham subsequently re-entered Parliament in October. Captain Locke, having found himself disadvantaged by the events

---

[25] The Bishop Wars of 1639 and 1640 were ready made for England's Puritans by Scotland's Covenanters, who, in 1637, had flatly rejected the introduction of an Anglican-styled Prayer Book into the Scottish Church against the advice of the senior bishops. In England and Scotland, Archbishop Laud's campaign to suppress Puritanism and impose conformity on the Church had provided a protest movement led by militant Protestants, who were angry at both the persecution of the godly and toleration of crypto-popery within the church. For these godly Protestants, the opportunity had arrived to purge the nation of papal impurities and establish the true reformed religion.

[26] Fox Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, 8.

[27] Cranston, *Locke*, 16.

[28] Marshall, *John Locke*, 4.

of the civil war, made a calculated effort to retrieve his position by taking on new civilian duties as clerk of the sewers for the county of Somerset.[29] This early experience, John Rogers speculates, may have alerted the younger Locke to the "advantages of keeping one's counsel in times of trouble and the importance of peace and toleration to civilized living."[30]

These happenings had other unforeseen effects on life in England. Colonel Popham, as a Member of Parliament, was now in a position to obtain a nomination for the son of his friend for admission to Westminster School, an institution that Parliament had taken under its control. Once the exclusive domain of Royalists, an ordinance was passed by Parliament on18 November 1645, charging those individuals, who thought as they did, with the administration of the school and abbey. This development naturally led to the opening of the school to young Puritan males.[31] Through the influence of Popham the fifteen-year-old Locke was admitted to Westminster School in the autumn of 1647.[32] This event "was the decisive beginning of a career from which all else flowed," Cranston tells us, and adds:

> The decay of Locke's father's fortunes was attributed to the Civil War, but if there had been no Civil War, Alexander Popham would have had no say in the running of Westminster School, and Locke would never have gone there; if Locke had

---

[29] Fox Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, 9.
[30] G. A. J. Rogers, *Locke's Enlightenment: Aspects of the Origin, Nature and Impact of his Philosophy*, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1998), 3.
[31] Fox Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, 17.
[32] The year of Locke's admission to Westminster seems to be either 1646 or 1647 depending on the biographer that you read. Fox Bourne gives 1646 while Cranston writes that he entered in 1647. Further, Richard Aaron follows Fox Bourne's lead and John Dunn appears to side with Cranston. I have chosen the year 1647, based on Cranston's evidence and the likelihood that Locke would have been fifteen years of age when admitted.

> never gone there, he would not have had the education which was the indispensable preliminary to all that he achieved.[33]

The influence of Locke's early education upon his mature philosophical views is without question. The academic training at Westminster and Oxford was indispensable to his development and would shape many of the ideas and attitudes that he held for the remainder of his life.

Westminster School

When Locke entered Westminster School he was exposed to a strict course of studies under the school's headmaster, Richard Busby. The great master, appointed to the position in 1638, managed to steer the school through many difficult times during his tenure of fifty-seven years. This success is clear from his working relationship with the Parliament appointed governors during the Cromwellian Interregnum, though he was a committed Royalist and devoted Anglican. What is clear, outside of the many unconfirmed exploits, is that Dr. Busby was dedicated to his students and the craft of teaching.[34]

Doctor Busby, known for his harsh discipline, followed a regimen of hard work and hard living for his pupils. Each day the students were expected to rise before six o'clock in the morning and were subjected to a daily barrage of grammar exercises that

---

[33] Cranston, *Locke*, 17.

[34] Dr. Busby reportedly told Charles II that he kept his hat on in the royal presence lest his boys see him acknowledge a higher authority than his own.

extended well into the evening.[35] They were taught Hebrew, Arabic and some elementary geography, but most of the time was spent on Greek and Latin lessons.[36]

Though Locke's early education proved beneficial later in his life, it is clear he disapproved of the methods employed at Westminster.[37] In *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1692), he expressed his discontent with learning a language by rote and neglecting the more useful skills required for trade and commerce:

> Can there be any thing more ridiculous, that a father should waste his own money, and his son's time, in setting him to learn the Roman language, when, at the same time, he designs him for a trade, wherein he, having no use of Latin, fails not to forget that little which he brought from school, and which it is ten to one he abhors for the ill usage it procured him?[38]

No doubt this style of educational teaching led Locke to a preference for private tutors.

The temptation by certain historians to view Westminster's strict discipline and Royalist sympathies as a means of purging devoted students, including Locke, of their "unquestioning Puritan faith" is somewhat simplistic.[39] The leap from this viewpoint to Cranston's statement that "Dr. Busby, the great conservative pedagogue, must be given the credit for having first set Locke on the road to liberalism" is misguided and inaccurate, as we shall see in analyzing the conservatism in his early *Tracts on Government.*[40] The reality is probably much closer to the compromise settled upon by

---

[35] Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, 20.
[36] Richard I. Aaron, *John Locke*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 3. Dr. Busby established the Latin pronunciation still current at Westminster.
[37] Marshall, *John Locke*, 5.
[38] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), § 164.
[39] Cranston, *Locke*, 19.
[40] Ibid., 19-20.

John Marshall, who hesitantly agrees with Cranston that "Locke may have begun to separate himself intellectually from his Calvinist upbringing" at Westminster.[41]

Locke's election as a King's Scholar in 1650 was the second significant step in his educational development. This minor election at Westminster provided him with an opportunity to seek a major election to a scholarship at Christ Church, Oxford, or Trinity College, Cambridge. In achieving such a distinction the student would be awarded a sum equal to more than half his expenses, and be given the prestigious title of scholar.

To become a King's Scholar, one had to succeed in the school challenge. Candidates would begin in school order, the student at the bottom of the list challenging the person above to expound doctrines of classical authors and to analyze rules of grammar and usage for particular words. If the person challenged failed, the challenger took his place. Among twenty candidates Locke placed tenth. The next two years proved to be rather uneventful in the young scholar's academic life, as he apparently prepared for the "second decisive step" of his career.[42]

In the spring of 1652 Locke became a candidate for a major election at Westminster. The competition for scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge was different from the competition for the minor elections. The major elections were determined more by the negotiations of others and less on the academic abilities of the students. Letters of recommendation, for example, were solicited from influential people and military officers. In one of Locke's earliest remaining letters to his father, he wrote:

---

[41] Marshall, *Locke*, 5.
[42] Cranston, *Locke*, 21-2.

> My humble duty remembered unto [you]. Yours by Mr. Wheeler I have received, and according to former order sent your letters [except] only those for Mr. Stapleton, which yet I have. That for Lieutenant-General Fleetwood I sent to Captain Smyth, who hath promised me to do his utmost. I doubt not much of the election with the help of some friends which I shall diligently labour for.[43]

He followed this letter with one to his former patron, Alexander Popham, who as before was looked upon as providing the impetus needed to complete the election process. In May 1652, Locke drafted a letter in Latin to his "Maecenas"[44] requesting his assistance once again:

> Bethink yourself therefore, O best of Maecenases, of all the affection, all the benevolence, all the good offices, too, with which you have hitherto encompassed and accompanied me. Remember, I beseech you, by whose supporting voice and by whose introduction I was once placed within these walls, and let me be permitted on the ground of that old favour now also to hope for and earnestly to solicit your patronage.[45]

The combination of Locke's academic potential and the influence of those negotiating on his behalf were enough to secure his election to a scholarship at Christ Church. In a list of six candidates, he was elected last.[46] He was to make Oxford his home for the next thirty years.

Christ Church, Oxford University

In November 1652, Locke finally found himself settling into the university life that he had dearly sought. The Oxford he discovered, however, would not be the same institution that participated on Charles' side during the Civil War. After Oxford fell to the

---

[43] Locke to John Locke, sen., 11 May 1652, *Correspondence*, I, 4.
[44] Gaius Maecenas, a wealthy patron of the arts, gave Horace an estate to support him so he was free to spend his time writing poetry. His name has become a byword for all well-connected and wealthy patrons.
[45] Locke to [Alexander Popham?], [May 1652?], *Correspondence*, I, 6.
[46] Cranston, *Locke*, 27.

Parliamentary Army of General Fairfax on 24 June 1646, the University was forced to consider the realities of its immediate circumstances and acknowledge the powers of the victors.[47] Fortunately, the surrender was peaceful and the city was saved from any permanent damage.[48]

During 1648-49, Parliament purged the universities of a large number of Royalist Heads of Colleges, Professors, Fellows and tutors who did not take the Covenant and had opposed the parliamentary forces in the recent war. Samuel Fell, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and Dean of Christ Church was removed after much resistance and replaced first by the Presbyterian, Edward Reynolds, and then John Owen, Oliver Cromwell's own chaplain.[49]

The appointment of Dr. Owen, the strong-minded Independent, was a much-needed tonic for the former Royalist institution that had suffered much during the war.[50] He immediately set upon restoring the prestige and honour of the University by reforming the academic curriculum that was still medieval in its approach. Such a policy,

---

[47] Ibid., 30.

[48] The "irretrievable vandalism" that was experienced at Cambridge was not repeated at Oxford, as Fairfax, who was deemed "a cultured man who esteemed learning," included in the Articles of Surrender a clause to the effect that "all Churches, Chapels, Colleges, Halls, Libraries, Schools ...shall be preserved from defacing and spoil."

[49] Edward Reynolds, the first Puritan Vice-Chancellor of Oxford as Dean of Christ Church, was ejected from office because he could not accept the Engagement of 1649, which was to prepare for a republic.

[50] Marshall, *Locke*, 5.; Anthony à Wood wrote: "He was a person well skilled in the tongues, rabbinical learning, Jewish rites and customs, had a great command of the English pen, and was one of the most genteel and fairest writers who have appeared against the Church of England." Anthony à Wood, *Athenae oxonienses: An Exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the University of Oxford*, ed. Philip Bliss (Oxford, 1813), IV. Col. 97.

executed with vigourous zeal and supplemented by the introduction of godliness, was bound to alter Oxford forever, for better or for worse.[51]

Locke, not unlike students of most generations, served notice early in his academic career that the education he was receiving was less than satisfactory. In a letter to Popham, he wrote:

> Were there not to be found here more then ordinary advantages, and did not this place yield daily increase and the most desirable thing in the world, I might well dislike my stay here as affording nothing answerable ... but that of learning and ... the worthies and most admired persons of former ages to converse with.[52]

The dreariness of the educational format did not change over the course of Locke's association with the University and he would later remark that "he lost a great deal of time at the commencement of his studies because the only philosophy then known at Oxford was the peripatetic, perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions."[53] Whatever the source of Locke's interest in philosophy, it did not arise from reading Aristotle or the Scholastics.

The academic discipline, under Owen, was considered severe and the religious discipline imposed upon the students even more so. The replacement of inconsequential ceremonies and academic dress by the new masters and temperance preaching had similar characteristics to many of the reforms instituted by William Laud, who as Vice-

---

[51] V. H. H. Green, *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964), 143.
[52] Locke to P. A. [Alexander Popham?], [late 1652?], *Correspondence*, I, 8.
[53] Aaron, *Locke*, 5. This sentiment was echoed by the Cambridge student and poet, John Milton (1608-1674), who wrote in 1641 that young men were trained in "nothing else but the scragged and thorny lectures of monkish and miserable Sophistry" and left with "such scholastical bur in their throats, as hath stoppt and hindr'd all true and generous philosophy from entering" and "crack't their voices forever with metaphysical barbarisms." John Milton, *The Reason of Church government urg'd against Prelaty*, (London, 1642), 62.

Chancellor of the University, had instituted, in 1629, strict disciplinary policies to bring Christian unity of faith to those members of English society who most surely required it—the student body.[54]

The Oxford men were also required to attend at least two sermons a day and give an account of these every Sunday evening to a lay person of conviction and humility personally assigned by Owen himself.[55] This practice helped to ensure that they listened carefully to what they heard and missed no opportunity to learn about salvation. In his own way the Dean of Christ Church was not only offering his students excellence in the arts but also charging each man with a personal obligation to find godly discipline through reasonable certainty of truth and moral conduct.[56]

The strict Calvinist preaching and discipline that were required of all students at Oxford was offset by the fair-minded toleration exhibited by Dr. Owen, who did not actively prohibit private practices of religion, including Anglicanism. For example, in June 1653 Parliamentary Visitors instructed the Heads of Houses to expel from their lists of undergraduates anyone who did not take seriously the Puritan faith. Not surprisingly, all of the students, including Locke, were found exempt from this deliberate exercise designed to eliminate any expressions of religious heterodoxy. This decision should not necessarily be seen as a reflection of the students' inward faith or belief in Calvinist doctrine, but simply as an indication of John Owen's commitment to the undergraduates'

---

[54] Cranston, *Locke*, 31.
[55] The Calvinist Independent, Thomas Cole, was designated as Locke's tutor during this period.
[56] Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, Pastor, Educator, Theologian*, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1971), 78.

liberty in religious worship in spite of political interference.[57] In Cranston's words: "He certified them all as being everything they should be."[58]

Owen, as a supporter of the full doctrine of religious toleration, found strength and purpose in the pages of Holy Scripture. The Bible, as all good Calvinists were aware, was open to examination and interpretation by those who chose to read by patient effort the face of knowledge with a clearer light.[59] There were no infallible visible judges of Scripture.

He, thus, sought to fortify this position by delivering daily sermons demonstrating that the intolerant claims of Christian Churches were based solely upon a lack of understanding of the nature of spiritual unity. The opinion of these churches, Owen believed, reflected the secular interests of men of authority, whose worldly ambitions determine their orthodox ideal of a National Church, but more often than not leads to a failure to focus on the common truths upon which all moderate men agree. He was persuaded, in other words, that every man has a plain right to choose his own religion according to his own fallible understanding of Scripture as long as his own pretensions do not lead him to go and disturb others.[60]

In 1656, the year Locke graduated as a Bachelor of Arts, Owen began a campaign within his own college to support his personal beliefs. Henry Stubbe the younger (1632-

---

[57] The liberality Dr. Owen granted to those from whom he differed on religious matters also extended to faculty.
[58] Cranston, *Locke*, 34.
[59] John Locke, *Two Tracts on Government*, ed. Philip Abrams, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 32. The following abbreviations will be used throughout to differentiate between the editor's introduction or one of Locke's two *Tracts*: *PTG*: preface to the *Two Tracts*, *FTG*: *First Tract on Government*, *STG*: *Second Tract on Government*.
[60] Cranston, *Locke*, 41.

1676), formerly a student at Westminster, wrote to Thomas Hobbes, the English philosopher, that Owen had given him instructions "to study Church government and a toleration and so to oppose Presbytery." He later recorded that all of the scholars from Westminster School and now at Christ Church (presumably Locke included) were "Dr. Owen's creatures" and had "promised to defend liberty of conscience and the other fundamentals of his government."[61] Placing his faith in the magistrate to uphold these guarantees of toleration, Owen attempted to convince the multitude of his promise.

> Although the Magistrate is bound to encourage promote and protect the Professors and Professions of the Gospel, and to manage and order civil administrations in a due subserviency to the interest of Christ in the world, and to that end to take care that men of corrupt minds and conversations do not licentiously publish and divulge Blasphemies and Errors, in their own nature subverting the faith and inevitably destroying the souls of them that receive them: yet in such differences about the Doctrines of the Gospel, or ways of the worship of God, as may befall men exercising a good conscience, manifesting it in their conversation, and holding the foundation, not disturbing others in their wayes or worship, that differ from them, there is no warrant for the Magistrate under the Gospel to abridge them of their liberty.[62]

The pledge did not hold as Owen resigned from the position of Vice-Chancellor in October 1657 and was removed from the Deanery by a Parliamentary committee in 1659.

The contention made by Fox Bourne and others, that Owen was "a direct teacher to Locke" and "a benefactor to all," should not be thought of as a certain proposition. Fox Bourne, himself, argued, "Never was there a time in which religious tyranny was so openly insisted upon as in those years, or so much rhetoric ...used in denouncing

---

[61] Locke, *PTG*, 32.

[62] John Owen, *Unto the Questions sent me last night, I pray accept of the ensuing Answer under the Title of two Questions concerning the Power of the Supream Magistrate about Religion, and the Worship of God; with one about Tythes, Proposed and Resolved.* (London, 1659), 5.

'pretended liberty of conscience'."[63] The same might be said of Locke during this same period. In a three-year span, he drafted a number of letters to his family and acquaintances making striking references to Quakers and exhibiting his intolerance of their "enthusiastic" behaviour. We need only sample a few of his letters to notice just how far he was willing to distance himself from the dissenters.

In first encountering Quakers, Locke at Westminster wrote to his father of the "most remarkable thing" that he had encountered since coming to the city. While observing a Quaker walking into Westminster Hall without his hat, Locke commented: "The rest of his brethren may do well to imitate him, keeping the head too hot being dangerous for mad folks."[64] Shortly, thereafter, in witnessing the judicial examination of the would-be prophet, James Nayler, a protégé of Quaker founder, George Fox, Locke observed that in answering questions posed by the judiciary they either did not answer "or did it with a great deal of subtlety besides the cover and cunning of that language, which others and I believe they themselves scarce understand." He concluded, by stating to his father: "I am weary of the Quakers."[65]

Locke's weariness of outward nonconformity continued as he prepared for his Master of Arts degree and subsequent election as a Senior Student of Christ Church in June 1658. In the final days before the death of Cromwell, the familial Puritan influences that had once been part of Locke's early life were now being laid aside. He had, as Fox Bourne observed, "learnt wisdom ...not dogma" from the energetic Welshman, Dr. John

---

[63] Fox Bourne, *Locke*, 73.
[64] Locke to John Locke, sen., 25 October 1656, *Correspondence*, I, 29.
[65] Locke to John Locke, sen., 15 November 1656, *Correspondence*, I. 30.

Owen.[66] But, from teachers like Dr. Edward Pococke, "the most outspoken royalist and episcopalian in the university," he was given something more tangible—an appreciation for authority, whether intellectual, spiritual, or political.[67]

The Settlement Debate Begins

There is little doubt that in the summer of 1659, on the eve of the Restoration, Locke was already contemplating a society suspended between two less than moderate extremes—secular authority and religious toleration. In a long letter addressed to his father, Locke disparaged the assertions of both traditionalists and nonconformists alike and looked to the authority of God, rather than men, to ease his insecurities in this world and the after-life:

> I hope I shall not be thought insensible for this serenity which I think ought to be the endeavour of every one that remembers there is a god to rest on, and an other world to retire into. I have taught my hopes to overlook my fears and suppress those troublers, and as I do not credit all the glorious promises and pretences of the one side, so neither am I scared with those threats of danger and destruction which are so peremptorily asserted by a sort of men which would persuade us that the cause of god suffers when ever they are disappointed of their ambitious and covetous ends. I hope I am to be pardoned on both sides if I am not quick sighted enough to see either that glorious fabric of liberty and happiness, or those goblins of war and blood which either side would persuade us they behold over our heads ready to drop down on us, that which I look to is the hand that governs all things, that manages our Chaos and will bring out of it what will be best for us and what we ought to acquiesce in, *I have long since learned not to rely on men.*[68]

Later that year, he bluntly remarked, in a similar tone:

---

[66] Fox Bourne, *Locke*, 77.

[67] Ibid., 59; Locke's overt fondness for the Regius Professor of Hebrew and Laudian Professor of Arabic is eloquently stated in the following glowing appraisal: "So extraordinary an example in so degenerate an age deserves, for the rarity, and, I was going to say, for the incredibility of it, the attestation of all that knew him, and considered his worth."

[68] Locke to John Locke, sen., 22 June [1659], *Correspondence*, I, 59. My emphasis.

> Where is that Great Diana of the world Reason, everyone thinks he alone embraces this Juno, whilst others grasp nothing but clouds, we are all Quakers here and there is not a man but thinks he alone hath this light within and all besides tumble in the dark.[69]

The despair in Locke's writings not only indicates his own personal feelings of trepidation and fear, but also may have mirrored the feelings of the nation as a whole. In the hostile intellectual climate created by the death of Cromwell, it is easy to understand the ecclesiastical and political uncertainty about what form of government would be chosen.

This anxiety would equally dictate the terms of religious worship for the people and toleration for those not necessarily inside the realms of power. The questions of religion confronting England were so critical, so emotional, and so personal in their consequences for the individual that the normally conservative discussion suddenly overflowed the conventional banks to cut new and permanent channels in English thought. Thus, as might be suspected, these uneasy times produced a surfeit of writings from hundreds of writers, laymen and learned, offering a multitude of abstract recommendations proposing lasting solutions to the impasse that threatened to strangle the political and religious life of the nation.

It is highly significant, therefore, that in the autumn of 1659, Locke accepted an invitation from his Christ Church contemporary, Henry Stubbe, to comment upon a piece that he had published in defence of religious toleration. The pamphlet entitled *An Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause; or a Discourse concerning the Rise and Extent of the Power of the Civil Magistrate in Reference to Spiritual Affairs* had the dual purpose of

---

[69] Locke to Tom [Thomas Westrowe?], 20 October 1659, *Correspondence*, I. 81.

providing the reader with a history of toleration and an appeal for its extension, based upon a similar line of reasoning set forth by Dr. Owen, that "where there is wanting an infallible Expositor of the mind of God (which being to be accepted upon Revelation is not to be discussed by Reason) there is not only cause for a Toleration, (for why should any be forced from what he holds to be true, unto that which another can not evidence but it may be false.)"[70] In other words, no possible objection of policy, reason, or divinity can or should be raised against religious toleration.

Stubbe also affirmed that, "what is Revelation to one, is but Tradition to another, and he who will believe every man that saith he is sent of Heaven, may himself, (unless chance be as prevalent as choice in soul concerns) go himself to Hell. Thus Pilates wife was obliged to believe God speaking to her. He was not bound to believe a woman speaking to him."[71] Every human being must strive in the end to retain absolute independence in matters of faith. It is clear from Stubbe's comments that the rise of individualism in the sphere of religion was becoming increasingly more apparent and would continue to undermine the policies of spiritual coercion found in church establishments.

---

[70] Henry Stubbe, *An Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause; or a Discourse concerning the Rise and Extent of the Power of the Civil Magistrate in Reference to Spiritual Affairs, &c.* (London, 1659), 42.

[71] Ibid., 40. Compare Stubbe's defensive argument to that of Locke's in Book IV, Chapter 18 of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, where Locke cautioned his reader to think for himself: "Thus far a man has use of reason, and ought to hearken to it, even in immediate and original revelation, where it is supposed to be made to himself: but to all those who pretend not to immediate revelation, but are required to pay obedience, and to receive the truths revealed to others, which by *tradition* of writings, or word of mouth, are conveyed down to them; reason has a great deal more to do, and is that only which can induce us to receive them."

Locke's reply to Stubbe's work bordered on admiration but was cautious in its approach to the subject. For this reason, it has been interpreted in different ways. If the letter to Stubbe is read, without taking into consideration Locke's early writings on the adiaphoristic controversy, it seems to support the idea of religious toleration as "practicable" and worthy of contemplation. Locke wrote:

> Carriers only be their guides, when you have added the authority of dayly experience that men of different professions may quietly unite (antiquity the testimony) under the same government and unanimously cary the same civill intrest and hand in hand march to the same end of peace and mutuall society though they have taken different way towards heaven you will adde noe small strength to your cause and be very convinceing to those to whome what you have already said hath left noething to doubt but whither it be now practicable.[72]

The single reservation that Locke had about Stubbe's policy of toleration was the extension of freedom to Catholics. Locke expressed this disagreement in the strongest terms possible, a position to which he would adhere throughout his life:

> The only scruple I have is how the liberty you grant the Papists can consist with the security of the Nation (the end of government) since I cannot see how they can at the same time obey two different authoritys carrying on contrary intrest espetially where that which is destructive to ours ith backd with an opinion of infalibility and holinesse supposed by them to be immediatly derived from god founded in the scripture and their owne equally sacred tradition, not limitted by any contract and therefor not accountable to any body, and you know how easy it is under pretence of spirituall jurisdiction to hooke in all secular affairs since in a commonwealth wholy Christian it is noe small difficulty to set limits to each and to define exactly where on be gins and the other ends.[73]

This letter, together with the works that will be examined in the following chapters, present a much clearer expression of Locke's attitude towards the political and religious

---

[72] Locke to S H [Henry Stubbe], [mid-September? 1659], *Correspondence*, I. 75.
[73] Ibid.

ramifications of such a clear and open policy of toleration. The appearance of liberalness disappears, and a more conservative and authoritarian Locke is revealed.

Although Locke was merely commenting on the philosophical and historical writings of an academic colleague, it is well to remember that his mind would have assuredly been on actual events taking place in England and the continent. The death of Oliver Cromwell had left a leadership vacuum that his son, Richard, was considered ill fit to fill, and it soon became evident that Richard lacked both the skill and fortitude to fulfill the solemn responsibility of guiding the three kingdoms through turbulent and difficult times. The inevitable forced resignation of Richard Cromwell, as the head of the Protectorate and leader of the Commonwealth created a power struggle among Presbyterians, Independents, and Episcopalians that threatened to lead the nation into anarchy. Without the indisputable leadership abilities of Oliver Cromwell, the task of governing fell to the generals, who were ill prepared and lacked traditional training in statecraft.[74]

Not surprisingly, Locke despaired for the state of the nation and likened it to a ship afloat without a captain. "A ship," he emphasized, "is no improper name for this Island for surely it hath no foundation, it is not firm land but hath been floating these many years and is now putting forth into a new storm, ill victualed, ill tackled, and the passengers striving for the helm. Oh for a Pilot that would steer the tossed ship of this

---

[74] George Macaulay Trevelyan, *England Under the Stuarts*, (London: Methuen, 1949), 293.

state to the haven of happiness!"[75] Less than six months later Locke would see his wish granted. England would again have a Stuart monarch, Charles II, at the helm.

After the failure of the generals to construct a lasting peace, a compromise of necessity was required to prevent the country from plunging into another bloody civil war.[76] To their credit, it was the Presbyterians, who found themselves in an unforeseen position of power that made the initial effort towards conciliation. Their original intention was to limit the participation of the Independents in any future parliaments, whom they viewed as less than godly and peddlers of republicanism. The more likely reason was that moderate Presbyterians, like moderate Anglicans, were in favour of a unified National Church. Hence, the Presbyterian ministers furtively promised the Episcopalians to restore the monarchy in exchange for their support. Not surprisingly, the Royalists, who had been shut off from all positions of power for over a decade, graciously accepted the offer. The Churchmen humbly replied:

> We reflect upon our sufferings as from the hand of God, and therefore do not cherish any violent thoughts or inclinations against any persons whatsoever who have been in instrumental in them; and if the indiscretion of any particular persons shall transport them to expressions contrary to this general sense, we shall disclaim them.[77]

The wholehearted acceptance of divine providence in the minds and hearts of certain ambitious individuals would prove to be a powerful tool in reestablishing the church party.

---

[75] Locke to _____, [Thomas Westrowe?] 8 November [1659?], *Correspondence*, I. 82.
[76] Trevelyan, *England Under the Stuarts*, 293.
[77] Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans; or, Protestant Nonconformists; from the Reformation in 1517, to the Revolution in 1688: comprising an account of their principles; their attempts for a farther reformation in the church; their sufferings; and the lives and characters of their most considerable divines*, 5 vols. (London: William Baynes and Son, 1822), 4: 224-5.

The time spent in political and religious purgatory and the impending return of Parliament and King together were also accepted as a fortuitous and positive omen for the exiled Anglicans. Although, they would yet have to wait a number of years before episcopacy replaced presbytery and the uniformity of liturgy would once again be consolidated around the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Bishops believed their return to power was not only imminent but divinely ordained.

One could, of course, question the wisdom of entertaining such a notion in the first place. But given the fact of its existence, it was conceivable, as Anne Whiteman concludes, that there was, at least, spiritually, little difference between many of the Episcopalians in the Church of England and the Presbyterians, Independents, and "even some of the Separatists and Sectaries." The Presbyterians, she notes, stated among other things, that

> wee takeing it for granted that there is a firme agreement betweene our brethren and us in doctrinall truths of ye Reformed Religion, and in the substantiall parts of Divine Worship; and that the differences are only in some various Conceptions about ye antient forme of Church Gover[n]ment, and some particulars about Liturgy and Ceremonies ...[78]

In the face of such similar views, there appeared to be reason for optimism among large segments of the population. The challenge of the new religious settlement, therefore, was to confront the controversies of the past directly and, almost incidentally, discuss the realities of an increasingly complex world. The motivation for change depended upon the will of the people to come to terms with these uncertain conditions and adjust their belief system accordingly.

---

[78] Anne Whiteman, "The Restoration of the Church of England," in *From Uniformity to Unity 1662-1962*, ed. Geoffry F. Nuttal (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 54.

Conclusion

It was commonly accepted that religious conformity was necessary for the maintenance of order in the state. Locke's early years had taught him the reasonableness of this orthodox thinking, which was continuously reinforced in his mind. Religious liberty, Locke suggested in his earliest letters, had only brought harm to the nation, something abundantly proven in the past when it permitted freedom of worship to sects that differed from the established religion. The state, embodied in the monarchy, had always defended by law the religious life of the nation, which also meant that it protected the nation from civil disorder. Obviously, this nostalgic perception was shared, at least at the time of the Restoration, by a vast majority of Locke's compatriots, who had grown tired of the political instability caused by religious conflict.

The necessity of a new religious settlement had once again complicated the situation. If, as the Presbyterians suggested, the dominant groups differed little in the essentials of religious doctrine, how far must each of them compromise their thinking to accommodate the opposing views with respect to the non-essentials? That there were other problems to confront prior to any sort of settlement, such as the adoption of a particular form of church government and the settling of ministers, is unquestionable, but the long-standing dispute concerning things indifferent in religious worship often dominated the discussions of both clergy and laity alike. It is in this spirit that I hope not only to capture and reveal in the complexity and the depth of the debate surrounding the theory of *adiaphora* during the upheavals of the Restoration, but also to provide context for the subsequent development of Locke's views.

CHAPTER II

FREE AND ARBITRARY

> *Each party is filled with fury against the other because each hates its neighbours' gods, believing that none can be holy but those it worships itself.*
>
> *~ Juvenal, Satire XV*

The purpose of the next two chapters is to draw attention to the many ways in which the doctrine of *adiaphora* was understood in the early years of Restoration England. As with any question of importance, there are always two opposing sides to the question. In these sections each will be considered independently, returning to a chronological progression in the final chapter when recounting the historical context in which they developed.

The investigation of non-essentials in religious worship during this period is a complicated task for several reasons. One is that the term "adiaphoron" does not lend itself to a precise definition.[79] The second reason is more vague and is related to established standards in Locke scholarship. One searches in vain for the entry "adiaphoron" in indexes of scholarly publications on Locke; it is simply not a household word in the true Lockean sense, as are common themes on *the nature of knowledge, the origin of ideas, the foundation of morality, divine and human law* and *the origin of civil society.*[80]

---

[79] Bernard J. Verkamp, *The Indifferent Mean: Adiaphorism in the English Reformation to 1554*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1977), 15.

[80] There are only three entries in the John Locke Bibliography, published on the Internet by John C. Attig, under the heading of "things indifferent", which includes the paper by Edward Bagshaw written in 1660.

"Secular" is a word that a majority of Locke scholars have little reservations about using when discussing Lockean thought. Unfortunately, few modern writers use the term "religious" with the same intensity or regularity.[81] This preference has not always been the case. Around the turn of the eighteenth century, for example, admirers and critics alike were more apt to discuss Locke's writings for their religious implications, rather than for their political or social ideas, a situation that ultimately required him to defend himself against his defamers.[82] Curiously, the modern debate has been largely restricted by the "pursuits of political philosophers and historians" who have tended to focus on the "secular" rather than the "religious" aspects of Locke's extensive manuscript sources. The availability of "copious" selections of Locke's writings on religion, it has been suggested, may prove to restore the balance in Locke scholarship.[83]

This debate keeps alive an important question, namely, to what extent should terms not used by persons in the past be used when we attempt to explain what those persons meant? This question applies to the terms "secular" and "religious" as well as to the term "adiaphoron". The theory of *adiaphora*, for instance, although not necessarily absent from discussion in primary documents, is virtually nonexistent in secondary sources. Should this fact preclude its usage when discussing the history of ideas in the seventeenth century, or any other period for that matter? The answer would depend entirely upon its relevance to the subject matter. Or, perhaps, the idea is not readily

---

[81] John C. Biddle, "Locke's Critique of Innate Principles and Toland's Deism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37 (1976), 411.
[82] John Locke, *John Locke: Writings on Religion*, ed. Victor Nuovo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), xv.
[83] Ibid., xvi.

apparent without searching for subtle, yet important references within the multitude of documents written during this important period of history. The adiaphoron concept captures the complexity of many of the issues that emerged from the beginnings of the Henrician Revolution of the English Reformation through the Restoration of Charles II. Indeed, as we shall see, the debate over things indifferent was part of the broader intellectual, religious, and political context in which Locke and his contemporaries were at home.

Adiaphoron in Restoration England

The doctrine of *adiaphora* was common during Locke's time. Although it is impossible to measure with any degree of certainty the presence of discussion among the general public, the different contexts in which the idea presents itself show how widespread the notion was, at least among the cultured elite. It was a concern of politicians, public speakers, philosophers, religious leaders, and, for our purposes, academics within the university community. The large number of argumentative pamphlets on both sides of the controversy, particularly during the Cromwellian Interregnum, reflects a general cultural preoccupation of the English Reformation.[84] That

---

[84] See especially Gabriel Powel, *De Adiaphoris: Theological and Scholastical Positions, concerning the Nature and Use of Things Indifferent*; Francis Mason, *The Authority of the Church in making Canons and Constitutions concerning things indifferent* (Oxford, 1634); Laurence Womock, *Beaten oyle for the lamps of the sanctuarie, or, The great controversie concerning set prayers and our liturgie examined in an epistle to a private friend: with an appendix that answers the paralell and the most materiall objections of others against it : unto which are added some usefull observations touching Christian libertie and things indifferent* (London, 1641); and John Williams, *The case of indifferent things used in the worship of God: proposed and stated by considering these questions: Qu. I. Whether things indifferent, though not prescribed, may be lawfully used in divine worship? (or, whether there be any things indifferent in the worship of*

modern scholars mostly choose to ignore the concept of adiaphorism should be regarded as a general disservice to our understanding of the period, and particularly to the history of Locke's thought.

The easiest way to illustrate the complexities found in the theory of *adiaphora* is to analyze closely two diametrically opposed viewpoints on the lawfulness of the Christian magistrate imposing his authority in the realm of indifferent things in religious worship. In this instance, the champion for the right of conscience in adiaphoristic matters of religion was a sometime Oxford student and ordained minister, who had too often become embroiled in highly contentious issues concerning authority and discipline. The uncharacteristic role of the defender of traditional, orthodox opinion fell upon the unseasoned shoulders of our subject, the historic and future "founder of liberalism." Yet this apparent paradox should come as no surprise as we have already observed Locke's enthusiasm for the return of the status quo and the authoritarian role of the monarchy in all corporeal as well as spiritual matters.

While there is no clear indication prior to the Restoration of Locke's religious affiliation, we can say with strong probability that by 1660 he had at least an outward inclination towards the Church of England with respect to its appreciation for tradition and authority in the spiritual and political domains. As Locke's response was a result of personal reflections, based on the readings of contemporary polemicists, and subsequently a determined disagreement with the published views of a professed Independent, I will discuss the finer points of his assertions in the next chapter. The

---

God?) Qu. II. Whether a restraint of our liberty in the use of such indifferent things be a violation of it? (London, 1683).

examination of the nonconforming perspective will be our first task, as it is only by taking that view into account that the distinctness of their respective positions can be properly appreciated.

Edward Bagshaw, Minister of the Gospel and Nonconformist

Locke's forthright and authoritarian expressions on the question of toleration were provoked by the publication of a modest pamphlet by Edward Bagshaw the younger (1629-1671) on 15 September 1660, a few short months after Charles' Restoration. Bagshaw called upon his fellow Oxonians to prove themselves "sober and impartiall men," who "may be prevailed upon, if not to alter the Judgment, yet at least to moderate the Passions of some, who would put out our Eyes, because we cannot see with their Spectacles; and who have placed Ceremonies about Religion, a little too truly as a Fence."[85] Not long thereafter, Locke wrote in answer to the same pamphlet that "men would be persuaded to be so kind to their *religion*, their *country* and *themselves* as not to hazard again the substantial blessings of *peace* and *settlement* in an over-zealous contention about things, which they themselves confess to be little and at most are but indifferent."[86]

Whether the moderation to which these two well-meaning Christ Church students aspired was ever achieved can be debated, but it may be said they were both seeking a peaceful resolution to a conflict that had plagued English Protestants from the beginning—albeit from two distinct perspectives. Above all, the message they sought to

---

[85] Edward Bagshaw, *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship*, (Oxford, 1660), iii.
[86] Locke, *FTG*, 120.

convey should be seen as a passionate plea to bring about a sense of balance between the essentials and non-essentials of the Christian religion in England. The tragedy in this era of political, social, and religious uncertainty was that what was secondary in importance in doctrine and worship assumed major importance as the line between the newly restored religious order of the Anglican Church and those displaced nonconformists hardened.[87]

While Edward Bagshaw was not the only English pamphleteer to trumpet the doctrine of *adiaphora* in defence of religious liberty, either before or after this period, he was noticeably determined to make a lasting impression. Hence, in Bagshaw, the nonconformist, we discover an individual not content merely to linger in silent obscurity, but someone who felt it necessary to communicate his learned religious views publicly despite the consequences of expounding potentially seditious beliefs during dangerous times.

Throughout many of his early writings, Bagshaw displayed the prevailing nonconformist thinking in his detailed discussions of the role of the Christian magistrate in the Church. The sovereign, he argued, had an important role as the temporal head of the Church and should actively suppress any flagrant abuses, but he should not attempt to meddle in questions of faith. Nor should he seek to impose a rigid conformity upon the Church.[88]

---

[87] The designation 'nonconformist' will be used to identify post-restoration Puritans and Independents, as they both became excluded from the Church of England in 1662.
[88] W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England: From the Accession of James I to the Convention of the Long Parliament (1603-1640).* 4 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1936), 3: 233.

In *Saintship No ground of Soveraignty* published during the time of the negotiations leading to the Restoration, Bagshaw took the "Preachers of the Gospel" to task for leading the people back down the road towards Popery. In Bagshaw's reasoned judgment, there was minimal difference between the Presbyterians' ascription of the Elect or "The Godly" and their subsequent elevation to "Governors" on earth and that of the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Infallibility: Satan "directly claiming the glory of the world as his own" and the Antichrist's "Doctrine of making Christs Kingdom an Earthly Monarchy." He maintained that the Scriptures plainly teach us that it is against all things Christian "to make Christ a temporal Prince, and under the notion of advancing him, to exalt our selves, and Lord it over others."[89]

Bagshaw was fearful of spiritual tyranny, and consciously sought to limit the power of the temporal ruler in religion. He sensed that liberty of conscience, a principle of profound importance, particularly "in times of so eminent danger," was being used by the Presbyterians as a tool to negotiate a settlement with the Royalists.

> Shall those who were affrighted at the shadow of a Lyon, not tremble to hear him roaring? What folly is it to flee from the tail of the Dragon, and yet not be afraid when we perceive his sting? Let us not be mistaken, it is not the garb or dress of Ceremonies, it is not this or that form of Worship, which presently makes it Antichristian, but it is the challenging a power to impose them upon others.[90]

It is highly improbable that the ruling Presbyterians would have heeded the prescient words of this newly ordained vicar from Oxfordshire, even in the unlikely event they were aware of him. Regrettably, he was considered by many surrounding him to be "self-

---

[89] Edward Bagshaw, *Saintship No ground of Soveraignty: or a Treatise Tending to prove, That the Saints, barely considered as such, ought not to Govern*, (Oxford, 1660), 56.
[90] Ibid., 55.

conceited," stubbornly resistant to authority, and frequently subject to fits of violent temper.[91]

These charges were further substantiated by Dr. Walter Pope, proctor of Christ Church, Oxford, when recounting the attempted repeal of the University statute requiring "the wearing of Caps and Hoods." In a lengthy account of the young divine's purported actions against the "Reliques of Popery," Pope claimed that the

> Godly Party ... to effect this their design, they sent an Envoy to me to engage me to comply with them, well knowing that without my concurrence their design would prove abortive. The Person whom they employed was a Schoolfellow and intimate Friend of mine, who altho' the Son of a Royalist, upon some disappointments, especially a great one, that happened to him at *Westminster* by the means of Mr. *Busby*, ... I say, upon this, and other Misfortunes, he became a Presbyterian and Commonwealths-Man, if this addition be not superfluous. He was a Man of Learning, and knew it, and very hot and zealous in a way."[92]

Bagshaw's unstable confidence, as we shall observe, was brought about in no small part by some unusual and tragic events that marred his early life and contributed to his later serious writings on toleration.

Bagshaw was born into a well-to-do family in Broughton, Northhamptonshire, in 1629. His father, Edward Bagshaw the elder, had been educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, where the Puritan writer Robert Bolton tutored him. After obtaining his B.A., the senior Bagshaw entered the Middle Temple and eventually settled in as one of its benchers. In 1639 he was elected Lent reader and following in the footsteps of his distinguished mentor delivered two lectures condemning the interference of bishops in

---

[91] *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Bagshaw, Edward."

[92] Walter Pope. *The Life of the Right Reverend Father in God Seth, Lord Bishop of Salisbury, and Chancellor of the Most Noble Order of the Garter*, (London, 1697), 35. See Edward Bagshaw's personal account of the incident in *A True and Perfect Narrative of the Differences between Mr. Busby and Mr. Bagshawe.*

the civil affairs of men. Not surprisingly, the rancorous speeches attracted the attention of the authorities, most notably Archbishop Laud, and the senior Bagshaw was forbidden from repeating them in public. Ironically, the notoriety brought about by the publicity he received helped in Bagshaw's election to the Long Parliament that began on 3 November 1640.[93]

It is uncertain as to which events provoked a change of mind in the elder Bagshaw, but it was not long after that he left Westminster to join the King in Oxford, who had called another Parliament for the sole purpose of opposing the rebels in London. When the parliamentary army had taken Oxfordshire in 1644, he was taken prisoner and committed to the King's Bench prison in Southwark, London for a period of two years, where he continued to write in favour of the majesty and the merits of a state church. Though the remainder of his life was spent in relative obscurity, he did live to see the return of the monarchy and the re-establishment of traditional Anglicanism.[94]

That Bagshaw's son should spend the better part of his life agitating against authority should come as no surprise. The precedent for unruly behaviour was set early in his life and would appear to have been self-perpetuating. From expressions of discontent with the vice-chancellor of Christ Church to outright "intolerably impudent, saucy and refractory" practices towards university censors, Edward Bagshaw the younger garnered a seemingly well-deserved, scandalous reputation for questioning the limits of institutional power in both civil and spiritual affairs.[95]

---

[93] Wood, *Athenae oxonienses*, IV. 619.
[94] Ibid., IV. 619.
[95] Ibid., IV. 944.

The defining moment of Bagshaw's early life came in 1656 when the Dean of Christ Church, John Owen, personally nominated him for the position of second master of his former school, Westminster. Upon his election, Bagshaw found himself immediately at odds with the head schoolmaster, the infamous Dr. Busby, who by then had established Westminster as his own personal fiefdom. Among the many accusations made with respect to the behaviour of the young master was sitting in church with his hat on, disrespect shown to the learning of Arabic, and the devaluation of the headmaster's teaching of Greek grammar. These "petty" incidents, according to Bagshaw, were merely cover-ups for the actual grounds for his eventual dismissal, which included notifying the school governors of alleged improprieties undertaken by the headmaster in the discharging of his duties and responsibilities.[96] The end result was predictable, as even Bagshaw readily acknowledged in a letter to those same governors:

> I was very sensible when I first appeared before your Honours, that I had little hope to prevaile in a cause, where Mr. Busby's Personall Merit, and long Prepossession of your Honours Favour, were Arguments enough to deterre any from opposing his Desires.[97]

The disappointment of the dismissal was to have a lasting effect upon the general disposition of the young scholar, who soon retired his academic dress for that of a man of the cloth. On 3 November 1659, Bagshaw was ordained as the vicar of Ambrosden, in

---

[96] Edward Bagshaw, *A True and Perfect Narrative of the Differences between Mr. Busby and Mr. Bagshawe, the first and second Masters of Westminster-School, written long since, and now published, in Answer to the Calumnies of Mr. Pierce*, (London, 1659), 4.
[97] Ibid., 13.

Oxfordshire, by Bishop Brownrigg of Exeter and continued in this position until the time of the Restoration.[98]

As the son of a committed Royalist and confident of his own "merit and abilities," Bagshaw looked forward to receiving a "considerable preferment" from the newly restored king.[99] When this advancement did not occur, he returned to London "seven times more imbittered against ecclesiastical and kingly government."[100] It is conceivable that these events prompted him to write extensively on a number of interrelated topics including heresy, infallibility, and the powers of the church and state.

In *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship* (1660), the first tract in a three part series considering the idea of liberty of conscience, Bagshaw developed more completely his notions concerning the relationship between the civil power and religious worship. He published the pamphlet anonymously and followed lines of argument similar to those popularized by many of the earliest English reformers. In this treatise, Bagshaw not only followed an established tradition, but also eagerly took a stand in the controversy over *adiaphora*, specifically the wearing of academic formalities in full convocation.[101]

---

[98] *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Bagshaw, Edward."
[99] Wood, *Athenae oxonienses*, IV. 945.
[100] Pope, *The Life of the Right Reverend Father in God Seth*, 35.
[101] In January 1661, Bagshaw's colleagues from Christ Church removed all of the offending surplices they could find from the chamber under the common Hall, "smeared them with muck from the privy," and buried them deep inside the sewers in Peckwater Quad.

The Nonconformist Critique of Ceremony and Ritual in Worship

The thirty-one year old student argued, largely from scriptural evidence that the Christian, like the Jew and Muslim, must be left to his own conscience with respect to religious ceremony and ritual.[102] And though the non-Christian will "certainly perish in it," the Christian magistrate cannot impose his authority upon those things "which concern not the substance of his Religion." These things, which he deems not necessary, are by "their own Nature *Indifferent.*"[103]

In assessing Bagshaw's contribution to the settlement debate, we cannot escape the historical realities of the period. It would be difficult to find an author in the seventeenth century who did not recognize the supreme power of God to legislate in all matters of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The appeal to scripture as the ultimate authority, therefore, is not surprising or unexpected. Thus, the importance of the debate cannot be measured by the intensity of the arguments generated, but by the significant issues it raised.

The nonconformists, whether Presbyterian or Independent, preferred simple expressions in prayers, gestures, and vestments, while the Anglicans desired set forms of liturgy and grandness in ceremony and ritual. The grey area was the degree of authority that was to be given to God's representative on earth, the magistrate, to legislate in such important matters. Hierarchical governance, for most writers of this period, not only provided a basis for agreement, but also paradoxically the greatest source of contention.

---

[102] Locke, *PTG*, 4-5.
[103] Bagshaw, *The Great Question*, 3.

How much liberty should the magistrate allow the individual while still maintaining the peace and security of the majority?

Indifferency in Bagshaw's interpretation separated itself into two convenient categories: Those pure decrees, such "as the *Time* and *Place* of meeting for Religious Worship" and those regulations that "by Abuse have become occasions of Superstition," such as "*Bowing at the Name of Jesus, the Cross of Baptism, Pictures in Churches, Surplices in Preaching, Kneeling at the Sacrament, set Forms of Prayer*, and the like."[104] Men only need to be persuaded by their own conscience of the lawfulness of these ceremonies and to choose accordingly whether to practice them or not. As these acts have little or no moral consequences, the Christian magistrate may not lawfully force any individual to perform them.

Once Bagshaw had made it clear that ceremonies were not to be imposed because the magistrate could not legislate those actions that God had "left free and arbitrary" it was incumbent upon him to set forth the reasons for coming to this conclusion. In drawing upon the scholastic training that Oxford had afforded him, Bagshaw presented to his "Christian and candid reader" four fundamental tenets to further his position and solidify his nonconforming ideologies.

Bagshaw's first substantial argument against the imposition of things indifferent rested on the premise that God would not have us serve against our will and that the enforcement of any unlawful acts by the Christian magistrate would contravene the Law of God. To be Christian is to enjoy a freedom from compulsion and to not be is contrary

---

[104] Ibid.

to the spirit of religion. The magistrate, by imposing his religion upon his fellow Christians, through the use of the tools at his disposal, such as fines, imprisonment and torture, is disrupting the sole objective of the worshipper—the liberty of serving God, as "his conscience prompts him so." The freedom to worship is the essence of religion. "For God as he loves a *chearfull giver*, so likewise a *chearfull Worshipper*, accepting of no more, than we willingly performe."[105] Thus, even if the magistrate believes himself to be true in his views, he must not impinge upon the liberty of his subjects to follow their own conscience in matters of religious worship. [106]

Secondly, Bagshaw asserted that Scripture contains "many places" where the Saviour strongly protests "against the rigid and imposing Pharisees, for laying yokes upon others, and therefore invites all to come unto him for freedom." The imposition of things indifferent, he argued, is "directly contrary to Gospel-Precept." Citing such examples as Freedom in Christ and the exhortation to cast away the yokes of bondage by those who are weary and burdened, Bagshaw maintained that, freedom must be understood as not only from sin, but from "all human impositions."[107] In understanding freedom to mean that of freedom from the yoke of law, it is not difficult to see how nonconformists drew upon the Gospels to shore up their arguments. This is particularly

---

[105] Ibid.

[106] Bagshaw's discussion of the spiritual sovereignty of the individual Christian is similar to that of John Milton, who wrote: "Thus then if church-governors cannot use force in religion, though but for this reason, because they cannot infallibly determine to the conscience without convincement, much less have civil magistrates authority to use force where they can much less judge; unless they mean only to be the civil executioners of them who have no civil power to give them such commission, no nor yet ecclesiastical to any force or violence in religion." John Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes; shewing that it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compel in matters of religion, etc.*, (London, 1659), 15-16.

[107] Bagshaw, *The Great Question*, 3.

true in the Apostle Paul's instruction to the Galatians, where he said: "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of bondage."[108] The yoke of bondage, or slavery, to which Paul referred is that of Mosaical ceremonies, which even though they had divine origins and were subsequently eliminated by the coming of the Saviour, were largely indifferent, or adiaphoristic.[109] If these ancient rites, which were authorized originally by God himself, were deemed unnecessary for salvation, why should man again find himself held in bondage by "human ordinances, and outside rites, at the pleasure of our Christian magistrates."[110]

Bagshaw appealed to common aphorisms found in Scripture to shore up his argument against the magistrate's imposing additional burdens upon his subjects: e.g., do to others, as you would have others do to you, and you that are strong, bear with the infirmity of the weak. On this issue he concluded:

> Since though as a *Magistrate* he hath a power in civil things, yet as a *Christian*, he ought to have a care that in things of spiritual concernment he grieve not the minds of any, who are upon that relation, not his subjects, so much as his brethren: and therefore since they have left their natural, and voluntarily parted with their civil, they ought not to be entrenched upon in their spiritual freedom: especially by such a *Magistrate*, who owning the same principles of religion with them, is thereby engaged to use his power, only to support, and not to ensnare them: to bound perhaps, but not to abridge their liberty; to keep it indeed from

---

[108] Gal. 5:1.

[109] "Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* (Gal. 6:2-6).

[110] Bagshaw, *The Great Question*, 3-4.

> running into licentiousness (which is a moral evil) but not to shackle, undermine and fetter it, under pretence of decency and order.[111]

The Christian will openly recognize that force and persecution cannot possibly advance the ideal of the Kingdom of Christ and that men are arrogantly prepared to brand as profane anything that they do not understand. Unfortunately, the English nation had been divided and brought to ruin by this concern with those things considered non-essential, which are always changing and, thus, unworthy of controversy.

Similarly, Bagshaw's third argument is based upon "many remarkable instances" of historical actions used to demonstrate how the imposition of indifferent things is contrary to Christian practice. His examples include Christ's eating with unwashed hands; the resolution of the Apostles to oppose the imposition of Jewish ceremonies upon the converted Gentiles; and, finally, Paul's compromise, which allowed for the lawful practice of indifferent things (i.e. circumcision) until such a time they were made necessary. From these Scriptural events, Bagshaw gathered, "that when once *Humane Interventions* become *Impositions*, and lay a Necessity upon that, which God hath left Free; then may we lawfully reject them, as *Plants* of *mans setting*, and not of *Gods owning*."[112] Whereas he believed in the ultimate power of God to determine those things necessary for salvation, he reasoned that God also held in reserve authority over things indifferent. He concluded, "that in things appertaining to Religion, the *Christian Magistrate* had no power at all."[113]

---

[111] Ibid., 4.
[112] Ibid., 5.
[113] Ibid., 14.

Finally, Bagshaw called for a religious reformation led by Christian princes, who would lead by example rather than "by the severity of their Laws," i.e., removal of barriers to the liberty of religion. Without offering any argument other than the flat assertion that Christian writings prior to the reign of Constantine, "are full of nothing else but such Arguments as evince a *Liberty*, more Absolute and Universal" than those presently asked for, he concluded that the "purity of religion" was defiled as the civil and ecclesiastical authorities gathered power unto themselves by imposing "penal laws," which ratified and confirmed Church orders.[114] The arguments for religious toleration that the early Christian sects used to "justly challenge" the status quo were now long forgotten by those individuals whom God had presumably anointed as His earthly representatives.

While Bagshaw confessed to having little faith "that the world should be freed from Cruelty, disguised under the name of zeal," he concluded his treatise on a positive note with less than subtle advice to the Christian magistrate on how best to reform religion. His reasoning rested on the premise that the magistrate's "proper Province is only over the Body, to repress and correct those moral vices, to which our *Outward* man is subject." The magistrate honours both God and himself by restricting his activities to those earthly duties, which are within his realm; rather than interfering with the inner convictions of his subjects and their "outward ceremonies." Confidently, Bagshaw summarized his convictions:

> Which *Liberty*, is so far from weakening, that it is indeed the security of a Throne; since besides gaining the Peoples Love (especially the most Conscientious and sober of them) it doth in a special manner entitle him to Gods Protection: Since in

---

[114] Ibid., 14-5.

> not pretending to be wiser then God, he gives Religion the free and Undisturbed Passage, which our Saviour seems by his Life and Death to have opened for it.[115]

The less than radical appeal to authority in his closing remarks closely reflected those set out in his opening statement to the reader, where he professed "that none is more satisfied with the Present Government, or hath more Loyall and Affectionate Esteem for his Majesties Person and Prudence, than this Writer."[116]

Bagshaw, like Owen and Stubbe, believed in spiritual authority to grant men liberty of conscience in all manners of religious worship while granting the magistrate jurisdiction "to encourage promote and protect the Professors and Professions of the Gospel, and to manage and order civil administrations in a due subserviency to the interest of Christ in the world."[117] The deference to the magistracy to uphold all manners of civil affairs and the appeal by the same to protect the liberties of his subjects in ceremonial matters should have appeared to like-minded Oxonian academics as a reasonable compromise in the "needlesse Disputations about things indifferent, or Ecclesiastical Traditions."[118] This position, along with the reluctance to call for active or passive disobedience, acts Bagshaw both abhorred and expressed discontent with, is surprisingly moderate, a feature that gave the document its popular appeal and should

---

[115] Ibid., 16.
[116] Ibid., The Publisher of this Treatise to the Christian and Candid Reader.; Compare this to a similar declaration by Locke in his *Preface to the Reader* in the First Tract on Government where he wrote: "As for myself, there is no one can have a greater respect and veneration for authority than I."
[117] Owen, *Unto the Questions*, 5.
[118] Powel, *De Adiaphoris*, 1.

have provided conservative opponents and Anglican apologists alike little to object to within its content.[119]

Conclusion

The charitableness of the treatise is not what one would have expected of the young scholar who "enjoyed a certain renown as a militant" and "an eccentric controversialist."[120] In this case, Bagshaw's pamphlet should not be considered in any way provocative or seditious. His thoughts on religious toleration, like those of the more moderate English thinkers, had by the time of the Restoration justified the position that no spiritual authority can be sustained that encroached upon the individual conscience.

It is not certain whether Bagshaw ever took into account the broad implications of religious liberty or that he ever understood the full magnitude of the tremendous effort that would be carried out on its behalf in the years following the Restoration. Too much of a rebel to attach himself to any particular party, embittered and disillusioned by the ill-placed confidence of his youth, pushing ever farther into a spiritual and political position that isolated him from his more moderate contemporaries, he could not by the temperament of his personality join those same individuals who would continue to campaign in relentless defence of religious liberty. His savage wrath against those who he felt had wronged him was considerable and would ultimately consume most of his time

---

[119] Printed originally in September 1660, Bagshaw's treatise would enjoy a third printing before the end of the year.
[120] Cranston, *John Locke*, 60.

and energy.[121] The end result of Bagshaw's actions would be a life of ridicule, persecution and imprisonment at the mercy of those civil and ecclesiastical authorities he fought against throughout most of his days.[122]

---

[121] Bagshaw's attacks upon the "venerable" Richard Baxter would warrant a vicious response from the Puritan divine in *The Church Told of Mr. Edward Bagshaw's Scandals and Warned of the dangerous snares of Satan, now laid for them, in his Love-Killing Principles: With A farther proof that it is our common duty to keep up the interest of the Christian Religion, and Protestant Cause, in the Parish Churches; and not to imprison them, by a confinement to tolerated meetings alone*, (London, 1672).

[122] Dr. John Owen wrote the following inscription for Bagshaw's altar-tomb in Bunhill Fields:—"Here lies interred the Body of Mr. Edward Bagshaw, minister of the Gospel, who received faith from God to embrace it, courage to defend it, and patience to suffer for it, which is by most despised and by many persecuted; esteeming the advantage of birth, education, and learning as things of worth to be accounted loss for the knowledge of Christ. From the reproaches of pretended friends, and persecutions of professed adversaries, he took sanctuary, by the will of God, in eternal rest, the 28th December 1671."

CHAPTER III

ABSOLUTE AND ARBITRARY POWER

> *Is it ingenuous to ask liberty and not to give it? What greater hypocrisy than for those who were oppressed by the Bishops to become the greatest oppressors themselves, so long as their yoke was removed.*
>
> *~ Oliver Cromwell*[123]

We have examined with some care the finer points of Independent philosophy in English religious and political thought. We have also observed in the writings of Edward Bagshaw that this particular religious movement had a fundamental and recurrent characteristic. Its members, with few exceptions, firmly believed that the government should permanently divest itself of its legislative power in the realm of religion. But, the former supporters of Cromwell would soon be relegated to a political wasteland and the few yet powerful extremists within Parliament and the hierarchical Church of England would come to dominate the political and religious agenda for the nation for more than a quarter century after the Restoration.

The intolerant policies of the Cavalier Parliament and the consequences that followed from its actions will be discussed further in the final chapter. It is important to understand now that unlike the Anglican extremists of the Laudian period this small body of reactionary individuals was not necessarily royalist or religious in principle. The focus of the nation had changed in practical terms. As a result, a common perception began to

---

[123] Oliver Cromwell, "Speech IV to his First Parliament," (Jan. 22, 1655), in *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, ed. Thomas Carlyle (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), III, 417.

circulate among English laymen that the revolutionary experiment of the civil war had exposed the soft underbelly of a weak civil state and the destructive consequences of tolerating sectarianism in matters of religious worship, particularly in the realm of *adiaphora.*

There is little question that this powerful sentiment would later be effortlessly exploited by a clique of political and religious opportunists, but for the moment it was enough that English society was willing to recall the monarchy in an unrealistic desire to return to the stability thought to have existed in the traditions and customs prior to the disruption of the civil war. The early months of the Restoration were, broadly speaking, crucial to Locke's intellectual and literary development. For it was during this period that Gabriel Towerson, a close friend and rival, would encourage him to write about two subjects that they had discussed and investigated in great detail—the law of nature and the lawfulness of civil imposition in matters of religious indifference.[124]

Towerson, a fellow of All Soul's and the future author of several works defending the Church of England, and Locke belonged, in the late 1650s and early 1660s, to a fraternity of sorts that found itself frequently entertained at Black Hall, St. Giles', Oxford—the home of John Evelegh, a clergyman.[125] Black Hall, it appears, was not only a place of leisure and frivolity, but also a hub for serious conversation and debate. Among the many issues raised for discussion were probably finer points of religious

---

[124] Cranston, *John Locke*, 58.
[125] Marshall, *Locke*, 10.

toleration, as there is evidence of communication among the visitors to Black Hall regarding a certain pamphlet Locke was writing on the topic. [126]

One example of particular importance to the events leading to Locke's eventual composition of a detailed response to Bagshaw's *Great Question* was a letter from Towerson to Locke dated 23 October 1660, recommending a recently published book by John Pearson, which he said contained "the assurance he there gives of a sudden and just reply to all *their* exceptions against the doctrine, discipline, and ceremonies of the church of England."[127] Written a little more than a month after the publication of Bagshaw's treatise and confirmation, the correspondence provides evidence concerning the origin and purpose of Locke's first attempt to set down in writing his thoughts on religious toleration. That Locke acquired and read Pearson's views on the subject is certain although he later claimed to have carefully sequestered his thoughts "both from books and the times, that they might only attend those arguments that were warranted by reason, without taking any upon trust from the vogue or fashion."[128]

---

[126] John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. W. von Leyden, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 19. It should be noted that among Locke's closest friends (i.e. James Tyrrell, James Parry, Samuel Tilly, William Uvedale, and Gabriel Towerson) only one did not become a cleric in the Church of England. The notable exception was William Uvedale, who "inherited a fortune and retired to enjoy it." The friendship of these future prominent individuals brought to Locke's attention the importance of actively supporting the reestablishment of the Church of England against Puritan opponents. Throughout Locke's correspondence, there are many instances of the influence they had on him with regard to the imposition of indifferent things in religious worship and their opposition to those individuals who did not support the lawful authority of the Church of England to intervene directly.

[127] Gabriel Towerson to Locke, 23 October 1660, *Correspondence*, I, 104. My emphasis. The book that Towerson refers to was called *No necessity of reformation*, which downplayed the importance of adiaphora and thus found no reason for their removal.

[128] Locke to [Gabriel Towerson?], 11 December 1660, *Correspondence*, I. 108.

The declaration may have been wishful thinking on his part, as evidence of Locke's prodigious reading and note taking throughout his life would point to a different conclusion. For the period 1659-62 alone, Marshall has found evidence in Locke's manuscripts that he read works by Henry Stubbe and John Pearson, and also that he had made "copious" notes on relevant writings defending the Anglican establishment's imposition of things indifferent by Richard Hooker, Robert Sanderson, Robert Boyle, and the moderate thinker, John Hales. Using Hales' *Golden Remains* as an illustration, Marshall describes examples of Locke's note taking where he pays particular attention to "Hales' defence of authority to impose ceremonial forms" and strong opposition to "those who urged conscience and the all-sufficiency of Scripture against the powers of imposition" in *adiaphora.*[129]

To Clear a Truth in Question

In the face of these two important concepts, Locke's reply to Bagshaw illuminates his motives for writing.[130] As far as we know, there was no point in Locke's life at which he did not aspire to search and follow the truth, wherever it may be found, and his unpublished response to Bagshaw's treatise supports this suggestion. The "clearing" of a

---

[129] Marshall, *John Locke*, 11. Hales did not recommend toleration for prudential reasons, but he did believe that to strip the Christian doctrine down to its bare essentials would have the effect of broadening the national Church so that all could join.

[130] There is little evidence to prove that either Locke or Bagshaw knew one another as students of Christ Church. Consequently, when Bagshaw first writes his anonymous treatise in 1660 it can only be speculated that Locke knew who wrote the *Great Question*, as Cranston assures us. However, by the spring of 1661, Towerson wrote to Locke and refers to Bagshaw directly: "I heare Mr. Bagshaws booke is so well lik'd ..." (Gabriel Towerson to Locke, 12 March 1661, *Correspondence*, I.115) This evidence shows that Locke was aware of the author by this time and probably had a suspicion, if not a direct assurance, upon writing his response in the latter months of 1660.

"truth in question" is his primary purpose for writing his earliest known paper, *Question: Whether the Civil Magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to Religious Worship.*[131] That the heading of the *Tract* is the sub-title of Bagshaw's anonymously published treatise was also not a coincidence as Locke sought to methodically refute each and every point of the *Great Question.*[132]

The success (or perhaps the failure) of this endeavour has been skillfully argued by a number of Locke scholars, including Philip Abrams and John Marshall, but in the interest of looking at Locke's intellectual development in relation to his later years it is particularly important to explore his arguments as a response to Bagshaw's own. Only then can we observe Locke in the proper context and understand more intelligibly where he stood on moral and political issues immediately following the Restoration.

In the *Preface to the Reader*, Locke professed to having always been against those needless and often unwarranted writings of his contemporaries, which had they "been more sparing of their ink" would have saved their country from those "Furies, War, Cruelty, Rapine, Confusion" that "have so wearied and wasted this poor nation."[133] In this particular instance, however, he felt it was his duty to enter into the fray on the same side of the civil magistrate in the hopes of suppressing, rather than beginning a quarrel.

> I could heartily wish that all *disputes* of this nature would cease, that men would rather be content to enjoy the *freedom* they have, than by such questions increase at once their own *suspicions* and *disquiets*, and the magistrate's *trouble*, such discourses, however, cautiously proposed, with desire of *search* and *satisfaction* being understood usually rather to speak *discontents* than *doubts* and increase the one rather than remove the other. And however sincere the *author* may be, the

---

[131] Locke, *FTG*, 117.
[132] Locke, *PTG*, 5.
[133] Locke, *FTG*, 118.

> *interested* and *prejudiced* reader not seldom greedily entertain them as the just *reproaches* of the State, and hence takes the boldness to censure the miscarriages of the magistrate and question the equity and obligation of all laws which have not the good luck to square with his *private judgment.*

Accordingly, Locke felt that the only solution for the "greatest security and happiness of any people" was to be found in a complete submission to the restored monarchy and the assurances of toleration he gave to the people. [134]

Locke's reaction to the "giddy folly" of quarreling over religious matters is understandable when one takes into consideration that England had been in an almost perpetual state of "religious rage" since his birth. "I no sooner perceived myself in the *world* but I found myself in a storm, which hath lasted almost hitherto, and therefore cannot but entertain the approaches of a calm with the greatest joy and satisfaction."[135]

The exhaustion from the many years of civil unrest and the ensuing relief brought upon by the Restoration is evident in his appeals for tranquil understanding. If men could only see how damaging their thoughts and actions with regards to religious *adiaphora* were to peace, order, and good government, Locke contended, they would refrain from such idle speculation:

> And I would men would be persuaded to be so kind to their *religion*, the *country* and *themselves* as not to hazard again the substantial blessings of *peace* and *settlement* in an over-zealous contention about things, which they themselves confess to be little and most are but indifferent.[136]

---

[134] Ibid., 118-9.
[135] Ibid., 119.
[136] Ibid., 120.

"But since," Locke observed elsewhere, "a *general freedom* is but a *general bondage*, that the popular assertors of public liberty are the greatest engrossers of it too and not unfitly called its *keepers*."[137]

Such charges were not without grounds. As many advocates of religious liberty in *adiaphora* themselves would have surely admitted, all too many of their followers had exploited the idea of adiaphoristic liberty as an excuse for an arrogant and unrestricted pursuit of freedom.[138] But what the nonconformists taught, and the actions of their followers, was not always the same thing. The experience was not lost on Locke who cautioned those who would champion toleration in the name of liberty and freedom. "This part of *freedom* contended for here by our *author* ... would prove only a *liberty* for *contention, censure* and *persecution.*" Further adding that it would "quickly be found that the *practice* of indifferent things not approved by dissenting parties, would then be judged as anti-Christian and unlawful as their injunction is now, and engage the heads and hands of the zealous partisans in the necessary duty of reformation."[139]

Locke considered the peace and settlement of the nation far too important to be left to scholars or members of the clergy. It is often the teachers, he argued, who exhort their devoted followers to rebellion against their adversaries in the name of liberty of

---

[137] Ibid..

[138] Luther, for example, wrote: "There are very many who, when they hear of this freedom of faith, immediately turn it into an occasion for the flesh and think that now all things are allowed them. They want to show that they are free men and Christians only by despising and finding fault with ceremonies, traditions, and human laws; as if they were Christians because on stated days they do not fast or eat meat when others fast, or because they do not use the accustomed prayers, and with upturned nose scoff at the precepts of men, although they utterly disregard all else that pertains to the Christian religion." Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, (Wittenberg, 1520).

[139] Locke, *FTG*, 120.

conscience. The liberty, however, for which they speak, is not that at all, but rather for an ambition that prejudices its believers into removing the framework of established constitutions and from the "ruins" building fortunes for those responsible. "Such a liberty," Locke once again cautioned, "is like to engage us in perpetual dissension and disorder."[140]

The perceived threat of anarchy and chaos proved to be an overwhelming influence on Locke's intellectual development and was one to which he returned often—always conscious of the role of laws and the lawmakers. The duties and responsibilities associated with the authority of the magistrate are the surest way to preserve a peaceful coexistence:

> All the *freedom* I can wish my country or myself is to enjoy the *protection* of those *laws* which the prudence and providence of our ancestors established and the happy return of his Majesty hath restored: a body of laws so well composed, that whilst this nation would be content only to be under them they were always sure to be above their neighbours, which forced from the world this constant acknowledgement, that we were not only the *happiest state* but the *purest church* of the latter age.[141]

When the supreme divine authority of the Christian magistrate is assaulted by sectarian factions and is separated by religious disputes, civil disorder and the ruin of the Christian Church must inevitably follow. The widespread and almost continuous effort by all men to uphold these laws is required to ensure the preservation of both the advantages of the state and the security of the nation.

The unexpressed principle of the common man's involvement in defending these ideals meant that Locke found himself personally drawn into a public debate against

---

[140] Ibid., 121.
[141] Ibid.

those who pleaded for "liberty of action" based upon "an opinion of their natural freedom, which they are apt to think too much entrenched upon by *impositions* in things indifferent."[142] Thus, drawing upon the same arguments of concealment used by Bagshaw, Locke announced to his potential readers that he too would remain anonymous so as to allow the arguments to speak for themselves. For an understanding of how he proposed to proceed we must turn to Locke's unpublished treatment of Bagshaw's *Great Question.*

Adiaphora and the Power of the Magistrate

What, first of all, was the difference between Bagshaw's position concerning the power of the magistrate over matters designated *adiaphora* and Locke's? How, secondly, does this difference establish the ideological connection between their controversy and the contemporary controversy relating to religious worship?

Locke began his *Tract* by declaring that he not only agreed with the author's initial suppositions—that a Christian may be a magistrate and that there are some things indifferent—but added that further premises must be clarified before debating the question as stated. Because establishing these supporting propositions was, for Locke, important to his overall argument, it will be useful to summarize some of the major points at which he parted ways from his Christ Church contemporary.

First, Locke and Bagshaw both accepted that the issue was based on purely human laws—civil as well as ecclesiastical.[143] The main difference between them was the

---

[142] Ibid., 122.
[143] Ibid., 124.

interpretation of those laws with respect to religious matters not of vital concern and whether the civil magistrate has the authority to frame legislation concerning non-essentials for the nation.[144] The importance of the magistrates' duty to protect the faithful from injustices inflicted by others was impressed upon Locke during his youth by the civil unrest caused by those dissenting members of English society in the recent past.

He further believed that moral authority rests in God, and man must obey accordingly. In making such a statement, Locke understood disobedience as contempt of the law and therefore regarded every transgression of human law as a mortal sin. This line of thought is typical of a large and influential body of lay opinion that had developed in this bleak period of civil and religious conflict, and enables the reader to easily grasp Locke's intentions.[145]

"That were there no law there would be no moral good or evil," Locke wrote in the first premise.[146] Man "left to a most entire liberty in all his actions" would find nothing that was not "purely indifferent," and that reality, he further argued, would make everything not under the "obligation of any law" indifferent. "That nobody," he continued in the second premise,

> hath a natural original power of disposure of this liberty of man but only God himself, from whose authority all laws do fundamentally derive their obligation,

---

[144] Locke, *PTG*, 18.

[145] See, for example, Bulstrode Whitlock, *Monarchy Asserted to be the Best, Most Ancient and Legal Form of Government*, (London: 1660); J. Fell, *The Interest of England Stated*, (London: 1659).

[146] Locke, *FTG*, 124. Years later in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, he stated that these rules are "only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good or evil is drawn on us by the will and power of the law-maker."

> as being either immediately enjoined by him, or framed by some authority derived from him.[147]

In support of this opinion, Locke observed that where man, either by reason or revelation, knows the will of God he has no other course but to submit and obey, as "all things within the compass of this law are *necessarily and indispensably good or evil.*"[148]

Seen in this light, those things outside the law of God must be considered "perfectly indifferent" and, thus, man, who is "naturally free," may choose to do with those things as he sees fit. It is in this proposition that Locke appealed to those members of society who would give up a share of their liberty to another and obey that same person by investing in him a "power over his actions." Since, there is nothing in God's law, he argued, that forbids a man from disposing of his liberty and obeying another, it is only natural that this same person follow the same law of God, "enforcing fidelity and truth in all lawful contracts," and obligingly "after such a resignation and agreement to submit."[149]

Finally, in the last of his introductory suppositions, Locke proposed that "it is yet the unalterable condition of society and government that every particular man must unavoidably part with this right to liberty and entrust the magistrate with as full a power over all his actions as he himself hath." In this instance, he defined the magistrate to be "the supreme legislative power of any society not considering the form of government or number of persons wherein it is placed."[150] In his opinion, however, the only form of

---

[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid. My emphasis.
[149] Ibid., 124-5.
[150] Ibid., 125.

government able to provide men with the greatest liberty is that of the absolute monarchy, which has overriding authority over any lower legislative assembly by virtue of the supreme lawmaker, God.

That Locke chose to focus his discussion on a social contract theory of the origins of government should be seen as a strategic move not only to anticipate but also to refute the arguments often made by those individuals, who saw their natural freedoms trodden upon by the imposition of things indifferent by the magistrate. It does not imply, however, that he was partial to this particular source of human legislative authority, as opposed to any other.

> Not that I intend to meddle with that question whether the magistrate's crown drops down his head immediately from *heaven* or be placed there by the *hands of his subjects*, it being sufficient to my purpose that the supreme magistrate of every nation what way soever created, must necessarily have an *absolute* and *arbitrary power* over all the indifferent actions of his people.[151]

Locke was maintaining that he was not especially troubled about the problem of how the magistrate attained power, but only that the power was necessarily wielded over adiaphoristic liberty, an assertion, Philip Abrams argues was either "naïve or disingenuous" for its boldness of suggestion.[152]

This passage, in short, is purposely deceptive in its overriding intention. On one level Locke defended the dismissal of any investigation of the foundations of government by arguing that it did little to further his aims in this debate. But there was another level of meaning to be read between the lines. His strategy would only work if it demonstrated the "effective authorization" of the magistrate's will. For this particular demonstration, he

---

[151] Ibid., 122-3.
[152] Locke, *PTG*, 73.

had to be cautious about any theories concerning the origins of government that he used and how others might eventually interpret his application of them.

The peril posed by Locke's selection process is the final settlement upon two "pure" and "fundamental" theories that were considered dangerous by some and deemed suspect by many others. It was not the safest of choices, but Locke finally settled on Hobbes' theory of social contract and Filmer's theory of patriarchal, or natural power of kings.[153] These theories were entirely opposed to one another, but both satisfied Locke's objective of placing the will of the people in the hands of the magistrate. Ironically, he would later exert extensive mental energy differentiating his theory of government from those of both Filmer and Hobbes in his *Two Treatises of Government.*

Perhaps because he had witnessed the not always charitable acts of Cromwell and the experiments of the Commonwealth, Locke wholeheartedly embraced the call for political stability, which he recognized as being founded in the traditions of the ancient monarchy.[154]

> Only give me leave to say that the indelible memory of our late miseries, and the happy return of our ancient freedom and felicity, are proofs sufficient to convince us where the supreme power of these nations is most advantageously placed, without the assistance of any other arguments.[155]

To this extent, the Restoration brought optimistic assurances of a return to a more tranquil era. His hope in forthcoming events would prove to be largely disappointed.

---

[153] Ibid.
[154] G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1660-1700*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 1.
[155] Locke, *FTG*, 125.

Given Locke's implicit assertion of the inherent advantages of a society surrendering absolute power over the actions of individuals to the magistrate, the question remained how he intended to formulate his arguments not only to refute his adversary, but also to propose a solution to a problem that had beset both the English church and government since the sixteenth century. The adiaphoristic controversy, or how "Christians were supposed to conduct themselves in the realm of ceremonial and like matters," would bring Locke, albeit anonymously, into an ongoing debate that had confronted England since the Reformation and could arguably be seen as the issue that propelled his yet uncertain career away from the cloth and toward that of philosophy.[156]

Initially, we must be content to look at the incomplete thoughts of a young man, who had not yet fully developed his skills. This is not to say that this ingenious student from Oxford was not capable of meticulous and careful scholarship. Locke's unconventional and often, though not always, original thinking on this highly charged and emotional issue exhibits the strengths and capabilities that would eventually be seen in his more famous published works. In the detailed scrutiny of Bagshaw's *Great Question*, Locke was skillful as well as shrewd. His coherent refutation of the arguments found in his worthy colleague's treatise is an early example of his considerable abilities in debating ideological and philosophical questions. The tactical strategy of evading, or even altogether omitting, certain fundamental elements of Bagshaw's arguments is, perhaps, the only failing of Locke's *Tracts*. The sole difficulty that this stratagem created for him, Abrams argues, is his eventual inability "to close the case for imposition" of an

---

[156] Verkamp, *The Indifferent Mean*, xiv.

arbitrary uniformity and may further suggest reasons for the subsequent shelving of the project.[157]

There is an obvious advantage to concentrating on Locke's frontal attack on an already published work, in that we may compare his own uncompromising arguments with Bagshaw's contrasting opinions. This approach can also be useful in recreating the critical mental process undertaken by the future philosopher and in determining many of the fundamental differences between the two scholars and the positions of those with similar viewpoints they were defending.[158] Most commentators have looked upon the *Tract* as a whole and have often ignored the subtlety of Locke's interweaving of his adversary's arguments into his own. They often provide little discussion of Bagshaw's views and thus underestimate his contribution to Locke's early intellectual development.

In the interest of addressing this obvious shortcoming in Locke scholarship, I will follow the format found within the *Tract* itself. I will relate the four arguments, as presented by Bagshaw and cited by Locke, as they were stated in the *Great Question.* This exercise will reveal many of the differences between Locke's absolutist position and Bagshaw's declaration of religious toleration. In this manner, we shall be more easily able to perceive some of the important distinctions between the different perspectives on the theory of *adiaphora* during the early days of the Restoration.

---

[157] Locke, *PTG*, 5.

[158] Ibid., 17. There are five relevant works: Bagshaw's *Great Question*, published 15 September 1660; Locke's English *Tract*, finished by 11 December 1660; Bagshaw's *Second Part of the Great Question*, published in September 1661; Locke's Latin *Tract*; and Bagshaw's *Third Part*, published January 1662. Philip Abrams concludes that apart from the original debate discussed above, it is not clear whether the two men ever wrote specifically against one another. Yet there is a sequential development to their arguments.

The Great Question Answered

In the *Question: Whether the Civil Magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to Religious Worship*, Locke followed in Bagshaw's footsteps and argued mainly from Scripture. The similarity of their methods was notably short-lived. The obvious distinction between Bagshaw's focus on the relationship of ceremonies in the realm of religious worship and Locke's insistence on widening the scope of his examination to include "purely" civil ceremonies.[159] "I cannot but wonder how indifferent things relating to religion should be excluded more than any other." He further pondered: "But how time and place are more purely indifferent, how less liable to superstitious abuse, and how the magistrate comes by a power over them more than the other, the law of God determining neither, they all equally relating to religious worship, and being equally obnoxious to superstition, I cannot possibly see."[160] Not surprisingly, Locke proceeded contrariwise. His first emphasis was to cast serious doubt upon Bagshaw's narrow definition of *adiaphora* based solely on religious ceremony and, subsequently, to erect the foundations for his eventual conclusion that the magistrate must have complete and absolute control over the "exterior, indifferent actions" of the people, which the liberty of God has given them to "be resigned freely" into his hands.[161]

In a clear act of subterfuge, Locke chose to ignore the substantive features of Bagshaw's opening statement and instead opted to exercise his own personal literary

---

[159] Ibid., 21.
[160] Locke, *FTG*, 126-7.
[161] Ibid., 129.

license to undermine his opponent's case. "The author's first argument," Locke emphatically wrote, "is [*that because 'tis agreed that a Christian magistrate cannot force his religion on a Jew or Mahomedan, therefore much less can he abridge his fellow Christian in things of lesser moment*] i.e. indifferent, a conclusion no way following from that particular supposition."[162] Bagshaw's intention, as we already know, was not to use this point as a substantive argument, but was merely an appeal for liberty and freedom from religious persecution, which, he argued, plainly had no justification in either history or Scripture.

Locke proceeded to a determined defence of the right of the magistrate to make use of "the great instruments of government and remedies of disorders" to prosecute "those faults which may be thereby amended." In other words, rewards and punishments, although not a tool for persuading men's inward opinion and conscience, may still be used by the magistrate to enforce outward conformity and, thus, stabilize civil society. In an analogous argument, comparing the role of the magistrate to that of a father to a child, further clarified his authoritarian position:

> 'Twould be tyranny in a father to whip a child, because his apprehensions were less quick, or his sight not so clear, or the lineaments of his face perhaps not so like his own as the rest of his brethren, who yet with equity enough might chastise the disobedience of his actions, and take this way to reclaim his willful disorders.[163]

The obvious paternalism in this opinion reflects a cautious but uncompromising approach to the uncertainty brought about by the arrogance and inflexible spirits of those men who

---

[162] Ibid., 127. The use of the square brackets is used by Locke to refer to passages from Bagshaw's original text.
[163] Ibid., 128.

had for a considerable period of Locke's early life held the seat of power in England. These same individuals, Locke observed, had called for liberty of conscience, but immediately upon securing administration of the seat of government used all instruments of power at their disposal to disrupt the order of church and state. Proof, he concluded, of the necessity for the rigourous discipline that could only come from the restraining hand of authority made available by the absolute power of the magistrate.[164]

The subtle differences between the two passages presented Locke the perfect pretense to sweep away Bagshaw's original purpose and, thus, to introduce his own assertion that the "magistrate's power derived from the people." The hypothetical quality of this supposition is based on the assumption that these same individuals have given direct power and authority to the magistrate, an act, a fact which Locke reasoned would give the magistrate "an absolute command over all actions of men" in all things of indifferency as they have "made him the judge, when, where, and how far they ought to be done, and are obliged to obey." If men, being "free and undetermined agents," can only agree upon these fundamentals and agree that they are fundamentals, they will willingly hand over "supreme legislative power" to the magistrate over all "exterior, indifferent actions" and, thus, being aware of their own conscious decision cannot be delivered into a new bondage.[165]

Having made this last remark, Locke launched into a lengthy refutation of Bagshaw's second argument in favour of spiritual liberty, an argument which aimed to prove that the "imposing of things indifferent is directly contrary to Gospel precepts." In

---

[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 128-9.

this instance, Locke did not swerve from confronting his rival's argument head-on, but instead lashed out with obvious sarcasm at the audacity of the declaration as a whole. "Indeed," Locke charged, " were this proved the controversy were at an end and the question beyond doubt, but amongst those many places produced I find not one command directed to the magistrate to forbid his intermeddling in things indifferent, which were to be expected if his determinations were against God's commands."[166] He shrewdly observed the glaring contradiction of the evidence provided by those who would plead for liberty of conscience based upon Scripture, but failed to acknowledge the same doctrine when it worked against them. He pointed to Paul's submission to the Roman magistrate, more specifically the pagan Emperor Nero, as an example of a biblical reference that confirmed that God ordains civil rulers and, "therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience."[167]

Yet, if the arguments of his opponents were to be seriously considered, it would be lawful for men to exempt themselves from those things they determined indifferent in religious worship. "'Tis strange," Locke mused, "that that doctrine that enjoins submission to a Nero, should be thought to free us from subjection to a Constantine, that that which doth advance the throne and establish the authority of a heathen and a tyrant should weaken and pull down that of a good man and a good Christian."[168]

---

[166] Ibid., 130.
[167] Rom. 13: 1-6.
[168] Locke, *FTG*, 130.

The contradiction arguably stems from the lack of clarity found within the biblical passages that touch upon the adiaphoristic "liberty" obtained from Christ's supreme sacrifice. The sense of the word, Locke suggested, is "used indefinitely without application to things either religious or civil" and, consequently, is appropriated at every occasion to justify and defend the cause of religious freedom.[169] This point makes intelligible the suggestion that the mainline English nonconformists considered the New Testament and the writings of the early Christians far more important to their cause than anything written prior to the birth of Christ, including the Old Testament. "'Tis true as my author says," Locke patiently explained, "their writings are full of arguments for liberty but it was for that liberty which was then encroached on and far different from what is here in question; 'twas for the substantials of their profession and not against the addition of ceremonies; their oppression was from those from whom they feared the subversion of the very foundations of their religion and not too gaudy and curious a superstructure; they complained not of being burdened with too many habits, but of being stripped stark naked."[170]

The weight of Locke's argument becomes clearer when he turns to an exhaustive examination of the Scriptural texts, which Bagshaw and other nonconformists declared to be evidence for their claims for religious tolerance and freedom from persecution and bigotry.[171] Much of this rhetoric was designed to point out that Christ had had no

---

[169] Ibid., 131.
[170] Ibid., 130-1.
[171] See Matt. 23: 1-36; Matt. 11: 24-30; John 8: 36; Gal. 5: 1; James 1: 2.

intention of settling man's earthly affairs, from which Locke concluded that all such matters must be left to the control of the magistrate, "though it were burdensome."[172]

Bagshaw obviously had not reached the same conclusion having derived his point of view from the theory of *adiaphora*, where one could find the sort of simplicity that had characterized the church of New Testament times. The "unanswerable arguments" found in Scripture, he maintained, reject the professions of those who would grant civil rulers the right of imposition over ecclesiastical *adiaphora.*[173] And, nowhere, was this truth more self-evident, he further reasoned, than in Paul's Letters to the Galatians. The most compelling argument is to be found in the following verse, which was used by all Christian churches, Protestant and Catholic, as the "doctrine of Christians' enfranchisement from the ceremonial law."[174]

> It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery.[175]

The far-reaching implication of the message of the Epistle was not lost on Locke who could not help but agree with Bagshaw. He readily consented to the sentiment of this text, but could not see how an "unanswerable" argument could be drawn from it. Again, he sought to defend the right of the magistrate to "enforce his own laws as the laws of a man who is the steward and judge of the public good."

Locke further reasoned that, if the pleas of the nonconformists were granted, it would "at one stroke dissolve all human laws or the greatest part of the them," as liberty

---

[172] Locke, *FTG*, 133.
[173] Bagshaw, *The Great Question*, 3.
[174] Locke, *FTG*, 134.
[175] Gal. 5: 1.

was extended in "the free use of all indifferencies," both civil and ecclesiastical. The end of this historic precedent of "liberty without any limitation to this or that sort of indifferent things," he protested, would constitute the worst of all possible worlds, such as defiant subjects casting off their allegiance to lawful authority, or the rejection by Christians of the doctrines of the established church.[176] It could be argued that these events do not appear to be preconditions for an eventual downfall of the entire nation, but they must have seemed serious enough for the impressionable, young scholar, who had seen plenty of conflict and discord throughout his early life.

Locke proceeded to formulate a number of intriguing questions while hypothesizing about the composition of a world without boundaries. For instance, what if the magistrate did not have the power to legislate upon all matters of human conscience, civil and ecclesiastical? If this were the case, would there exist any reason to formulate laws at all? Or, would liberty of conscience cease to exist "if private men's judgments were the moulds wherein laws were to be cast" in the world proposed by the tolerationists?[177] The articulation of these important and fundamental questions presented the reader with further evidence of Locke's intentions for the remainder of the *Tract* and it is suggested, that indeed they do provide a particular illustration of his "rejection of the principle of conscience" if one only chooses to reread the relevant texts critically.[178]

Locke's responses to his own queries seemingly provide more rhetorical questions than straightforward answers.

---

[176] Locke, *FTG*, 136.
[177] Ibid., 137.
[178] Kirstie M. McClure, "Difference, Diversity, and The Limits of Toleration," *Political Theory*, 18: 3 (August 1990), 369.

> 'Tis true, [*who would have his conscience imposed upon?*] and 'tis as true, who would pay taxes? who would be poor? who almost would not be a prince? And yet these (as some think them) burdens, this inequality, is owing all to human laws and those just enough, the law of God or nature neither distinguishing their degrees nor bounding their possessions.[179]

But this only amounts to an oversimplification of the purpose and design of his overall objectives. It is necessary not only to reread the text, as Kirstie McClure suggests, but one must also place in context the role of "man's persuasion" within the discussion.

Conscience, defined by Locke, as "nothing but an opinion of the truth of any practical position, which may concern any actions as well moral as religious, civil as ecclesiastical," is essential to his view of the magistrate's power over all things indifferent.[180] It was at least probable that he had begun to think of this problem in terms other than that of right and wrong. Without doubt, there was never an explicit demand that the civil authorities punish every doctrinal error; it was, however, the duty of the rightful ruler to preserve the lawful order amongst men. The manuscript seems to suggest, in other words, that Locke was attempting to think out how to base duties and obligations, to which he was obviously partial, on an account of their role in facilitating peace and unity.

Locke unhesitatingly accepted the proposition that any imposition upon man's inward conscience should be treated "tenderly" and, thus, be avoided where possible. Every man may demand and rightly deserved to receive his precious allowance without question from the state. But in deciding how to deal with indifferent "outward" actions Locke was not as generous or tolerant. For, he now argued, "if you take it in our author's

---

[179] Locke, *FTG*, 138.
[180] Ibid.

[Bagshaw] sense every lawful command of the magistrate, since we are to obey them for conscience sake" would be imposing on conscience and "so according to his way of arguing unlawful."[181]

Focusing even further attention on Bagshaw's spirited defence of adiaphoristic liberty and the corresponding debates being fought in the halls and courtyards of Christ Church, Locke sharply argued:

> I know not how a Quaker should be compelled by hat or leg to pay a due respect to the magistrate or an Anabaptist be forced to pay tithes, who if conscience be a sufficient plea for toleration (since we in charity ought to think them as sincere in their profession as others than whom they are found less wavering), have as much reason not to feel constraint as those who contend so much for or against a surplice, for not putting off the hat grounded upon command of the Gospel, though misunderstood, is as much an act of religion and matter of conscience to those so persuaded as not wearing a surplice.

To which he added a final word on the question of liberty of conscience:

> If outward indifferent things be things of spiritual concernment 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. Is a courteous saluting, a friendly compellation, a decency of habit according to the fashion of the place, and indeed subjection to the civil magistrate, civil things, and these made by many are made matters of conscience and there is no action so indifferent which a scrupulous conscience will not fetch in with some consequence from Scripture and make of spiritual concernment, and if nothing else will scandal at least shall reach him.[182]

Individuality and the certainty of every man's attaining faith by the guidance of his own judgment were concepts that Locke would later glean from various sources and begin to develop within his own intellectual framework. But, at least for now, what he required was an orderly and peaceful world, structured on the absolute authority of the magistrate to govern in all things civil, as well as, ecclesiastical. "'Tis true," Locke earnestly

---

[181] Ibid., 139.
[182] Ibid., 138-9.

declared, "a Christian magistrate ought to deal tenderly with weak Christians, but must not so attend the infirmities and indulge the distempers of some few dissatisfied as to neglect the peace and safety of the whole."[183]

The final argument in the *First Tract* is made against Bagshaw's assertion that "it is much more suited to the nature of the Gospel that Christian princes should reform religion rather by the example of their life than the severity of their laws."[184] Locke, in order to make his own point, feigned ignorance in guessing what was meant by the concept and belittled his adversary's opinion. "As for the observance of outward ceremonies in the worship (they being in his opinion *either unlawful or useless*), he will readily exclude them from reformation, and how the magistrate's example of life can any way reform except in one of these two is beyond my apprehension." Since,

> *true religion*, i.e. the internal acts of faith and dependence on God, love of him and sorrow for sin, etc. are (as our author says) *like the spirits of wine or subtle essences* I'm sure in this that they cannot be seen and therefore cannot be an example to others. 2. I answer that it is a very good way, for the prince to teach the people the service of God by his own example and 'tis very likely the paths of virtue and religion will be trodden by many when they lead to credit and preferment and the prince will be sure to have a large train of followers which way soever he goes. But all men live not within the influence of the court, nor if they did are all so ingenious to be thus easily won over to goodness.[185]

Furthermore, this passage plainly shows that there is more than one way to persuade men of their spiritual and religious duty. The difficulty with Bagshaw's concept of the magistrate leading by example of his life is that it continues to allow him to exercise "the rigour of laws" fully and it gives permission for "severer applications of his authority

---

[183] Ibid., 140.
[184] Bagshaw, *The Great Question*, 16.
[185] Locke, *FTG*, 173.

where the stubbornness and peevishness of the people will not be otherwise reclaimed."[186]

These arguments follow from Locke's original supposition that the magistrate derives his power from the consent of the people, (or from the hand of God), and, thus, holds legitimate authority of maintaining the law and command over his subjects. If consent is not given to this basic premise, the treatise properly reverts to the original question of whether or not the civil magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to religious worship, which is the all encompassing theme of the entire disputation. Thus it is evident that Locke's emphasis on the power of the Christian prince to make laws concerning all indifferent things had reduced the necessity for strictly religious *adiaphora* by enlarging the magistrate's jurisdiction to include those things ecclesiastical, as well as civil, and effectively downplayed their overall importance in the controversy.

This strategy would no doubt have been unacceptable to Bagshaw had he been given the opportunity to defend his original position against Locke's unpublished work. For Bagshaw, the theory of *adiaphora* in matters of religious worship was integral to his treatise and the foundation upon which his version of Christian liberty was based. Those differences that divide Christians and churches may only be explained in these terms. We

---

[186] Ibid.

have erred so blindly in the rigourous prosecution of the "Doctrine of Impositions" in religion, Bagshaw argued, that we have ignored the fundamentals of faith.[187]

Furthermore, those same individuals who assert that most things are inconsequential, yet impose upon others, are guilty of crucifying the Christian conscience and perverting the meaning of Christ's Gospel. "Since the Imposers do lay so much stresse upon them, that, it is evident, though they call them *Indifferent*, yet they think them *Necessary*."[188] This paradoxical position, Locke retorted, was nothing more than "an affirmation that things indifferent cannot be determined which is the question between us and no proofs of it."[189]

Though Locke had not acknowledged the validity of the evidence and subsequent conclusions provided by Bagshaw, it is not clear whether he felt he had conclusively made his either. Surely he had pressed the argument that the civil magistrate must out of necessity have absolute and arbitrary power over all indifferent actions, power which was to be provided by the consent of the people. Locke's hypothetical use of contract theory provided an allowance for men to surrender part of their natural liberty and ultimately entrust to the sovereign power over those actions that they freely held.[190] Nevertheless, before this outcome could occur men would have to surrender their faith in things that they believe to be necessary in worship, but were undeniably indifferent.

---

[187] Edward Bagshaw, *The Second Part of the Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship, Briefly Stated, And tendered to the Consideration of all Conscientious and Sober men* (London, 1661), 18.
[188] Ibid., 15.
[189] Locke, *FTG*, 173.
[190] Von Leyden, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, 27.

The main difficulty in this reasoning, Robert Kraynak says, is that Christian liberty affirms that the individual must be "accommodated" in those things he believes necessary, things which must inevitably include those customs and ceremonies that over time "come to be regarded as necessary or *as orthodoxy*, handed down by God." Hence, even a law "handed down by the arbitrary will of a human legislator" will eventually be viewed as necessary rather than as an intended indifferent imposition.[191] In later years, the full effect of this insight would become readily apparent as Locke reconsidered his determined beliefs in absolute principles regarding political and religious matters.

From the very outset, then, Locke had provided what he considered sufficient proof and support to weaken Bagshaw's impassioned plea for liberty of conscience and spiritual toleration, but had in no way delivered the telling blow. This having been said, it would be fair to view the English *Tract* as an impressive but obvious initial effort by a young scholar to articulate a position between the temporal concerns of this life and the spiritual care of the after-life. And though many of his early beliefs gradually evolved over the course of the subsequent unpublished and later published works, we observe many of the fundamental themes that he repeated at length throughout his life. Most notable, thus far, have been the nature of law, liberty, as it relates to things necessary and indifferent, consent of the governed and scriptural interpretation.

---

[191] Robert P. Kraynak, "John Locke: From Absolutism to Toleration," *The American Political Science Review*, 74:1 (March 1980), 60.

The Distinction Between Liberty and Obligation

Only briefly touching on the difference between liberty and obligation in his English *Tract*, Locke apparently felt it necessary to expand upon the first essay and immediately set out to write a second *Tract* clarify his position further.[192] In the piece, written in Latin and entitled *An magistrus civilis possit res adiaphoras in divine cultus ritus asciscere, eosque populo imponere? Aff.* Locke expanded upon his original reply to Bagshaw, but did not mention either the author or the pamphlet.[193] While there is little difference between the two *Tracts*, aside from the flourishing rhetorical style of writing instilled by an Oxonian scholastic education, a noteworthy difference is to be found in the analysis of obligation.

Locke began from his previously established position of the magistrate's acquiring legislative power from the individual who has willingly surrendered the whole of his natural liberty to the sovereign. The sovereign is therefore empowered by the consent of the people to make laws and govern accordingly. Once more, the means by which the magistrate attained power was left open and says much about Locke's political philosophy during this period. "I offer no conclusion about these theories, nor do I consider it of any relevance to our present controversy whether one or other of them be true."[194] Yet he then immediately proposed a third means by which civil power may be constituted in the magistrate: "One in which all authority is held to come from God but the nomination and appointment of the person bearing that power is thought to be made

---

[192] Von Leyden, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, 27.
[193] Locke, *STG*, 210. "Whether the civil magistrate may incorporate indifferent things into the ceremonies of divine worship and impose them on the people: Confirmed."
[194] Ibid., 231.

by the people. Otherwise a right to govern will not easily be derived from the paternal right nor a right of life and death from the popular."[195]

Once again, the essential element of Locke's argument is not whether the right to govern is granted from above, below, or originates democratically, but rather how this "exchange" is fundamental to the formation of a political society, or commonwealth.[196] The commonwealth, Locke maintained, is willed by God as a means of providing "order, society and government" to all men. He continued:

> In every commonwealth there must be some supreme power without which it cannot truly be a commonwealth; and that supreme power is exactly the same in all government, namely, legislative. The object and matter of legislative power we have shown above to be all indifferent things, and we repeat once more that either the power of the supreme magistrate is over these, or else it is nothing.[197]

This assertion was his means of confronting those individuals, like Bagshaw, who insisted on dividing *adiaphora* into their civil and ecclesiastical components.

These same persons, Locke submitted, sought to further stand outside the reach of the magistrate by defying all obligations inherent in those laws respecting the use of things indifferent in religion. The sectarians, he continued, ultimately withdraw into a self-absorbed notion of the world around them, seeking to find "asylum where they may safely hide in the depths of their own conscience, not to be profaned in the least degree by the laws and ceremonies of the church." [198] Liberty of conscience, they reason, bears no relation whatsoever to the legislative power of the magistrate and being divine in nature is completely under obligation to the will of God.

---

[195] Ibid.
[196] Cranston, *John Locke*, 63.
[197] Locke, *STG*, 232.
[198] Ibid., 238.

This distinction is vital and must be kept clear. If the magistrate imposes his own will upon the people in matters of religious *adiaphora*, he not only offends against the divine magistrate but also does "violence and injustice" to his subjects. Thus, most extreme proponents of religious toleration contend that any law that would "constrain or circumscribe" the primitive liberty of any man should be "held to be *ipso facto* unlawful and void."[199]

The conclusion may be, Locke conceded, that every law, civil and ecclesiastical, in some way, must impose upon the consciences of all men. The difficulty is in determining which laws the subject is obliged to obey and those he may lawfully oppose. To find a solution to this problem, Locke borrowed heavily from the book *De Obligatione Conscientae* written in 1660 by the Anglican conservative, Robert Sanderson.[200] In Sanderson's work the key to answering the arguments set forth by the sectarians was to show specific distinctions between obligation and liberty. In so doing, the argument could be made that men still held onto their liberty of conscience while being imposed upon by laws concerning those things considered indifferent in religion.

---

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid., 238. The only two authors mentioned in both Bagshaw's and Locke's works on the powers of the magistrate to impose in religious worship are Richard Hooker and Robert Sanderson. In both *Tracts*, Locke sides with Sanderson against Bagshaw. In 1661, James Tyrrell, one of Locke's intimate friends, collaborated with Sanderson in editing a manuscript written by Tyrrell's maternal grandfather, Archbishop Ussher, entitled *The Power Communicated by God to the Prince, and the Obedience Required of the Subject* (London, 1640). Cranston has pointed out that Locke may have met Sanderson at this time as a result of this personal connection. In addition, Robert Boyle initiated Sanderson's revision in 1660 of the Oxford lectures, *De Obligatione Conscientiae*, which were originally delivered in 1647. Boyle may have also introduced Locke and Sanderson. Either way, Sanderson's influence on Locke's early writings is undeniable.

Following Sanderson's example, Locke maintained that there are two kinds of obligation to which men are subjected—material and formal. The first, not necessarily in order of importance, is that of *obligatio materialis*, which may be thought of as the necessary requirement of the subject to obey the impositions of the magistrate by virtue of some previous command of divine law, e.g. thou shalt not steal or commit adultery.[201] This obligation is both material and formal in the sense that man is bound by obedience to God as well as the magistrate and thereby all intrusions on the liberty of conscience of the subject are removed.[202]

Locke's secondary obligation, *obligatio formalis*, for our purposes the more significant of the two, concerns the imposition of indifferent things by the civil magistrate. The obligation placed upon the subject in this particular circumstance, he argued, is merely formal not material. That is to say, though the magistrate may legislate those things not commanded or forbidden by God, the subject may refuse to give consent to the judgment, (i.e. may not approve of it in his heart), which does not in any way impose upon his primitive liberty.[203] On the other hand, he would still have to obey the command of the lawful sovereign as a necessary part of the formal obligation brought about by the exchange of powers between the people and the state. In this instance, the subject's liberty of conscience is "left unrestricted," as the assent of the will is required, but not that of the judgment.[204] Thus, Locke concluded:

---

[201] Von Leyden, *Essay on the Law of Nature*, 29.
[202] Locke, *STG*, 239.
[203] Cranston, *John Locke*, 63.
[204] Von Leyden, *Essay on the Law of Nature*, 29.

> And hence I say that all the magistrate's laws, civil as well as ecclesiastical, those that concern divine worship as much as those that concern civil life, are just and valid, obliging men to act but not to judge; and, providing for both at the same time, unite a necessity of obedience with a liberty of conscience.[205]

These basic assumptions concerning the necessity of obedience, whether active or passive, become extremely important in the understanding of Locke's later defence of toleration.

Infallibility

A valuable addition to the *Two Tracts* is Locke's *Essay on Infallibility*, in which he discussed some issues of Scriptural interpretation not directly dealt with in the initial reply or the Latin treatise. The reasons for the composition of this particular manuscript remain unclear, but there is little doubt that he intended it to condemn the claims of infallibility by the Catholic Church and continue the assault began in the *Two Tracts* upon those "sharp-sighted" priests who have sought "control over the conduct and consciences of men."[206] The relative importance of this document to the early treatises on government and the *Essay concerning Toleration*, written in 1667, must not be overestimated, although one could argue that its true value comes from the laying down

---

[205] Locke, *STG*, 239.

[206] John Locke, "John Locke's 'Essay on Infallibility': Introduction, Text, and Translation," ed. J. C. Biddle, *Journal of Church and State*, 19 (1977), 317. For a further and contemporary discussion of the notion of "infallibility" see Edward Bagshaw, *A Brief Enquiry into the Grounds and Reasons, Whereupon the Infallibility of the Pope and Church of Rome is said to be Founded.* (London, 1662). This is one of the few instances where Locke and Bagshaw appear to agree on the same position.

of "fundamental principles" of scriptural interpretation intermittently found throughout Locke's later writings.[207]

The manuscript, written in Latin in late 1661, contains the argument that an infallible interpreter of Holy Scripture was not necessary in any Christian Church. Locke confidently observed that God had not made available such an individual "since the time of the apostles."[208] This fact is more than evident from the quarrels and disputes that had not only recently divided Christians throughout the world, including the Church of Rome from the time of Constantine. Furthermore, the usefulness of an infallible interpreter, even if such a person existed, would inevitably beg the question as to how much he could contribute to solve the problems of the Christian faith, unless this person could "infallibly show that he is infallible." The capacity of any individual to prove this to anyone else is questionable, as there is no scriptural basis for such a claim. The so-called infallible interpreter of Scripture, Locke concluded, would subsequently lack the authority and power to stem the tide of anarchy that had of late infected the church.[209]

The remainder of the essay deals primarily with the question of whether Scripture even requires an infallible interpreter. "Since," as Locke assured us,

---

[207] Ibid., 314.

[208] Jeremy Taylor wrote much the same: "There is no insecurity in ending there where the Apostles ended, in building where they built, in resting where they left us, unlesse the same infallibility which they had, had still continued, which I think I shall hereafter make evident it did not." *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying....Shewing the unreasonableness of prescribing to other men's faith, and the iniquity of persecuting differing opinions.* (London, 1647), 16.

[209] Locke, "Essay on Infallibility," 320-1. Viscount Falkland had similarly declared in 1646 "Which if it be the onely infallible determination, and that can never be believed upon its owne authority, we can never infallibly know that the Church is infallible." *Of the Infallibility of the Church of Rome.* (London, 1646). As Marshall has pointed out, Locke reread and made notes on Falkland's *Discourse* in 1665, which makes his reading of the same document prior to writing his own essay on infallibility all the more likely. This manuscript would prove to be influential to Locke's later writings.

> it was written at different times and not in the same style, embraces within itself various arguments, and contains the history of past events, rules of conduct, and the articles of faith, it can be considered in many ways.[210]

The considerations, he further indicated, may be reduced to an even shorter list of four dissimilar methods. They appear to be of unequal importance, but are meant nonetheless to assist us in understanding the delicate process of interpreting Scripture for ourselves. The first two are easily dismissed as either the sort that "exercise petty minds," for example What was the forbidden fruit of Paradise, or those that contain "the profound mysteries of divine matters which utterly transcend the human intellect," such as the attributes of God.[211] Locke obviously found little hope at this time in finding truth in either of these propositions save to confound and expose the arrogance and frailty of the human mind.

Of course, there are those features of Scripture that Christian men need not rely on for any sort of interpretation, infallible or otherwise, to understand for themselves, such as justice, chastity, charity, and benevolence.[212] These ideas, Locke stressed, were so comprehensible to the human intellect "that virtually nobody can doubt them, for to hear is to understand them." God, in other words, had made all those things necessary for our salvation abundantly clear to us.[213] Accordingly, respect for and appreciation of the Bible, whether by study or sermon, should be more than sufficient for a solid understanding of the required essentials needed in matters of faith.

---

[210] Ibid., 321.
[211] Ibid., 321-3.
[212] "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes." (II Timothy 2: 22-23).
[213] Locke, "Essay on Infallibility," 323.

Locke's position on this question, as on so many others, was rather ambiguous. In the first place, he recognized the rights and responsibilities of individuals to come to their own particular understanding of the moral duties and obligations directed from Scripture, which he considered "a perfect rule of the inward and necessary worship."[214] But when dealing with topics with an adiaphoristic nature found in those same passages, Locke suggested that the devout Christian was far better off being one of the metaphorical "sheep".

In this instance, the individual who assumed the dual role of leader of church and state (i.e. the English monarch) is proposed to be an infallible interpreter of indifferent matters. The proposition would appear to run contrary to Locke's earlier opinion that there does not exist such a person. There is no contradiction, however, if we are conscious of his particular definition of infallibility in this instance being "directive" as opposed to being "definitive." The exact meaning of these terms will become clearer as we look further at Locke's application of them within the framework of his fundamental thesis.

Following the earlier discussion on obligation, we again observe Locke's ongoing effort to preserve the peace of the nation by regulating the actions of the people by the legislation of religious *adiaphora* by a civil magistrate. "To be sure the shepherds of the church can perhaps err while they are leading, but the sheep certainly cannot err while they are following."[215] We may gather the following conclusions from Locke's

---

[214] Locke, *STG*, 234.

[215] Again we see a similar argument taken from Jeremy Taylor's *A Discourse of The Liberty of Prophesying*: "Our guides must direct us, and yet if they faile, God hath not so left us to them, but

arguments: the Christian subject's formal obligation of obedience must be satisfied; the "infallible" interpreter may direct but not mislead; and the sole "definitive" interpreter of Scripture is immediately reconciled as "Scripture itself" rather than the individual or the leaders of the church.[216]

In citing Paul's command that "all things be done decently and in order," Locke had hoped to show the reader that such instructions prove the necessity for an "infallible" interpreter over those things deemed indifferent in Scripture.[217] This argument would later be abandoned, but for the purpose of this particular essay it allowed for an important distinction to be made between Anglican and Roman Catholic doctrine.

In essence, the Church of England maintained that "outward conformity" provided the necessary conditions for membership in religious institutions and no external force in the world could persuade the individual to change "his mind at will."[218] The imposition of religious *adiaphora*, although held to be within the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, must not impinge upon the Christian conscience.

The same cannot be said of the Church of Rome. The rank and file of English Protestants unfailingly described Roman Catholic priests as immoral and ambitious men, who under the pretence of tradition and infallibility of judgment brutally imposed their external forms of worship as necessary to salvation. Locke, as we have noted, not only

---

he hath given us enough to our selves to discover their failings, and our own duties in all things necessary. And for other things we must doe as well as we can. But it is best to follow our guides, if we know nothing better." Cranston argues that Taylor's book was probably the most influential in converting Locke to the idea of toleration although he supposedly did not read it until 1666-7.

[216] Locke, "Essay on Infallibility," 325-7.

[217] 1 Corinthians 14:40

[218] Marshall, *John Locke*, 16-7.

agreed with the sentiment of these critics, but also privately extended his distrust to clergy of all denominations. In the obvious sense this too was a further attempt to establish the prerogative of the secular ruler to legislate matters of *adiaphora* in the ecclesiastical realm.

For all that, the work reveals nothing fundamentally original about Locke's ideas, but rather it reinforced the same convictions that had found expression in the author's earlier tracts. The significance of *Infallibilis Scripturae interpres non necessaries* lies in the fact that it summarizes those convictions and provides numerous indications of the direction in which Locke's thought would develop in the future. Although this work is in some respects related to its predecessors, it does not reveal Locke as an innovator and certainly not as a thinker who was ready to embrace a universal toleration in the face of the political crisis of his age. This applies both to his general theological statements and to his comments on religious toleration. Even at the end of his life, Locke would not concede toleration to Roman Catholics and atheists based on purely political convictions.

Conclusion

In the texts we have reviewed, Locke favoured a purely authoritarian position, which he was more than convinced provided the only rational solution to those troublesome questions of religion that forever endangered the security of the nation. It is likewise apparent that this particular point of view may be somewhat unsettling for those scholars who acknowledge the obvious inconsistencies between this policy and his later defence of toleration. Nevertheless, to deny the existence of this evolution of thought is surely to misunderstand the intentions of the young philosopher.

For Locke protection within the law meant much more than many of his contemporaries would have admitted, and it is here that his mostly negative and uncompromising settlement—tempered though it was with caution and concern about his own times—is most evident. He does not share the notion that in indifferent matters the individual must necessarily have his conscience violated by the state. Instead, he accepted that people willingly surrender all legislative powers to the sovereign even though they themselves may be allowed to believe what is necessary in their own religious worship: "In the nature of things there is nothing so utterly perfect and harmless that from it no evil can, or is accustomed to, derive, or at least be feared; and many just and lawful things are regularly felt by some to be senseless and onerous. But in truth those inconveniences which befall me, or can befall me, from the right of another in no way impede his right."[219]

Jacqueline Rose, a perceptive scholar with refreshingly new insights into Locke's early works, has warned that modern scholars have "dangerously decontextualized" the Restoration tracts, and the early writings must be placed squarely within the confines of other polemicists from that difficult period.[220] In this respect, we have already exhaustively concluded Bagshaw's writings were instrumental in bringing Locke's pen to paper.

While this may be true, however, it is also the case that other writers in the Restoration debate would influence Locke more positively. In the final chapter, the challenge will be to free Locke's ideas from comparisons to his later works, future events

---

[219] Locke, *STG*, 240-241.
[220] Rose, "John Locke, 'Matters Indifferent', and the Restoration of the Church of England," 603.

and individuals he would later encounter. The young scholar and future great philosopher had obviously thought hard about the notion of *adiaphora* within the settlement debate, but as Rose also notes, his early thought developed within the framework of "a polemical atmosphere, not in the solitude of philosophical abstraction."[221] Therefore, we are more likely to find clues to Locke's apparent move towards a doctrine of limited toleration from within the Restoration period rather than outside of it.

[221] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL NECESSITY

> *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*
> *~ Romans 14: 17-19*

When Locke wrote *An Essay concerning Toleration* in 1667, he included a paragraph to the effect that those individuals, who assert that the monarchy is *jure divino* and, therefore, by divine right religious power is vested in one ruler, have forgotten "what country they were borne in, under what laws they live & certainly cannot but be obleigd to declare Magna Charta, to be downe right heresie."[222] It was likewise an error for others to assert the magistrate be granted absolute authority over ecclesiastical matters exclusively by the people's consent.[223] And, finally, he openly questioned the validity of any doctrine whereby "the people should give any one or more of their fellow men an authority over them for any other purpose then their owne preservation, or extend the limits of their jurisdiction beyond the limits of this life."[224] It was in this document Locke

---

[222] John Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration and Other Writings on Law and Politics, 1667-1683*, ed. J.R. Milton and Philip Milton, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 270. This manuscript should not to be confused with Locke's *Letter concerning Toleration* (1689) published more than twenty years later.

[223] In 1661, Dr. Edward Stillingfleet, rector of Sutton in Bedfordshire, and later the bishop of Worcester, argued that no form of church-government is of divine right, and that the church had no power to impose things indifferent in his *Irenicum, or, A Weapon Salve for the Church's Wounds* (London, 1662). Ironically, Locke and Stillingfleet would later become bitter adversaries, arguing for the opposite position from what they had originally defended at the beginning of the Restoration.

[224] Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration*, 270.

first articulated both his opposition to autocratic power and his difficulties with the imbalance between the essentials and non-essentials of religious worship. These new positions would inform his later theological and political thought.

The fervent zeal for absolutism professed by Locke at the beginning of the Restoration had waned considerably in the intervening years. His insistence upon a less severe approach to the "question of liberty of conscience" did not, however, deter him from advocating a hierarchical determination of religious toleration. In the first place, he drew unmistakable distinctions between those dissenting groups entitled to a right of conscience and the conditions of "imposition and obedience" they would be required to respect in order to be formally recognized.[225] Furthermore, Locke differentiated between those "opinions and actions of men" that warranted varying degrees of toleration depending on their practicality, nature and contribution to the security of the nation.[226] Civil peace, he contended, is the sole function of the magistrate and his government:

> For if men could live peaceably & quietly togeather without uniteing under certain laws & growing into a common-wealth, there would be noe need at all of magistrates or politics, which were only made to preserve men in this world from the fraud & violence of one an other, soe that what was the end of erecting of government ought alone to be the measure of its proceeding.[227]

There is little doubt that Locke's purposes remained consistent throughout his early writings and that only the means of achieving these ends changed. Implicit in such a conclusion is the assumption that he replaced an absolutist doctrine with a policy of toleration. Unfortunately, he does not state this explicitly anywhere in the document,

---

[225] Ibid., 269.
[226] Ibid., 271.
[227] Ibid., 269-270.

preferring instead to leave the reader puzzled concerning his motives for the unanticipated reversal in viewpoint.

It is in this light that it seems unlikely that it will ever be entirely possible to identify the precise moment at which Locke came to formulate a new approach to an old political question. The lack of detailed documentation of the events surrounding his Restoration writings hamper our abilities to find even the slightest evidence confirming a date or even a reason for Locke's abrupt change of mind. The one fact of which we can be certain is that this change occurred between 1662 and 1667. Nevertheless the question remains—what happened in this intervening period to subtly alter Locke's convictions?

Reviewing the evidence as a whole, we may surmise that the outright failure of the monarchy and the government to protect the diversity of judgment and the variety of worship of the people, especially in the realm of indifferent matters of religion, may have prompted Locke to alter his own ideals and replace them with his own particular brand of limited toleration. This apparent modification in thinking meant that infallible interpreters of Holy Scripture would have to be found in the complex understanding and individuality of Christians themselves and not in the infallibility of church leaders.[228] Metaphorically, the time was drawing near for members of the flock to cast off the shepherd's fetters and fend for themselves in matters essential to salvation.[229]

---

[228] For the argument on the infallibility of the church fathers and its relation to the premise of the Christian obediently following those same leaders, see Riddle, "John Locke's Essay on Infallibility: Introduction, Text, and Translation," pp. 303-304.

[229] Timothy Stanton, "The Name and Nature of Locke's 'Defence of Nonconformity," *Locke Studies*, 6 (2006), 153.

Seeing religious freedom practiced on the Continent may have also alerted Locke to the simple reality that the guarantee of religious liberty might be one of the necessary preconditions of civil peace. The observation of individuals of different faiths living together in harmony under the protection of a civil authority could have arguably provided him sufficient empirical evidence to allow for religious toleration and, consequently, to reject persecution by secular authorities. Thus, in a more tolerant world, the magistrate's solemn duty would be solely to provide for the state and keep men from imposing their will and different judgments on one another by use of force or violence.

Alternatively, Locke's close relationship with Oxford's scholarly circle may also provide ample evidence to support my thesis that his newfound tolerationist writings were solidly grounded in adiaphoristic liberty and not, as some have argued, in economic self-interest. Scholars, who have mistakenly pointed to Locke's long-term relationship, beginning in 1666, with the obviously tolerant, but indifferent Lord Ashley as the source of his mature thoughts on toleration, have repeatedly made this common error.[230] The future first Earl of Shaftesbury may have had considerable influence on Locke's later political and economic thinking, but in the period in question there is little evidence to suggest Ashley was little more than a landlord to the young Oxford tutor in the early years of their association.[231]

During these years of upheaval, it is more likely that Robert Boyle's mentorship guided Locke through the political, religious and social difficulties of the 1660s and placed him on the well-trodden path toward the views and beliefs made famous by his

---

[230] Cranston, *John Locke*, 107.
[231] Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration*, 5.

later published works. The evidence for making such a claim is comparatively slight as there is certainly little in the way of existing, direct communications between the two men to support such a statement. It is ironic, however, that the same lack of proof has not deterred those who unquestionably portray Locke as "Boyle's pupil" in natural philosophy.[232] The challenge, therefore, will be to apply many of the same arguments in favour of one to show that the other is equally probable.

The Act Of Uniformity

It was no secret in this period that one of the most powerful tools of religious intolerance was the assertion of an absolute knowledge of the truth. Thus in order to find some common ground men of all religious convictions had to surrender some of their pretensions to certainty.[233] But, just how much of their power over knowledge were they willing to concede in the name of political and spiritual unity? This, I argue, became the grave question of the settlement period; and, from the ashes, Locke began to formulate his own solutions to the problem. For the time being, it is enough to place particular emphasis on some of the important political events, which may have contributed to the evolution of Locke's thought.

Locke's completion of his first literary work coincidentally fell in line with two events of notable importance in his early life—the dissolution of the Convention Parliament and his election as Lecturer in Greek at Christ Church. The government's actions would not affect the young scholar personally, but the repercussions following the

---

[232] Cranston, *John Locke*, 75.
[233] Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 237.

King's decision to dismiss one elected body in favour of another would eventually challenge Locke's way of thinking. The changes to his academic life brought about by the teaching appointment were equally pivotal to his intellectual development, as the student was now required to teach his ideas as well as to defend them.[234]

When the academic changes are considered, it is all the more striking, how little Locke's religious life had been disrupted at the university level. The traditional and ceremonial practices, loathed by the Puritans, had been reimposed almost without delay. This meant the Prayer Book, academic dress, the surplice, and, even, organs had returned as *adiaphora* long before King and Parliament had made an official settlement. By the end of the first year of the Restoration, those faculty members and students who had only recently sworn allegiance to their Puritan masters, "became eager to prove their newfound loyalty" to the restored political authorities.[235] If the academic and religious changes at Oxford, only a decade or so prior, could be called sweeping, the Restoration must be viewed as a non-event.

Aside from the replacement of the Presbyterian Dean, Edward Reynolds, by the Royalist divine, George Morley, there was minimal need for adjustment at Christ Church or any of the other colleges for that matter. In truth, the Restoration appeared to be welcomed by the majority of students who had grown up under the restrictive practices of the Puritans. Consequently, the reestablishment of certain traditions and ceremonies were viewed almost as "novel and glamorous," even if they were not considered necessary to Christian salvation. For instance, the reinstallation of the church organ brought students

---

[234] Cranston, *John Locke*, 69.
[235] Green, *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge*, 157.

and local citizenry alike to Christ Church Cathedral and other college chapels simply to "enjoy the music."[236]

Such externals in religion remained wholly permissible not only for their inherently adiaphoristic nature, but because they could be useful in subtly promoting the Holy Spirit by the positive action of bringing the Christian community together in one place for religious worship. But diversity in spiritual matters was not so easily controlled and the secular ambitions of the Anglican royalists availed themselves of a policy of enforced conformity to accomplish their desired political, religious, and economic ends.

Some notice, therefore, must be taken of a group of seventeenth-century thinkers, the resolute Anglicans, who, according to Wilbur K. Jordan, were inclined to an "inevitable vindictiveness" and "whose personal sufferings had beclouded their vision and warped their political judgment." Like their dogmatic opposites, the Independents, the Anglican extremists were uncompromising in their opposition to change and, thus, were disposed to see the world in black and white rather than shades of grey. Unlike their Puritan contemporaries, however, these "inflexible spirits" would come to wield power disproportionate to their numbers in the new Cavalier Parliament.[237] Broadly speaking, the relative temper of the nation appeared to be overwhelmingly in favour of pressuring the government into reestablishing the Church of England by whatever means necessary.

Not everyone was necessarily supportive of such an intolerant policy of "rigorously enforcing obedience to the established Church" in an attempt to restore

---

[236] Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales 1658-1667*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 146.
[237] Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, 4: 469.

"political stability," but dissenting voices rapidly disappeared from the national stage.[238] The Anglicans became more aggressive in their dealings with those who did not conform to their prescribed doctrinal forms of worship. Especially noteworthy are the numerous incidents of "eminent and loyal Presbyterians" who were "sequestered from their livings, and cited into the ecclesiastical courts, for not using the surplice and other ceremonies."[239] It was not long before the explosive character of these intolerant actions became clearer and more explicit.

The auspicious opening of the Cavalier Parliament, following closely Charles' invitation to Anglican and Presbyterian representatives to attend a conference at the Savoy for "further discussions" meant to revise the *Book of Common Prayer*, must have surely sent mixed messages to both laymen and politician regarding the future ambitions of the government. On the one hand, there was little doubt, of the triumphant return of Anglicanism and Royalism, which had not been favoured since the time of Charles I and Archbishop Laud. On the other, the promise of conciliation, an essential element of both the Declarations of Breda and Worcester House, was "given a real chance to produce something constructive" at the Savoy Conference, and they were hopeful that it would lead to a lasting "compromise settlement" as an end result.[240] The government, it would

---

[238] Paul Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 162.

[239] Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 4: 271. This group is often referred to as the "Reconcilers," which probably came from their sincere intentions to obtain a settlement that moderate Anglican and Puritans could both accept.

[240] Whiteman, "The Church of England Restored," 76. In April 1660, Charles II outlined the key principles for the Restoration of the monarchy in the Declaration of Breda. He expressed his personal desire for liberty of conscience in religion. The actual terms of the Restoration settlement were to be worked out in detail by a freely elected Parliament.

appear, did not view the two concepts as disparate, but endorsed them equally as part of its program of comprehension on behalf of all parties. In any event, the majority of new members in the Lower House did not necessarily agree with the King's message of toleration for others.

When the new Parliament was summoned on 8 May 1661, the "zealous enemies of the Presbyterians, and abettors of the principles of archbishop Laud," as an openly biased Puritan historian called the Cavalier members, went to work systematically dismantling many of the constitutional amendments initiated from 1641-54 and most of the ecclesiastical reforms only recently settled upon by the Convention Parliament. That this was allowed to happen, despite Charles' promise that "he valued himself much upon keeping his word, and upon making good whatsoever he had promised to his subjects," was evidence of the evolving nature of the relationship between the Crown and the elected members of Parliament.[241]

The House of Commons swiftly deteriorated into a smoldering instrument of intolerance. In less than a year, the calm moderation and composed reasonableness of the Convention Parliament had been replaced by an arrogance and narrow-mindedness easily recognized by the opening salvo fired by the elected members who voted overwhelmingly to submit the Solemn League and Covenant to "the common hangman" for public burning.[242]

Similarly, the practice of reconciliation and compromise, ruthlessly exploited by both parties during the political and religious impasse of the preceding twelve months,

---

[241] Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 4: 288.
[242] Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime*, 164.

had now been replaced by the somewhat inflexible necessity of "uniformity and conformity" in worship, which most enthusiastic Anglicans subscribed to as holding the keys to peace and order.[243] With the more aggressive side of the new Anglicanism, came the telltale measure of practicing what they preached. Forthwith, the Parliamentarians resolved to receive "the Sacrament according to the rite of the Jacobean Prayer Book," which by the end of the Savoy Conference on 25 July 1661, had not suffered from any serious revision in either structure or doctrine.[244]

Acutely aware of its position of strength, the Commons yielded no quarter to the government or the Lords in their efforts to provide for any Presbyterian ministers ejected as a consequence of the proposed Act of Uniformity. Nor did they allow for "latitude in the surplice or cross in baptism, for fear of establishing a schism, and weakening the position of the church, as to her right of imposing indifferent rites and ceremonies," as many devoted Anglicans, including Locke, predicted would occur if unconditional religious liberty were granted by the magistrate.[245] It was not surprising, therefore, that the Bill of Uniformity, as passed by the Lower House eleven months earlier, was given royal assent on 19 May 1662.

The legislation, prefixed to the newly issued *Book of Common Prayer*, was officially christened, "An act for the uniformity of public prayers, and administration of sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies, and for establishing the forms of making,

---

[243] Douglas R. Lacey, *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689: A Study in the Perpetuation and Tempering of Parliamentarianism*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 47.
[244] Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 373.
[245] Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 4: 325.

ordaining, and consecrating, bishops, priests, and deacons, in the church of England." [246] The period for implementing the conditions of conformity was set to coincide with the feast of St. Bartholomew (24 August 1662) and would require "every dignitary, fellow, incumbent, curate and teacher" to submit to a series of tests that would somehow demonstrate their fealty to church and state.[247] To admit otherwise naturally placed the nonconformist in the problematic position of consciously admitting to heretical beliefs in religious worship and treasonous designs in civil actions. For in terms of uniformity it was evident the authors of the statute would settle for nothing less than absolute obedience to the word of law and utter loyalty to state and church.

More than a thousand clergy, lecturers, college fellows and schoolmasters retired peacefully or were deprived of their livings in England and Wales as a result of this rancourous piece of legislation. "It raised a grievous cry over the nation, for here were many men much valued," wrote Bishop Gilbert Burnet, who were

> distinguished by their abilities and zeal, now cast out ignominiously, reduced to great poverty, provoked by such spiteful usage, and cast upon those popular practices, which both their principles and their circumstances seemed to justify, of forming separate congregations, and of diverting men from publick worship. This begot esteem, and raised compassion, as having a fair appearance of suffering persecution for conscience.[248]

Notably and, perhaps, not surprisingly, Locke's earliest literary antagonist, Edward Bagshaw, was numbered among the outcast.

---

[246] Ibid.
[247] I.M. Green, *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England 1660-1663*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 144.
[248] Quoted in Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 4: 382.

The persistent demand for unity in religion did not necessarily mean the battle was lost for those individuals, who, by virtue of their belief in the necessity of liberty of conscience, might have persisted in facilitating meaningful discussion about the question of toleration. It meant simply, W. K. Jordan competently argues, "there remained only the difficult process of accommodating institutions to the fact of historical change."[249] Be that as it may, individuals, as well as institutions, were also required to adapt to changing realities. This argument is so obvious it should require no proof. But before institutional change could take place, there had to be a concerted effort by men of imagination and charity to see beyond their own parochial worlds and allow for differences in religious opinion.

The reality of this situation can be confirmed by the extant records of Restoration clergymen (e.g. Edward Reynolds, John Tillotson, and John Wilkins) holding true to their beliefs in matters of conscience while still maintaining their livings. But there is also reason to believe, if my interpretation of the events surrounding the Act of Uniformity and the succession of statutes passed to enforce conformity is accurate, that Locke, following the esteemed Robert Boyle's own pronounced views on religious toleration, may have personally observed acts of unwarranted persecution and thereafter sought to identify and formulate his own particular defence of toleration.

Robert Boyle, Oxford Virtuoso

Despite the reassurances of 1660 that the restoration of the monarchy would bring about unity and harmony, moderate theorists of all ideological persuasions found

---

[249] Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, 4: 469.

themselves less than assured that their political and religious leaders would bring about the compromises necessary to avoid a return to the pointless civil bloodshed of the previous twenty years. One such thinker was Robert Boyle, the Oxford virtuoso who was personally affected by the tragedy of the civil war and a moderate who feared the brutal abuses discharged in the name of religion. Sir Peter Pett, reflecting later upon Boyle's life wrote:

> Shortly after the King's Restoration Mr Boyle and I largely discoursing of the extravagant severitys practiced by some Bishops towards Dissenters in the Reigne of King Charles the 1 st as likewise of the horrid persecutions that the Church of England Divines suffered from the following Usurptions, and we fearing that our restored Clergy might be thereby to such a Vindictive retaliation as would be contrary to the true measures of Christianity and Politics.[250]

Their fears proved prophetic and anticipated many of the events that would take place in the years immediately following the Restoration.

Boyle had the distinct advantage of being born into a well-to-do aristocratic family at Lismore Castle in southern Ireland, as the fourteenth child and seventh son of Richard Boyle, the Lord High Treasurer of Ireland and the First Earl of Cork. At the tender age of eight young Boyle entered Eton College, where he spent three years receiving an education befitting the son of a gentleman. After his formal training, he traveled around Europe, further studying with the private French tutor, Isaac Marcombes. In his fourteenth year he spent some time studying, first hand, the works of the recently deceased Galileo Galilei during a winter visit to Florence.

---

[250] Robert Boyle, *Robert Boyle: By Himself and His Friends with a fragment of William Wotton's lost Life of Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter, (London: Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited, 1994), 72.

When Boyle returned to England in 1644 the country was still in the midst of civil war, and, more devastating for the young man, during his time on the Continent, his father had passed away. He inherited property at Stalbridge, Dorsetshire in England, where he remained until 1655 when he settled in Oxford. Fortunately the time spent in isolation at Stalbridge proved to be not only productive, but also beneficial for the clever, young man. It was during this period that he studied a wide array of subjects, including theology, mathematics, and those matters related to the new natural philosophy as advanced by the group he informally christened the "Invisible" College.[251]

In1646, Boyle found himself first visiting members of the Philosophical College in London, where they would regularly meet to discuss diverse topics, such as "mechanical philosophy, the mechanics and husbandry, according to the principles of our new philosophical college, that values no knowledge, but as it hath a tendency to use."[252] The key figure of this mysterious circle of academics was Samuel Hartlib, who, by his own intellectual curiosity, personified the organization as a whole. His numerous publications and frequent correspondence were often devoted to the subject of toleration.

---

[251] Daniel A. Beck, *Miracle and the Mechanical Philosophy: The Theology of Robert Boyle in its Historical Context*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1986), 31-2. Boyle made numerous references to the "Invisible College" in a series of letters. The first such mention of the fledgling society was made in a letter written to his former tutor Isaac Marcombes on 22 October 1646: "When you intend for *England*, to bring along with you what good receipts or choice books of any of these subjects you can procure; which will make you extremely welcome to our *invisible college*, which I had now designed to give you a description of." A similar reference to the organization was made in a letter written to Samuel Hartlib on 8 May 1647, where Boyle reveals Hartlib's earnest diligence to the project: "I say, you interest yourself so much in the *Invisible College*, and that whole society is so highly concerned in all the accidents of your life, that you can send me no intelligence of your own affairs, that does not (at least relationally) assume the nature of *Utopian*."

[252] Robert Boyle to Isaac Marcombes, 22 October 1646, *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, 6 vols. + index, ed. Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio and Lawrence M. Principe, (London: Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited, 2001), I, 42.

In a tract written in 1647 in support of religious peace Hartlib reminded his readers that "the troubles of all States and Churches in Europe," originate from three sources:

> The first is, the Affection of a Spirituall Absolute Power over Mens Souls. The Second, an Absolute Temporall Monarchy over Mens Estates and Bodies. And the third is, the want of Union and good Intelligence amongst those, who, labouring to free themselves from the one and the other Yoke, and Maintaining their Religious and Naturall Rights and Priviledges in a distracted and confused way, rather weaken then strengthen one anothers hands in all their Enterprises.[253]

Concerned with the universal availability of knowledge and its benefit to future generations, Hartlib refused to allow others to shirk their responsibility for the ambitious project of shared education—even if that meant single-handedly commissioning and editing manuscripts for publication himself. Boyle was an obvious candidate for membership into Hartlib's circle, where practical endeavours were held in the same high regard as intellectual achievements.

In the meantime, Boyle steadily made personal connections with individuals inside and outside of his practical expertise, expanding his realm of knowledge by associating with others of dissimilar interests, and forming long-term friendships with men of diverse abilities. One such person was the Scottish clergyman, John Dury, a close friend and colleague of Samuel Hartlib, who was committed to the religious unification of Protestants throughout Europe. Dury, like Hartlib, was a follower of the teaching of the Czech educator, John Amos Comenius, who had earnestly attempted to formalize a method (Pansophism) whereby theology and philosophy would be universally taught to the benefit of all mankind. Not surprisingly, Boyle and Dury became life-long friends and

---

[253] Samuel Hartlib, *The necessity of some nearer conjunction and correspondency amongst evangelicall Protestants, for the advancement of the nationall cause, and bringing to passe the effect of the covenant*, (London, 1644), 4.

shared many of the same principles with respect to religious freedom. This statement is of biographical significance for it shows that in Stalbridge Boyle was already in contact with moderate theologians, forming friendships that would last into his years in London.

Further evidence can be gleaned from a letter written to Dury in 1647, where Boyle himself shows his own moderate leanings. Alongside an account of a personal experience during his time spent in Geneva is to be found the value statement exemplifying Boyle's irritation with those people who quibble over minor nuances of indifferent matters of religion and fail to come to terms with those elements of doctrine, worship and discipline fundamental to all Protestants:

> It has been long, as well my wonder, as my grief, to see such comparatively petty differences in judgement make such wide breaches and vast divisions in affection. It is strange, that men should rather be quarrelling for a few trifling opinions, wherein they dissent, than to embrace one another for those many fundamental truths, wherein they agree.[254]

This letter is important, as it is the earliest known writing by Boyle on the theory of *adiaphora* and, as such, at least demonstrates some similarity of thought between himself and Locke, whom he had yet to meet.

The context of this letter is also of particular significance. Boyle's suggested method of dealing with the more extreme elements of dissent during the civil war showed considerable restraint and maturity for one so young in years. His evaluation of these events did not change appreciably during his lifetime. What did change was his understanding of the less than subtle means by which men were persecuted by those in

---

[254] Robert Boyle to John Dury, 3 May 1647, *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, I, 57.

positions of authority, through threats to their body, fame or fortune, for their own particular brand of faith. Thus he confessed

> it would be extremely my satisfaction, if I could see, by God's blessing, your pious endeavours of twisting our froward parties into a moderate and satisfactory reconcilement, as successful, as I am confident they will be prudent and unwearied. As for our upstart sectaries (mushrooms of the last night's springing up) the worst part of them, if not exasperated by, instead of lighting them into the right way with the candle, flinging the candlestick at their heads, like *Jonah's* gourd, smitten at the root with the worm of their irrationality, will be as sudden in their decay, as they were hasty in their growth; and indeed perhaps the safest way to destroy them is rather to let them die, than attempt to kill them.[255]

This is evidence that the young Boyle respected Dury's opinion as an ecumenical writer who shared his opposition to the crushing burden of religious persecution and the stifling of the natural yearning for knowledge.

Before his move from Stalbridge to Oxford, Boyle became further immersed in "utopian and philanthropic" activities through his enthusiastic support for the establishment of Hartlib's "Agencie for Universal Learning" or Office of Address, which was primarily founded "for the making some further progresse & Advancement in a usefull improvement of Experiments, to the more cleare elucidation as well of things Naturall as Artificiall."[256] By the time the Agency's aims were fully expressed in 1655, following after John Wilkins, Boyle had taken up residence in Oxford.[257]

In this decision, he was not alone. Christopher Wren had made a similar commitment in 1649 and following a similar invitation from Wilkins, Seth Ward, the new

---

[255] Ibid.
[256] Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660.* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1975), 72-74.
[257] B.J. Shapiro, "Latitudinarianism and Science in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present*, 40 (Jul., 1968), 23.

Savilian Professor of Astronomy, came to Wadham College, Oxford, for the opportunity to work with the esteemed scholar and religious moderate. In describing Wilkins, Ward maintained that he

> had nothing of Bigotry, Unmannerliness, or Censoriousness, which then were in the *Zenith*, amongst the Heads, and Fellows. For which Reason many Country Gentlemen of all Persuasions, but especially those then stiled Cavaliers and Malignants, for adhering to the King and the Church sent their sons to that College, that they might be under his Government.[258]

Essentially, as Barbara Shapiro has remarked, Boyle's decision to follow after Wilkins must not only be seen as an opportunity to join in Oxford's "scientific activities" but also to do it in a tolerant environment away from "the religious factionalism that had engendered and then been fostered by the Puritan Revolution."[259]

It is clear from the available evidence that within a remarkably short period Boyle had attracted the attention of many of the leading Puritan and Anglican moderates located around Oxford and that by the Restoration his influence in experimental research was easily apparent. He was also certainly at the forefront of intellectual and literary affairs, as he was not only acquainted with the leading "virtuosi" in London, but also demonstrated reciprocal respect for those members of the Oxonian community with humanistic interests.[260]

---

[258] Ward, *Life of Seth Ward*, 29.
[259] Shapiro, "Latitudinarianism and Science in Seventeenth-Century England," 22.
[260] M.A. Stewart, "Locke's Professional Contacts with Robert Boyle," *The Locke Newsletter* 12 (Autumn 1981), 20.

Boyle's Influence on Locke

During Boyle's years in Stalbridge he had become a self-taught expert of biblical languages in order to understand and discuss scriptural texts further.[261] It would seem only fitting then that he later sponsored a number of related literary projects, including the translation into Arabic of Grotius' *De veritate religionis Christianae* by Edward Pococke in 1660 and the publication of Robert Sanderson's casuistical lectures in 1659, "given at Oxford in the 1640s before he was ejected by the parliamentary visitors."[262]

The latter enterprise is particularly important to our discussion. Firstly, Boyle was introduced to the Calvinist theologian, Thomas Barlow, who brokered the deal with Sanderson and provided advice on cases of conscience when required.[263] And, secondly, the completion of Sanderson's *De Obligatione Conscientiae* in 1660 became fundamental to Locke's arguments in the second *Tract* on government. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish whether Locke ever met the former Regius Professor of divinity, but it is probable that Boyle may have introduced the two men at some point during the Restoration.[264]

Parallel to these collaborations is the most ambitious of Boyle's "missionary" enterprises. As we have already observed in the writings of Locke and Bagshaw, the Restoration was a time of appreciable uncertainty for the vast majority of Englishmen, and Boyle was no exception. Much of the ink spilled during this tentative period was

---

[261] Michael Hunter, "Boyle, Robert (1627–1691)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[262] Ibid. Locke became friends with Professor Pococke soon after his return to Christ Church in 1660.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Cranston, *John Locke*, 66.

used to offer recommendations for a peaceful settlement solution for a nation exhausted by years of civil war and political experimentation. Boyle, according to his biographer Thomas Birch, had always promoted "moderation to those, who dissented from us, and urged people not to force tender consciences," a view which echoed the policy of toleration introduced by the newly restored King.[265]

Not unexpectedly Boyle regarded the expressions of well-meaning intentions of the returning government and clergy with considerable skepticism and well-placed anxiety. In discussing these somber matters with his friend, Sir Peter Pett, Boyle was most zealous in voicing his opinions "against all severities and persecutions upon the account of religion."[266] Meanwhile, the "two respectable men," as the historian Neal described them, set upon a "conciliating and liberal design" in the interest of tolerance and compassion.[267] Pett judged that this plan of action came about when "we came in fine to an agreement that would tend to the public good to have something writ and published in print assertive of Liberty of Conscience."[268] Boyle was so enthusiastic about the proposed project that he immediately recruited the services of his friends, Barlow and Dury, to assist in the publication of a number of works advocating the toleration of all protestants within the established framework of the Church of England.

The tasks were assigned: Dr. Thomas Barlow, Bodley's librarian and esteemed scholar, would consider the theological implications of tolerating several religions, or

---

[265] Thomas Birch, *The life of the Honourable Robert Boyle. By Thomas Birch.* (London, 1744), 298.
[266] Ibid., 299.
[267] Neal, *History of the Puritans*, 284n.
[268] Boyle, *Robert Boyle: By Himself and His Friends*, 72.

opinions, within a state religion. As the author of *Several Cases of Conscience*, Barlow followed Sanderson on the path to a political and pragmatic argument for tolerance. He concluded that while the magistrate may compel a man to be educated in the reasons and truth of the established religion, a subject is only bound to obey the command but not necessarily obligated to believe the message. "As Parents compell their Children to go to School for Information, though they should not, cannot compell them to an assent, and belief of what they are taught." Thus, according to Barlow, it was the duty of the Christian community to preserve the lawful order amongst men, as "we and all men are bound to *Try all things, and hold fast that which is good.*"[269]

Boyle called upon the prominent ecumenist, John Dury, to submit his learned observations on religious controversies abroad and offer suggestions for renewing the spiritual vitality of the Protestant religion at home. In this instance, Dury reflected Boyle's own feelings in his tract, *The Plain Way of Peace and Unity in Matters of Religion*, when he concluded that a peaceful settlement could only be attained by building upon the essentials which "all Protestants agree in Doctrine, Worship and Discipline," not by "biting and devouring one another about the things wherein they differ."[270] Those who truly seek peace and unity, he offered, will gladly follow those principles and practices that "distinguish the Protestant Religion from Popery" and if these standards are

> upheld in a Gospel-way; that is, if they be made evident to the conscience of upright minded men by a Demonstration of Truth, and not imposed upon all men,

---

[269] Thomas Barlow, *Several Miscellaneous and Weighty Cases of Conscience, Learnedly and Judiciously Resolved By the Right Reverend Father in God, Dr. Thomas Barlow, Late Lord-Bishop of Lincoln.* (London, 1692), 91. This tract, while written during the time of the Restoration, was not published until after Barlow's death.

[270] John Dury, *The Plain Way of Peace and Unity in Matters of Religion.* (London, 1660), 3-5.

> because some in power will have it so, then the Protestant Religion will be propagated without the mixture of Popery, but not otherwise.[271]

In sum, it may be suggested that Dury had endeavoured to show that the unity of the Christian Church in England was more or less dependent upon the vindication of the freedom of every human being to follow his own faith in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual charity. Not surprisingly, this line of thought clearly reflected a point of view similar to those "impartial" individuals, the latitude-men, who desired a broad and comprehensive church, strongly grounded in morality and the essentials of faith.[272] Locke would later come to favour many of the practical concerns associated with the "their toleration of disparate views."[273]

Sir Peter Pett's political treatise is the final item in the collection of texts within the Boylean "missionary" project. It appeared under the title *Discourse concerning Liberty of Conscience.* The starting point for Pett, as it was for Barlow and Dury, was the advancement of religious freedom within an Anglican Establishment for "all or most of the parties differing in lesser matters of religion." Such freedom would not only strengthen the very fabric of English society, but diversity of opinion might prove to secure "the peace and safety of the Nation."[274]

Perhaps, more importantly, it was Pett's pragmatic intention to help prevent further bloodshed by systematically arguing in favour of liberty of conscience in spiritual,

---

[271] Ibid., 1-2.
[272] Shapiro, "Latitudinarianism and Science in Seventeenth-Century England," 30.
[273] Ibid., 29.
[274] Peter Pett, *Discourse concerning Liberty of Conscience, In which are Contain'd Proposalls About what Liberty in this kind is now Politically Expedient to be given, and severall Reasons to shew how much the Peace and Welfare of the Nation is concern'd therein.* (London, 1660), 9.

as well as, civil concerns. He underscored his anxiety by reasoning that there is always the danger that civil war may arise when "there are but two parties in Nation that differ from one another in Religion," but this outcome would be less likely in a country where several religious factions were tolerated.

> For they are not likely to know the exact strength of one another, and their severall animosities will keep them from joyning together against any one that doth not invade their liberty in generall. Nothing but extreme necessity can bring them to meet amicably and consult together.[275]

Persecution leads to unrest and revolt. Accordingly, where there is no persecution there is peace. "There is hardly a possibility of a civill War arising on the account of Religion," Pett reasoned, "if there be a fair Liberty of Conscience established."[276]

Without doubt Pett's *Discourse* made a strong case for toleration in most circumstances. It was a declaration of respect and a promise of comprehension in matters indifferent in religion from one of the more prominent figures of the Settlement period. The importance of the text, however, must not be overstated: Pett had written very little that was regarded as particularly original. The issues, as we have seen, had already been given considerable expression from defenders and opponents alike. The significance of the document is rather found by appreciating its close proximity to those individuals in the Oxford circle and how they might have received it. In other words, how spirited was the promotion of the work, and did it exert any profound degree of influence upon Locke's evolving ideas on toleration?

---

[275] Ibid., 13.
[276] Ibid.

Certainly, the similarities and agreement between Pett and Locke cannot be easily dismissed. While there is no existing evidence of Locke's having read Pett's *Discourse* during the early years of the Restoration, there is no reason to believe he would not have had ready access to it. It is also important to keep in mind how Locke sought "Boyle's friendship and approval" in the same year that Pett published his critical defence of liberty of conscience. This coincidence has led John Marshall to speculate on just how much Boyle's own works and partnership in the project may have "prompted" Locke to read Pett's tract. "While Locke," he observes, "was probably not convinced by the *Discourse's* plea for comprehension when reading it, since the second of the *Two Tracts* was most probably composed after reading the *Discourse*, he did thereby gain an early awareness of 'Latitudinarian' views."[277] There is no doubt that certain questions are left open to interpretation.

If we are to believe that Locke was not an early convert to the idea of comprehension it is certainly much easier to accept his eventual transformation as gradual rather than hasty and forced. This development would also be more in keeping with Locke's later, more ambitious undertakings, when he would spend long years developing philosophical projects for publication (e.g. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*). It is, therefore, not difficult to infer, how after much deliberation and consideration, Locke would find himself echoing opinions similar in content to an otherwise more notable contemporary. Accordingly, in *An Essay concerning Toleration* Locke hardly concealed his own personal adaptation of some of Pett's political ideas:

---

[277] Marshall, *John Locke*, 45-6.

> For the Fanatiques taken all together being numerous, & possibly more then the hearty friends to the state religion, are yet crumbled into different partys amongst them selves, & are at as much distance one from another as from you, for their bare opinions are as inconsistent one with another as with the church of England. People therefore that are soe shattered into different factions are best securd by toleration since being in as good a condition under you, as they can hope for under any, tis not like they should joyn, to set up any other, whom they can not be certain will use them soe well. But if you persecute them you make them all of one party & interest against you, tempt them to shake of your yoak & venture for a new government."[278]

The striking similarity of thought between the two men cannot be considered accidental and only Locke's lack of formal recognition of Pett's contribution to his own political ideas keeps us from establishing a direct connection between them.[279]

It is vital to remember that Boyle, Pett, Dury and Barlow in 1660 were well acquainted with one another. They not only shared each other's desires for a peaceful resolution of the question of the religious settlement, but they also shared a familiarity and understanding of the political landscape in England before the Restoration. It is against this backdrop of interpersonal communications I have considered the changes in Locke's thought. More importantly, I have attempted to draw the connection between those individuals who are acknowledged to have influenced Locke's philosophical thinking as being the same persons who influenced his theological and political ideas.

Despite the lack of direct evidence establishing an exchange of opinions between Locke and Boyle there has been no shortage of scholars willing to argue that Boyle and his associates influenced the young scholar in matters of natural philosophy.[280] For

---

[278] Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration*, 298.
[279] G.A.J. Rogers, "Boyle, Locke, and Reason," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27 (Apr.-Jun., 1966), 206.
[280] Ibid., 207.

instance, James Gibson strongly argued Boyle's case when he wrote: "Whilst it must remain a matter of uncertainty whether the scepticism of Glanvill exerted any influence at all upon Locke, no such doubt can be felt in the case of Boyle."[281] Similarly, Richard Aaron concluded in *John Locke*, "The really important influence on Locke from the empiricist side was the group that gathered around Sir Robert Boyle, and which ultimately founded the Royal Society. Indeed, the most important influence of all was Boyle himself."[282]

But, perhaps, the most surprising expression of the certainty of Boyle's influence comes from none other than Locke's modern biographer, Maurice Cranston, who emphatically states: "There were two main currents which governed the development of Locke's mind. One was the unformulated *ad hoc* empiricism of Newton and Boyle and the other Royal Society virtuosi. The other was the systematic rationalism of Descartes."[283] The perplexing feature of this statement stems from Cranston's insistence, in no less than three separate works, that Locke's "views on toleration" were directly or indirectly a result of an unplanned encounter with Lord Ashley, the politician.[284] More notably, however, we find no mention of Boyle or any of the other Royal Society virtuosi having contributed in any manner to Locke's "mature opinions on Toleration."[285] This statement might first of all suggest that Locke's relationship with Ashley, rather than

---

[281] Ibid., 205n1. See J. Gibson, *Locke's Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 260-261.
[282] Ibid. See Aaron, *John Locke*, 12.
[283] Ibid., 205n2. See Cranston, *John Locke*, 265.
[284] Cranston, *John Locke*, 111. I will return later to consider Cranston's comments when further analyzing the Locke-Ashley relationship.
[285] Ibid.

Boyle, was a far greater influence on his writings on toleration, but a closer examination shows this claim cannot really be justified.

It is certainly no exaggeration to say that despite the lack of written evidence establishing their relationship, Boyle as Locke's philosophical mentor is "generally accepted" within the academic community.[286] "Conjecture," John Rogers reasons, "must lead us to suppose, however, simply because their views were very similar and they were good friends, that there must have been some exchange or common source."[287] Further proof is made plausible, he suggests, not only by their Oxford connection throughout the Restoration period, but also because of Locke's concern "with the philosophical problems which were eventually to give rise to the *Essay* [concerning Human Understanding]."[288] These are the same critical questions on the Law of Nature, we may remember, which Locke discussed with his friend, Gabriel Towerson, along with the subject of Toleration, in the early months of the Restoration.[289] "It would seem very likely," Rogers continues, "that as Boyle and Locke had plenty of opportunity to discuss such matters they did so, especially as the questions which the younger man was writing on were closely connected to some views held by Boyle."[290]

No doubt. But should we not then judge Boyle's possible influence on Locke's writings on governmental power and theological disputes by these same criteria? Is it not

---

[286] Rogers, "Boyle, Locke, and Reason," 205.
[287] Ibid., 207.
[288] Ibid., 206.
[289] The Law of Nature (Lex Naturae) should not be confused with the laws of nature sought after by natural philosophers. Instead, as the term refers to "the moral law which the Creator has made evident to and compelling upon every rational being." See Cranston, *John Locke*, 64-67.
[290] Rogers, "Boyle, Locke, and Reason," 206.

conceivable Locke would have discussed the details of the imminent church settlement with Boyle and others in Oxford just as he had the philosophical problems of *Lex Naturae*? In either case, the answer must be in the affirmative.

Despite Locke's uncompromising defence of political authority during the Restoration debate on *adiaphora* there is no reason to suggest the topic caused any sort of heated disagreement with Boyle, and there is no evidence to prove otherwise.[291] Judging by the examples found in Locke's correspondence with Boyle, Rogers rightly contends, we must assume Locke exhibited a certain amount of "deference" to "the other's then superior intellectual position."[292] It is, therefore, highly probable that Locke kept his personal writings sequestered and merely deliberated and considered the older man's words. Certainly as the debate shifted from the heated polemics of armchair politicians to the realities of Parliament Boyle's unease over the eventual outcome of the church settlement continued to grow; but, in the meantime, Locke held onto his faith in the state, embodied in the monarchy, to preserve the peace and bring unity to the nation.

To be sure, the reality of these observations might be pure speculation. Locke, regrettably, offers us little to go by during this crucial period of English history and even less of what informed his views. Concerning the ejection of the Puritan clergy in 1662, Locke is reputed to have said:

> [They were] worthy, learned, pious, orthodox divines, who did not throw themselves out of service, but were forcibly ejected. Nor were they cast out

---

[291] Locke's response to Henry Stubbe's work *An Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause* indicates his support of toleration in general, but this, as we clearly have seen, was not the issue for him at that time.

[292] Rogers, "Boyle, Locke, and Reason," 207.

> because there was a supply of ministers to carry on the work of religion, for there was room for the employment of more hands, if they were to be found.[293]

Again, the evidence is minimal and, in this case, may be somewhat unreliable, as Locke was quoted many years after the proceedings surrounding Black Bartholomew's Day.

Evolution of Thought

The events of the civil war had clearly traumatized the young John Locke and brought to bear his heightened concern for peace and order. The great relief found in the Restoration was considerable and only the acute importance of the church settlement debates gave him cause to put his thoughts down on paper. What he did with his writings after they came into being is another matter and is summarized below.

Locke, in fact, did not attempt to find a publisher for his *Tracts* in either Oxford or London. This was thanks to the Act of Uniformity making any practical consideration of publication "superfluous" to the *Great Question.*[294] In similar fashion, Pett avoided printing Barlow's "learned book of toleration" after the debates had resulted in the somewhat inevitable outcome. While Boyle had initially expressed enthusiasm for the project and later encouraged his friend to publish Barlow's book, he wholeheartedly agreed with Pett's resolve to bury the manuscript. In due course Pett wrote a long account explaining his difficult decision that included the following statement:

---

[293] Quoted in Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 4: 382. I have traced the source of this single reference to the French historian, Paul Rapin de Thoyras, author of *L'Histoire d'Angleterre* and companion of Prince William of Orange during his invasion of England in November 1688. Locke may have had occasion to relate certain key events of his life to the writer, who, in 1707, three years after Locke's death, began his great work. Nicolas Tindal would later translate it into English, but I have been unable to find any reference to the quote in his translation.

[294] Locke, *PTG*, 14.

> I afterward satisfyd Mr Boyle for my not having done it, was because the Restoration of the Church together with the King, was attended with the restoring of the old Churchmens, old Mumpsimus-doctrine & practice of Persecuting the Nonconformists as such, & Dr Barlows proving persecution unlawful would not have had any effect in that Conjuncture but the raising a persecution against himselfe, & with which he was soone after the Restoration threatned by the clerical grandees.[295]

Barlow's discourse would be posthumously published in 1692 three years after Locke anonymously sent his *Epistola de Tolerantia* (A Letter concerning Toleration) to the printers with his authorship hidden covertly beneath the acronym, P.A.P.O.J.L.A.[296] In the instance of the former the reluctance to publish while Barlow lived served the purpose of protecting his person from harm. On the other hand, Locke merely followed the same ritual of identity concealment established while authoring his maiden *Tracts* in the 1660s.

For Locke, the problem was not simply one of hesitancy in presenting an argument, but that the events of the past had shown him the virtues of keeping one's own counsel or, at least, the merits of publishing under anonymous cover. His apparent unwillingness to make public his personal opinions may also explain the lack of published works before *An Essay concerning Human Understanding, Two Treatises on Government,* and *A Letter concerning Toleration* were printed in 1689. It is, therefore, rather surprising that Locke received any attention at all for his views with respect to freedom in religious worship given that his tolerationist discussions were either not published (e.g. *The Two Tracts on Government, An Essay concerning Toleration*) or pseudonymously printed, as was the case of the *Epistola de Tolerantia.* How his ideas

---

[295] Boyle, *Robert Boyle: By Himself and His Friends*, 72. *Mumpsimus* is a term used to describe a traditional custom or notion adhered to although shown to be unreasonable.

[296] Cranston, *John Locke*, 320. The letters reputedly stood for *Pacis Amico, Persecutionis Osore, Johanne Locko Anglo*, or "A friend of Peace, Hater of Persecution, John Locke, Englishman."

were disseminated for public consumption, however, is not particularly important to my closing arguments, but rather why he chose at any given time to involve himself in a specific discussion and how that further allows us to gather insight into his actions and, perhaps, see the immediacy of his thoughts.

For example, when looking at Locke's pursuits following the practical execution of the Act of Uniformity it is apparent that he had quietly laid aside his early writings on toleration and set about focusing his mind on activities mostly unrelated to the subject. This is not to say that he would have completely refrained from either discussing or meditating upon the subject, it merely suggests that he shifted it to a position of lesser importance until something significant happened to justify devoting more effort in intellectual pursuit. Two such events were to occur in rapid succession.

First, Parliament eagerly passed several more pieces of injurious legislation, including, the Five Mile Act, which prevented banned nonconformists, mostly clergymen, from living within five miles of incorporated and chartered towns. The sheer vindictiveness of these laws, as set forth by the hard-line Anglican Commons, must have surely unnerved even the most resolute authoritarian, among whose number Locke at this time would have been counted.

Secondly, Locke left England for the very first time and found himself posted as a diplomatic secretary to Sir Walter Vane in Brandenburg. The war against the Dutch had boiled over and Charles needed active allies on the continent. An understanding with the Elector of Brandenburg, if steadily cultivated, might have led, at best, to an alliance and, at least, the promise of neutrality with a geographically strategic territory. Initially,

Vane's mission was effective in neutralizing the monetarily motivated Elector, but in the end was frustrated by the extraordinary efforts of the Dutch to bribe their southerly neighbours with men, funds and provisions.[297] Locke's solitary diplomatic duty was short-lived, but by all accounts was highly successful.

It was a happy coincidence that there was time put aside to explore the continent and that not every waking moment was committed to political business. Correspondence between Locke and Boyle suggests that the young secretary to the Ambassador had resolved to supply valuable information relating to alchemy, pharmaceutical medicine, religious toleration and other diverse subjects to the Oxford virtuoso. The letters are noticeably subjective and generally littered with negative comparisons to all things English, but what cannot be questioned is that the subject matter was exhaustive in its scope and subsequently leaves little doubt that the two men were ordinarily accustomed to discussing a myriad of topics.

For our purposes, Locke's comments on religious toleration are of particular interest. In these letters he deliberately describes to Boyle the religious conditions current in the town of Cleves, where Vane's staff first settled in November 1665. "The town is little, and not very strong or handsom; the buildings and streets irregular," Locke observed,

> nor is there a greater uniformity in their religion, three professions being publickly allowed: the Calvinists are more than Lutherans, and the Catholicks more than both (but no papist bears any office) besides some few Anabaptists, who are not publickly tolerated. But yet this distance in their churches gets not into their houses. They quietly permit one another to choose their way to heaven; for I cannot observe any quarrels or animosities amongst them upon the account

[297] Cranston, *John Locke*, 81-84.

> of religion. This good correspondence is owing partly to the power of the magistrate, and good nature of the people, who (as I find by enquiry) entertain different opinions, without any secret hatred or rancour.[298]

But, why, we may ask, has Locke chosen to relate these specific observations about an insignificant township to Boyle, and could they have been to a certain degree formed from some earlier treatment of the topic? I think we can infer from the extant evidence that Boyle may have been at least partially responsible for instructing Locke to report in detail his findings with respect to the state of religion on the continent. It may also have been his suggestion or at least his strong support that stimulated this information exchange as a result of the recently passed Conventicle and Five Mile Acts, which further enforced conformity to the Church of England. This, as much as anything, would surely account for Locke's renewed interest in the topic.

Of course, it is possible, Cranston reluctantly concedes, that Locke was "moving away" from his earlier Hobbesian views, a claim which I would argue was fairly certain around this time.[299] In a similar manner, one could also point to Locke's observation of accord among the different religions as providing credence to some writings he had been studying on the topic of the infallibility of the Church of Rome and its relation to the observance of *adiaphora* within the Anglican Church. It is, I believe, important to take the point this way, because the sheer simplicity of its appeal has somehow allowed it to be overlooked by previous scholars.

Along the same lines, the key issue for Locke had been his inability to undermine Bagshaw's wholehearted appeal for adiaphoristic freedom by his failure to show how an

---

[298] Locke to the Hon. Robert Boyle, 12/22 December 1665, *Correspondence*, I, 175.
[299] Cranston, *John Locke*, 82.

infallible interpreter was absolutely necessary for those matters deemed indifferent by Holy Scripture and the Word of God. In this connection, we must remember that he seldom had difficulties recognizing the rights and responsibilities of the individual to come to their own understanding of the essentials of faith. Indeed, difficulties arose only when dealing with matters of an indifferent nature and the practicality of an arbitrary imposition upon these very same individuals.

The solution, he meticulously argued at the time, was to be found in the idea of an infallible interpreter (i.e. civil magistrate), who preserved the civil peace by directing the outward conformity of the people through legislation of religious *adiaphora*, while seeking to avoid the inevitable impingement upon the Christian conscience. The simple fact that this ambiguous position, founded mostly from Hobbes' contract theory, was quickly abandoned confirms that he was not thoroughly convinced he had made a strong enough argument to justify his general thesis. In the end, he had left himself with the unresolved problem of accommodating the inescapable human condition to believe in the infallibility of one's own opinion.[300]

This was clearly a major question. If the view that I have outlined is correct, Locke, with Boyle's guidance, may have found a partial resolution to this problem in a document originally published during the civil war by Lucius Cary, 2nd Viscount Falkland, who, during his short life passionately fought against the imposition of indifferent things in religious matters and his contribution to the realization of religious liberty in England is far greater than has been supposed.

---

[300] Kraynak, "John Locke, From Absolutism to Toleration," 59.

Modern scholarship has shown that Locke had, prior to leaving for the continent, reacquainted himself with Falkland's *Discourse of Infallibility* and may have used it as the foundation for his own rethinking about the viability of persecuting dissent and, in turn, favouring some form of religious toleration.[301] Without the benefit of analyzing Locke's notes on the *Discourse* it is difficult to confirm which sections of the text had the most profound effect on his opinions, but he may have been looking to Falkland for ways to control religious controversy while limiting compulsion as a means to impose necessary beliefs.

There are two key concepts for understanding Locke's change of perspective. One was the idea of an infallible interpreter of Scripture. Originally, Locke had questioned the usefulness of such a person, unless he could guarantee he was infallible, a possibility which Locke had earlier denied, although he still allowed for an "infallible" magistrate to direct his subjects in matters of indifferency on the condition that he not mislead them.[302] Suddenly this option was not viable in Locke's new view of religious toleration. The power of the magistrate to impose upon the people their "way to salvation" had been strikingly reduced to "noething but barely secureing the civill peace & proprietys of his subjects."[303]

---

[301] Marshall, *John Locke*, 45.

[302] Falkland wrote much the same: "Which if it be the onely infallible determination, and that can never be believed upon its owne authority, we can never infallibly know that the Church is infallible, for these other waies of proofe may deceive both them and us, and so neither side is bound to believe them." Falkland, *Of The Infallibility of the Church of Rome.*

[303] Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration*, 270-73. Bagshaw, it may be noted in passing, had earlier wrote "that since things *Necessary* to the worship of God, be already determined by God, and over them the *Magistrates* has no power; if likewise he should have no Power in *Indifferent*

In Falkland's thought we observe the germination of these very same seeds of religious freedom, reflected from the pen of a rational spirit, ideas which would later characterize much of Locke's tolerationist writings. Originally published in 1646, the *Discourse of Infallibility* came at a critical time of English history when many thought Presbyterian tyranny might differ little from Laudian persecution. One of Falkland's main insights was to compare the need for an infallible interpreter to the individual's ability to reason:

> This will be no Argument against him that beleeves, that to them who follow their reason in the interpretation of the Scriptures, God will either give his Grace for assistance to find the Truth, or his pardon if they misse it: And then this supposed necessitie of an infallible Guide, (with the supposed damnation for want of it) fall together to the ground.[304]

In such circumstances, it was the responsibility of every man to make use of his reason freely and tolerantly in search of truth, without fear of external pressure. Falkland, who was strongly opposed to any system uniformity, imposed by law and coercion, summed up this changing attitude to the claims of divine authority when he said, "Next, I would know, whether he, that hath never heard of the Church of *Rome*, shall yet be damned for not beleeving her infallible?"[305]

The second significant concept was the idea of individual conscience as a guide in divine worship. This formal obligation, or *obligatio formalis*, formed the cornerstone of Locke's second *Tract* and provided him with a subtle means of tenderly treating man's inward conscience: The subject must still obey the command of the sovereign as a

---

Things, then it would follow, that in things appertaining to Religion, the *Christian Magistrate* had not power at all." Bagshaw, *The Great Question*, 14.

[304] Falkland, *Of The Infallibility of the Church of Rome*, 2.

[305] Ibid., 5.

necessary part of the formal obligation brought about by the exchange of powers between the people and the state, but he did not have to agree with it inwardly. It was in this spirit that he had originally addressed Bagshaw:

> 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; otherwise, if you take it in our author's sense every lawful command of the magistrate, since we are to obey them for conscience sake, would be an imposing on conscience and so according to his way of arguing unlawful.[306]

Whatever may have been Locke's earlier position, in his debate with Bagshaw he clearly allowed for legislated indifferencies that were specific to civil and ecclesiastical governance, but arguably had little bearing on men's consciences. There are many things, he argued in his early treatise on government, that have not been laid down in Scripture, but that men can determine for themselves without having their consciences imposed upon regardless of beliefs.

The trouble with this line of reasoning, said Bagshaw, was that over time non-essential doctrines take on unmerited importance. "Since the Imposers do lay so much stresse upon them, that, it is evident, though they call them Indifferent, yet they make them Necessary."[307] Falkland voiced a similar opinion. "The word *necessary* it self," he wrote, "is also often used for very convenient, and then from necessary in that sence, to absolutely necessary is no difficult change, though it be a great one."[308] Likewise, he said, "there are two sorts of errors; To hold a thing necessary that is unlawfull, and false; or

---

[306] Locke, *FTG*, 138-9.
[307] Bagshaw, *The Second Part of the Great Question*, 18.
[308] Falkland, *Of The Infallibility of the Church of Rome*, 8.

that is but profitable, and probable."[309] Ecclesiastical directives of the second type, such as speculative belief in the Trinity, are over time accepted as doctrine, even though they are not clearly expressed in Scripture and are, therefore, not necessary to salvation. But it is natural, as Falkland put it, for those in positions of authority "to desire that all men should think as they do, and consequently to lay a necessity upon the receiving that opinion, if they conceive that a way to have it received."[310]

Whoever these men are, Locke would later insist, they are "the product of depravd ambitious human nature," which afflicts men of all religions and consequently leads to religious conflict and disturbances of the state. This gloomy assertion, while relying mainly on Falkland's positive understanding of the individual as infallible guide, once again highlighted Locke's basic insecurities during this period with respect to peace and order.

> I see noe thing in any of these [indifferent things], if they be donne sincerely & out of conscience, that can of its self make me, either the worse subject to my prince, or worse neighbour to my fellow subject. unlesse it be, that I will out of pride, or overweeningnesse of my owne opinion, & a secret conceit of my owne infalibility, takeing to my self some thing of a god like power, force & compell others to be of my minde, or censure & maligne them if they be not.[311]

Up to this point, Locke had held that the keys to civil peace could only be found in uniformity and conformity in religious worship. And, in fact, orthodoxy of opinion must lie solely in the hands of the Christian magistrate. Nonetheless, a variety of influences within the Restoration period had come together to subtly alter Locke's opinions on

---

[309] Ibid., 7.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration*, 274-5.

adiaphoristic liberty. Such, for example, had been Boyle's mentorship throughout the 1660s and the inevitable exchange of philosophical ideas between the two men.

Conclusion

In Marshall's terms, Falkland's enthusiastic assault on "popish" necessities in individual worship led the Latitudinarians commonly to claim him "as an inspiration for their support for comprehension."[312] Locke would eventually be numbered among this religious movement of limited tolerationists, who championed individual reason above most Christian doctrine, liturgical practices and ecclesiastical organization. Locke's *Letters* on toleration are fittingly seen as the natural conclusion to the early writings of the Oxford theologians, William Chillingworth and John Hales, who were under the patronage of the Viscount himself. To paraphrase a common saying, Falkland can be said to have laid the egg that Locke would eventually hatch.

---

[312] Marshall, *John Locke*, 45.

CONCLUSION

Exclaim therefore no more against the sage, the modest Philosophy of Mr. Locke, which so far from interfering with Religion, would be of use to demonstrate the Truth of it, in case Religion wanted any such Support. For what Philosophy can be of a more religious Nature than that, which affirming nothing but what it conceives clearly; and conscious of its own Weakness, declares that we must always have recourse to God in our examining of the first Principles.
~ Voltaire[313]

Locke's original considerations in favour of religious toleration did not appear during the settlement debate, but were written more than half a decade later in London in the midst of the comprehension and toleration proposals of 1667-8 and like his previous works on toleration were not published in his lifetime.[314] Historians have long sought the explanation for Locke's mysterious change of mind. They have generally assumed that the *Essay concerning Toleration* was founded on the convictions of Lord Ashley and came about through a chance meeting between the two men.[315] This assumption, as I have argued, has no basis in the evidence of the period.

Although the opinion is certainly faulty, it is not completely misguided, given that it is fairly easy to read political significance into most intellectual events, especially since much of Europe was in some degree of factional crisis at the time. Similarly, with the passing into law of the Act of Uniformity, the political situation in England became increasingly tense as the Anglican Royalists continued their indiscriminate persecution of

---

[313] Voltaire, *Letters concerning the English Nation*, XIII. On Mr. Locke, 59.
[314] Locke, *An Essay concerning Toleration*, 11.
[315] For instance, in his recent publication, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, Perez Zagorin continues in the Cranston tradition by unwittingly repeating the same common misconception: "Probably one of the principal causes was his new association with Lord Ashley, later made earl of Shaftesbury, whom he first met in 1666."

Protestant dissenters in the body of legislation commonly known as 'The Clarendon Code'.

Whether these Cavalier statutes have been unfairly credited to Charles' first minister is a question best left to political historians. However, what the Corporation Act, Act of Uniformity, Conventicle Acts, Five Mile Act, and Test Acts did seemingly accomplish was to strengthen the resolve of certain sympathetic lawmakers opposed to the dogmatic orthodoxy of church-state extremists who stood in their way of progress. According to this interpretation, Cranston argues, "Ashley was the most ardent opponent of the Code, the most eloquent champion of toleration."[316] He goes on to make a case for the tradition equating Locke's views with those of the elder political statesman, despite the fact that there is little resemblance in their opinions during the Restoration period.[317]

I have pointed out the fact that this tradition does not appear to be part of the adiaphoristic context. Rather, Locke's concerns, as I have demonstrated, were firmly established within the set confines of the Church of England, imbued with ceremony, and safely protected by the monarchy against civil disorder. Ashley, on the other hand, was concerned less with the humanistic aspects of toleration and more with the day-to-day applications found within contemporary commerce and politics. Cranston argues against his own particular interpretation, when he defines Ashley's position with respect to religious toleration:

> Ashley opposed religious persecution because religious persecution divided a nation, drove many of its most industrious citizens to emigrate, and generally impeded commercial development. He saw more clearly than most Englishmen of

[316] Cranston, *John Locke*, 107.
[317] Ibid., 111.

> his time how colonial expansion and international trade could be made to bring enormous fortunes to investors like himself and at the same time increase the wealth and power of the country as a whole. The example of Holland had taught him how trade and toleration could flourish splendidly together.[318]

In any case, it is difficult to understand how some scholars have repeatedly confused Ashley's pragmatic opposition to religious persecution with those of Locke's more philosophical and religious beliefs. How could Cranston, more importantly, not see that Locke's views did not fall into line with Ashley's—either by the time of their first meeting or ever?[319] Their ends may have corresponded, but the means for achieving them did not. Locke had come to his understanding from a completely different perspective.

The significance of many of these observations comes from the fact that they place Locke's early works into a clearly defined historical context as part of a larger base of writings supporting the lawful imposition of religious beliefs. As I considered Locke's motivations and influences, it was tempting to compare these discussions with his later publications, but that approach would have surely been counterproductive to my historical goals. I believe the importance of contextualization of Locke's thought has been thoroughly de-emphasized in the past and largely placed in a secondary position relative to other forms of historical analysis. Thus, I have attempted to elevate my analysis of the ideas and events surrounding the Restoration period by looking at Locke's writings next to those of his lesser-known contemporaries. It is only by beginning this process can we start to see Locke in a different light.

---

[318] Ibid., 107.
[319] Ibid., 111.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Written By John Locke

Locke, John. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding.* ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

_____. *An Essay Concerning Toleration and Other Writings on Law and Politics, 1667-1683.* ed. J. R. and Philip Milton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006.

_____. *Essay on the Law of Nature.* ed. W. von Leyden. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.

_____. *Locke on Politics, Religion, and Education.* ed. Maurice Cranston. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.

_____. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education.* ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

_____. *The Correspondence of John Locke.* 8 Volumes. ed. E. S. de Beer. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-89.

_____. *Two Tracts on Government.* ed. Philip Abrams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

_____. *John Locke: Writings on Religion.* ed. Victor Nuovo. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002.

B. Written By Others

Bagshaw, Edward. *A True and Perfect Narrative of the Differences between Mr. Busby and Mr. Bagshawe, The first and second Masters of Westminster-School, written long since, and now published, in Answer to the Calumnies of Mr. Pierce.* London, 1659.

_____. *Saintship No ground of Soveraignty: or a Treatise Tending to prove, That the Saints, barely considered as such, ought not to Govern,* Oxford, 1660.

_____. *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship.* Oxford, 1660.

_____. *The Second Part of the Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship, Briefly Stated, And tendered to the Consideration of all Conscientious and Sober men.* London, 1661.

_____. *A Brief Enquiry into the Grounds and Reasons, Whereupon the Infallibility of the Pope and Church of Rome is said to be Founded.* London, 1662.

Barlow, Thomas. *Several Miscellaneous and Weighty Cases of Conscience, Learnedly and Judiciously Resolved by the Right Reverend Father in God, Dr. Thomas Barlow, Late Lord-Bishop of Lincoln.* London, 1692.

Baxter, Richard. *The Church Told of Mr. Ed. Bagshaw's Scandals and Warned of the dangerous snares of Satan, now laid for them, in his Love-Killing Principles: With A farther proof that it is our common duty to keep up the interest of the Christian Religion, and Protestant Cause, in the Parish Churches; and not to imprison them, by a confinement to tolerated meetings alone.* London, 1672.

_____. *Catholick Unity: Or the only way to bring us all to be of one Religion.* London, 1660.

Boyle, Robert. *Robert Boyle: By Himself and His Friends with a fragment of William Wotton's lost Life of Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter. London: Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited, 1994.

_____. *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, 6 Volumes. ed. Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio and Lawrence M. Principe. London: Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited, 2001.

Cromwell, Oliver. "Speech IV to his First Parliament." In *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell.* Edited by Thomas Carlyle. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904.

Dury, John. *The Plain Way of Peace and Unity in Matters of Religion, Shewed by undeniable Maximes, and by effectual Expedients, to preserve and promote the Protestant Religion, by preventing further Breaches, and advancing a Settlement amongst our selves at home.* London, 1660.

Falkland, Lucius Cary. *Of the Infallibility of the Church of Rome. A discourse written by the Lord Viscount Falkland.* London, 1646.

Fell, J. *The Interest of England Stated.* London, 1659.

Hartlib, Samuel. *The necessity of some nearer conjunction and correspondency amongst evangelicall Protestants, for the advancement of the nationall cause, and bringing to passe the effect of the covenant.* London, 1644.

Luther, Martin. *The Freedom of a Christian.* Wittenberg, 1520.

Mason, Francis. *The Authority of the Church in making Canons and Constitutions concerning things indifferent and the Obedience thereto Required with particular application to the present estate of the Church of England.* Oxford, 1634.

Milton, John. *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes; shewing that it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compel in matters of religion, etc.* London, 1659.

_____. *The Reason of Church government urg'd against Prelaty.* London, 1642.

Owen, John. *Unto the Questions sent me last night, I pray accept of the ensuing Answer under the Title of two Questions concerning the Power of the Supream Magistrate about Religion, and the Worship of God; with one about Tythes, Proposed and Resolved.* London, 1659.

Pett, Peter. *Discourse Concerning Liberty of Conscience, In which are Contain'd Proposals. About what Liberty in this kind is now Politically Expedient to be given, and severall Reasons to shew how much the Peace and Welfare of the Nation is concern'd therein.* London, 1661.

Powel, Gabriel. *De Adiaphoris: Theological and Scholastical positions concerning the Nature and Use of Things Indifferent.* London, 1607.

Sanderson, Robert. *De Obligatione Conscientiae, Praelectiones Decem.* London, 1660.

Stillingfleet, Edward. *Irenicum: A Weapon-Salve for the Churches Wounds, or the Divine Right of Particular Forms of Church Government.* London, 1662.

Stubbe, Henry. *An Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause; or a Discourse concerning the Rise and Extent of the Power of the Civil Magistrate in Reference to Spiritual Affairs, &c.* London, 1659.

Taylor, Jeremy. *A Discourse of The Liberty of Prophesying...Shewing the unreasonableness of prescribing to other men's faith, and the iniquity of persecuting differing opinions.* London, 1647.

Ussher, James. *The power communicated by God to the prince, and the obedience required of the subject briefly laid down and confirmed out of the Holy Scriptures, testimony of the primitive church, dictates of right reason, and opinion of the wisest among the heathen writers by the most reverend father in God, James late Lord Archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland; faithfully published out of the original copy, written with his own hand, by the reverend father in God, Robert Lord Bishop of Lincoln, with his Lordships preface thereunto.* London, 1661.

Whitlock, Bulstrode. *Monarchy Asserted to be the Best, most ancient and legal form of Government.* London, 1660.

Williams, John. *The case of indifferent things used in the worship of God: proposed and stated by considering these questions: Qu. I. Whether things indifferent, though not prescribed, may be lawfully used in divine worship? (or, whether there be any things indifferent in the worship of God?) Qu. II. Whether a restraint of our liberty in the use of such indifferent things be a violation of it?* London, 1683.

Womack, Laurence. *Beaten oyle for the lamps of the sanctuarie, or, The great controversie concerning set prayers and our liturgie examined in an epistle to a private friend: with an appendix that answers the paralell and the most materiall objections of others against it : unto which are added some usefull observations touching Christian libertie and things indifferent.* London, 1641.

Wood, Anthony à. *Athenae oxonienses: An Exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the University of Oxford.* 4 Volumes. ed. Philip Bliss. Oxford, 1813.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

Aaron, Richard I. *John Locke.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

Beck, Daniel A. *Miracle and the Mechanical Philosophy: The Theology of Robert Boyle in its Historical Context.* Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1986.

Biddle, John C. "Locke's Critique of Innate Principles and Toland's Deism." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 37, no. 3 (Jul.-Sep. 1976). 411-422.

_____. "John Locke's Essay on Infallibility: Introduction, Text, and Translation," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 19 (1977). 301-327.

Birch, Thomas. The life of the Honourable Robert Boyle. By Thomas Birch. London, 1744.

Cragg, G. R. *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1660-1700.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Cranston, Maurice. "The Politics of John Locke," *History Today*, Vol. 2 (September 1952). 619-622.

_____. *John Locke: A Biography.* London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1959.

Davies, Horton. *Worship and Theology in England: From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Fox Bourne, H. R. *The Life of John Locke.* 2 Vols. London: Henry S. King, 1876.

Gibson, J. *Locke's Theory of Knowledge and it's Historical Relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917.

Giffin, Frederick. "John Locke and Religious Toleration." *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 9 (1967). 378-390.

Green, I. M. *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England 1660-1663.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Green, V. H. H. *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964.

Hutton, Ronald. *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales 1658-1667.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Jordan, W. K. *The Development of Religious Toleration in England.* 4 Vols. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1940.

Kraynak, Robert P. "John Locke: Absolutism to Toleration." *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 74, no. 1 (March 1980). 53-69.

Lacey, Douglas R. *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689: A Study in the Perpetuation and Tempering of Parliamentarianism.* New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969.

Marshall, John. *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

McClure, Kirstie M. "Difference, Diversity, and the Limits of Toleration." *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, no. 3 (Aug. 1990). 361-391.

Neal, Daniel. *The History of the Puritans; or, Protestant Nonconformists; from the Reformation in 1517, to the Revolution in 1688: comprising an account of their principles; their attempts for a farther reformation in the church; their sufferings; and the lives and characters of their most considerable divines.* 5 Vols. London: William Baynes and Son, 1822.

Pope, Walter. *The Life of the Right Reverend Father in God Seth, Lord Bishop of Salisbury, and Chancellor of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.* London, 1697.

Rogers, G. A. J. "Boyle, Locke, and Reason." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 27, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1966). 205-216.

_____. *Locke's Enlightenment: Aspects of the Origin, Nature and Impact of his Philosophy.* Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1998.

Rose, Jacqueline. "John Locke, 'Matters Indifferent', and the Restoration of the Church of England." *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 48, no. 3 (2005). 601-621.

Seaward, Paul. *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Shapiro, B.J. "Latitudinarianism and Science in Seventeenth-Century England." *Past and Present*, No. 40 (Jul., 1968). 16-41.

Stanton, Timothy. "The Name and Nature of Locke's 'Defence of Nonconformity." *Locke Studies*, Vol. 6 (2006), 143-172.

Stewart, M. A. "Locke's Professional Contacts with Robert Boyle." *The Locke Newsletter*, Vol. 12 (Autumn 1981), 19-44.

Toon, Peter. *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, Pastor, Educator, Theologian.* Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1971.

Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *England Under the Stuarts.* London: Methuen, 1949.

Verkamp, Bernard J. *The Indifferent Mean: Adiaphorism in the English Reformation to 1554.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977.

Webster, Charles. *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660.* London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1975.

Whiteman, Anne. "The Restoration of the Church of England." *From Uniformity to Unity 1662-1962*, ed. Geoffry F. Nuttal. London: S.P.C.K., 1962.

Zagorin, Perez. *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.