# THE RELATION OF JOHN LOCKE TO ENGLISH DEISM

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# THE RELATION *of* JOHN LOCKE TO ENGLISH DEISM

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# PREFACE

Probably all students of English thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries recognize some sort of relation between John Locke and English Deism, but they differ as to how they are related. Some writers make him a part of the movement, others consider him its father, and several of the leading historians of philosophy merely note the fact that there is some relation without defining it.

This monograph undertakes to show that these statements are wrong or inadequate, and that Locke and English Deism are related as co-ordinate parts of the larger progressive movement of the age.

When widely accepted historical opinions are challenged, proof of the thesis to be established should be made accessible to the reader and should be as complete as possible. Accordingly the book is to a great extent a tediously detailed marshaling of evidence.

The discussion of the belief in Providence and the statement of the attitude of the progressive leaders toward toleration in the fifth chapter do not contribute to the solution of the problem. The former is introduced here because it is generally believed that the "absentee God" was a characteristic of Deism, which it was not; and the presentation of the latter is necessary because some writers use it to prove that Locke was a Deist, which it does not prove.

The quotations from Locke are from Fraser's edition of the *Essay* and from the tenth edition of his works.

S. G. H.

Topeka, Kansas
June, 1918

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE REMOTE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The problem concerning the relation of John Locke and English Deism arises out of a situation that had been developing slowly for a long time. A full account of its origin would lead us back centuries to the beginnings of the New Learning in Italy. The scene had shifted, other interests had appeared; but the dominant motives were essentially the same. In the political, the social, the religious, the philosophical, and the scientific strife and movements of this time we have the age-old struggle of humanity for freedom. Man is so constituted that awareness of limitations is felt as a perpetual challenge to throw them off. Men felt this in Italy in the thirteenth century; they were conscious of it in England in the seventeenth century; the resulting movements differ because conditions had changed.

When the Renaissance dawned in Italy, it did not find the general confusion that we often associate with the Middle Ages. On the contrary, the civilization at that time was strongly organized. There was one central authority that dominated everything everywhere. Henry IV defied it, and in order to carry out his political plans he found it necessary to make peace with Pope Hildebrand at Canossa. Abelard was condemned by councils, and he was imprisoned and his books were

burned because his views were not approved. In the period of the Renaissance we see the same centralized authority dictating what men should think. Pomponazzi changed his teaching concerning immortality, fearing the anathema of Leo X; Bruno was burned; Galileo denied scientific conclusions to escape a like fate. Ecclesiastical authority approved and established systems of philosophy and theories of the universe; and to think differently was a sin against God, punishable by his vicegerent upon earth. Of course such a condition could not last; it must break down sooner or later, for "the thrust and kick of life" is felt also in the realm of man's spiritual interests, and whatever hinders here becomes intolerable. But men of the late Middle Ages probably did not feel the hampering conditions under which they lived as keenly as we might think, for the horizon of life's interests was narrow, and religion was their chief concern: the value of things here was estimated largely in terms of the life to come.

But a new spirit was making itself felt; at the beginning of the fourteenth century Dante drew materials for his masterpiece from classical as well as from biblical sources, and even acknowledged Virgil to be his teacher and master. And a generation later Petrarch was largely instrumental in starting that contagious enthusiasm for all things of the ancient Roman and Grecian civilizations which resulted in raising up a body of men who loved learning for its own sake, and in giving European culture another center. Along with this growing interest in the humanities there also developed a scientific impulse. As early as the thirteenth century

Roger Bacon had a fairly clear grasp of scientific methods, and characterized scholastic disputes as vain battles of words. Two hundred years later the Aristotelian cosmology collapsed before the new science. Man's horizon grew; he learned to know himself as a citizen of this world, and to think of the earth as a little member of the great universe. Conflict was inevitable; it was as if he were dethroning God and reverting to paganism. The wine of the new learning burst the old bottles of authoritatively given systems.

In the northern country the Renaissance was soon accompanied by the Reformation; or, if you prefer, it soon became the Reformation. There were, of course, many and varied motives that helped to determine that complex movement of the sixteenth century; but it was fundamentally a revolt against human authority in matters of religion. As Luther put it: If a man is to be persecuted for his religious opinions, the hangman is the best theologian.[1]

This was a logical deduction from the right of private judgment, which was a basal principle of the Reformation. Unfortunately this was to remain but an ideal for another hundred years; that is, liberty of thought was the privilege only of those who had power to assert it. The new learning and the new religious movement were so entangled in the seesaw of the fortunes of political and personal interests on the Continent and in England that this toleration, which they had promised, remained, in part at least, unrealized. The English

[1] Luther's *Werke* (Weimar Ausgabe), VI, 455.

statute of 1400, which decreed death at the stake for heretics, yielded to the new spirit in 1533; but it was re-enacted under Mary and, nominally at least and sometimes actually, continued in force until 1676.[1] Even as late as 1648 Puritan zeal for orthodox belief caused an ordinance to be passed which made anyone liable to the death penalty "who denied the Trinity, Christ's Divinity, the inspiration of the scriptures, or a future state," and set prison penalties for other heresies.[2] Fortunately this act did not result in persecution unto death. But in those troubled times in England, about the middle of the seventeenth century, the lot of the confessor of a disapproved dogma was very uncertain; thousands of clergymen were thrown out of their pulpits because they did not agree with the party in power; and, judging from the successive changes at Oxford, academic freedom was far from realization.[3]

However the right to private opinion was more and more recognized. Protestantism, in its appeal from papal authority, recognized the right of appeal; and this was resulting in greater freedom of thought. In the seventeenth century Holland in particular was the land of liberty, the place where Arminians and Socinians and Racovians lived and taught with practically no restraints. And in England many leaders had appeared who forsook the beaten paths, and yet were undisturbed. Important independent religious movements, more or less organized, were able to grow up and continue. Compared with almost all other countries, England was a land of

[1] J. B. Bury, *History of Freedom of Thought* (London, 1913), p. 59.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 79–86.

[3] H. R. F. Bourne, *Life of John Locke* (London, 1876), I, 27 ff.

liberty. And yet with that liberty often went persecution. As Blount, quoting another in the dedicatorial letter to his *Religio Laici*, very aptly expressed it: "Every opinion makes a sect, every sect a faction: and every faction (when it is able) a war: and every such war is the cause of God: and the cause of God can never be prosecuted with too much violence."

It seems almost impossible that Protestantism should have been untrue to its fundamental principle, that liberty of thought should be denied by the party in power. And yet it is not so strange when we consider all the circumstances. Europe had long been schooled in the right of might, and it unlearned the lesson slowly. There was the usual inertia of hoary tradition, and the necessity of self-defense against those who would crush all who differed from them in religious matters; and what more complete defense than to overwhelm any who would steal away their hard-won liberties! Furthermore, the strife and stress of theological controversies mingled with political conflicts required creedal definitions and the formation of systems of divinity. And once these were made it was easy to be intolerantly loyal to one's own religious beliefs. Perhaps it was necessary to defend them; and, ere they realized it, the anomalous condition of Protestant intolerance was a fact. When those confessions and systems became authoritative standards of types of religious conviction and ecclesiastical organization, we have the age of dogmatism, when the spontaneous, living, inquiring spirit of the Reformation is replaced by dead orthodoxy. However, this hampered the development of religious thought less in England than in Germany.

## 2. ENGLISH THOUGHT IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The century of the Stuarts and the Commonwealth was a turbulent time of beginnings. Much that is best in England today can be traced to this age. The old order, stubbornly resisting every change, was slowly yielding to the new; and the waning, outlived notions in the various fields of interest mingled with the ideals that marked the opening of another epoch in England's history. The divine right of kings was crumbling; the Laudian scheme, which "was to exterminate all individuality and freedom of conscience" and to enthrone "Prelatic tyranny" was becoming impossible.[1] The struggle for liberty was slowly getting the victory. In science and philosophy a new spirit was moving; men were turning from ancient masters to nature herself to learn of nature's ways—the Baconian method was gaining followers. In the forties a group of interested scholars met weekly in London to foster experimental investigation. This is probably what Boyle called "the invisible college," which later became the Royal Society.[2] Sydenham founded the new study of medicine on inductive methods in England, and Boyle practically revolutionized chemistry by championing "the empirical method in chemistry against the Alchemist."[3]

But still a great deal of serious thinking moved in the old scholastic ruts: When the Protestant theologians made their confessions and theological systems, they

[1] John Tulloch, *English Puritanism and Its Leaders* (London, 1861), p. 179.

[2] C. R. Weld, *History of the Royal Society* (London, 1848), I, chap. ii.

[3] H. Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy* (London, 1900), I, 378.

used the thought-forms, that is the philosophy, of the age; and in doing this they were conservative, as theologians generally were; they chose for the most part the old and accepted formulas of the traditional systems. Thus the metaphysical background of most English theology of this period was drawn from scholasticism. Now "men had become weary of Protestant scholasticism."[1] Toland's calling it a "scholastic jargon" was not altogether the hostile gibe of an unsympathetic critic.[2] In fact Protestant theologians everywhere simply used the philosophical concepts that had been handed down to them from the former period. "The Reformation produced no immediate change in philosophy."[3]

Descartes was taught scholastic philosophy at La Fleche; but this was to be expected in a Roman Catholic school. Bacon never wearies of exhibiting scholastic systems and methods as the great obstacles to progress. Philosophy was in ill repute because it concerned itself "in a multitude of barking questions, fruitful of controversy, but barren of effect." One of the "distempers of learning" was the "contentious" learning, which must be removed if we are ever to advance. Even when Locke studied at Oxford in the middle of the century, it is evident that he received little more than the old scholasticism, for he complained that the time he spent in the study of philosophy was almost wasted, "because the only philosophy then known at Oxford was the

[1] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. "Deism."

[2] J. Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (London, 1702), Preface, p. xi.

[3] A. Weber, *History of Philosophy* (New York, 1896), p. 277.

peripatetic, perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions."[1] The situation was somewhat different at Cambridge; there the dominance of the old system had been broken before Locke's student days at Oxford. In the closing years of the sixteenth century the new philosophy was opposed by Digby, "a zealous scholastic and mystic." He was in turn attacked by Temple, who had largely adopted the point of view of Ramus, and thus Cambridge became the chief center of Ramism. Temple's successful opposition to scholasticism broke down hindering traditions and made Cambridge the center of the progressive tendency in philosophy, where later the school of Platonists flourished.[2]

Thus in England of the seventeenth century the general progress of civilization had not fully achieved freedom of thought; there was still such a thing as persecution for opinions' sake. Even Locke's *Letter on Toleration*, which was probably the greatest plea for it that had been heard in England, expressly denied full liberty to atheists and papists. In theology much of the thinking looked backward rather than forward; it was content to appeal to symbols and authorities; it loved the traditional and was prone to heap scolding epithets upon innovators. And in philosophy there was still a vigorous contest between the outworn scholasticism of the Middle Ages and the new philosophy. Even as late as the last decade of the century Locke's *Essay* was refused recognition at Oxford.[3] Such in general was the

[1] Bourne, *op. cit.*, I, 48.

[2] Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 277; R. Falkenberg, *History of Modern Philosophy* (New York, 1897), p. 63; Höffding, *op. cit.*, I, 187, 288, 377.

[3] Höffding, *op. cit.*, I, 381.

conservative tendency in English thought in the seventeenth century.

But the fundamental principles of the Renaissance and the Reformation were progressively asserting themselves. The right of private judgment and the duty of free inquiry were claimed and exercised by an ever-increasing circle of independent thinkers. They did not, it is true, form a school or have any bond save this common recognition of the necessity of a change; but they represented the progressive spirit of the age. They saw that there was much truth that could not be forced into old forms, that the inherited systems were not adequate to meet the demands of new discoveries. Hence they undertook to adapt, to amend, to enlarge, or even to supplant the old. They sought to serve their age by giving it a system fitted to meet the new requirements.

They represented practically all fields of thought—theology, philosophy, politics, literature, and the sciences. And they were of practically every shade of opinion, from the relatively conservative thinker, who with hesitation departs as little as possible from traditional views, to the revolutionary innovator, who would make all things new. But whatever their field of interest and whatever their tendency, they agreed in this, that the old systems and methods were inadequate. They saw the need of new adjustments to meet new problems, and of freedom of thought in making these adjustments. Among themselves they disagreed in many ways and criticized each other freely. But as a group of thinkers they stand out in contrast with the conservative tradition-loving leaders described above.

The line of demarcation, it is true, cannot be sharply drawn; it is difficult to determine where some men properly belong. But this is not necessary. It is sufficient to recognize the fact that at this time there was a conservative group of leaders who tended to maintain things as they had been, and that opposed to them, perhaps sometimes unconsciously opposed to them, there was a group of progressive leaders who recognized the need of change and undertook to effect it.

It is not necessary to call the entire roll of honor of England's sons who rightly grasped the problems of their age and made their contributions toward their solution; but it will be worth while to mention the leaders. The catalogue of the progressive thinkers of England in the seventeenth century begins with Hooker, although his work really lies in the previous century. In his great treatise on *Ecclesiastical Law* he marked a departure from servile tradition, and did not hesitate to appeal to reason, "sound reason," and "the higher reason," and to nature and to natural law. He is frequently quoted by his successors; Locke refers to him in the *Essay* as the "learned Doctor Hooker." Then there were the philosophers Bacon, Hobbes, the Cambridge Platonists, and Locke; and such theologians as Hales, Taylor, Culverwell, Chillingworth, Tillotson, and others; and the statesmen Faulkland and Cromwell, and the poet-statesman Milton; and the whole generation of Deists beginning with Herbert; and the scientists, among whom Boyle, Sydenham, and Newton were the most important. These were the leaders, men who left their mark on their times. This age had its share of great men; some of them are among the greatest the world

has ever known. And together they broke away from tradition and raised English thought to world-leadership in their generation. We fail to appreciate the heritage that we have received from them because we use it daily.

### 3. THE PROBLEM

For the present purpose we are concerned only with the party of progress in England of the seventeenth century. The conservative element comes into consideration only as the common object of attack and criticism, because, in greater or less degree, it represents the spirit of opposition to free inquiry, which would check progress by clinging to systems and methods that had outlived their usefulness.

We find that in a general way Locke and the Deists opposed the same tendencies or principles. They are also associated closely in time. Locke entered upon his Westminster schooldays in the midst of the struggles that resulted in the establishment of the Commonwealth. In 1652 he became a student at Christ Church, Oxford, from which he received his Bachelor's degree in 1656 and his Master's degree in 1658. He continued as a member of the University in various relations until 1684. During his maturing youth and manhood he witnessed at close range two revolutions and the disorders that they occasioned particularly at the University. He began writing during the early sixties, although he published nothing until twenty-five years later. From this time until his death in 1704 he expressed himself through the press on a number of subjects—political, economic, theological, scientific, and philosophical. The period of

his greatest activities lies between 1685 and the time of his death.

Deism is dated from the closing years of the seventeenth century to about the middle of the eighteenth century—at least this is the period when it was at its height. Its beginnings in England, however, reach back more than sixty years, and a decade or more before the appearance of Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* it was so strong as to call forth criticisms. Locke's years of greatest activity and the period of Deism overlapped, though the movement did not reach its highest point until after his death.

Furthermore, as will appear more fully later, they have much in common, they often seem to speak the same language; in the midst of differences there are suggestive likenesses.

In a general way Locke and Deism face the same foe, they are associated in time, and they show resemblances that seem to indicate a close relation of some sort. Our problem is to determine, so far as possible, what sort of relation exists between them. Is it merely a temporal elation, and are these resemblances without significance? Or if they have significance, what do they mean, what are we to infer from them, how are we to link together Locke and Deism in this period of English thought? Such is the task that is before us in this investigation.

### 4. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

It will be well to begin this study by defining the possible relations that may exist.

The solution of our problem might lie in the establishment of some sort of a causal relation between them; in the theory that the one in some way and to some extent accounts for the other. Temporal connection would then have significance, and any likenesses that might be found could be explained quite easily—the child would resemble the parent, and the parent the child. But then a further problem would appear: this causal relation can work in either one of two opposite ways.

A. It is possible that students of this period might be led to conclude that Deism was the source of the religious philosophical views of Locke; that, when we find Locke and the Deists discussing the same problems and setting forth similar views, Locke is dependent upon the Deists. But, as we shall see later, this theory is historically untenable.

B. Or it may be that the causal linkage works in the other direction, that Locke accounts for Deism. This would be much more in harmony with what we know of Locke's relation to a number of other movements. He was a leader, a pioneer in thought; he dominated intellectually his own and the succeeding period. He has gone down in history as the father of English Empiricism, the molder of the political ideas of the revolution of 1688; and various other movements had their origin in him or were deeply influenced by him. Even without any historical data bearing immediately on the question, one would be tempted to conclude that Locke was in some degree responsible for Deism. There might be some trouble with dates, especially if we should emphasize the earliest beginnings of Deism; but this theory

would easily explain the resemblances. We shall see in the next chapter that this view has been held by a number of historians, who cite facts that tend to support their position.

Another possible theory that might co-ordinate the facts and define the relation between Locke and English Deism is the theory that they belong together, that they constitute one and the same movement, that, whatever else he may be, Locke is one of that group of men commonly known as Deists, who fostered free and critical thinking on religious problems. This hypothesis would have no chronological problem and would be supported by any resemblances that might be found. It could also account for many of the differences that would certainly appear; for Deism continued to develop after Locke's time; and it could be urged, with great plausibility, that the more extreme views, which did not altogether agree with Locke's relatively conservative positions, represented a further stage in the development of the same principles. The Deism of Tindal and Morgan is but the Deism of Locke grown up. Such a theory would have the advantage of simplicity, but it must be tested by facts. We shall find some scholars who hold this view.

But there is another possible solution. The problem arises, as we saw, from the likenesses and differences between Locke and the Deists, who were adjacent in time. It may be that they are relatively independent so far as causal linkages are concerned; it is quite possible that they do not form one group; and yet they may be closely related in another way. Perhaps we can do fuller justice to the known facts if we consider

Locke and the Deists related as elements which, with others, constitute a larger whole; that is, as parts of one and the same general movement. Lockian thought and Deism could then be represented as products or manifestations of the same *Zeitgeist*. They would appear as protesting against the same scholastic tradition and intolerance. But they were not the only ones who insisted upon the right of free inquiry. The spirit of progress was abroad; a new epoch was dawning, and it had many heralds. There was what we have already described as the progressive movement, which was made up of several different elements. There were the independent and more or less rationalistic thinkers in the field of theology, there were the founders of English philosophy, and the Cambridge Platonists, and the Deists beginning with Herbert, and many others. All these movements and men taken together constitute one general movement; and within it Locke and Deism appeared as co-ordinate parts. This would account for all resemblances, would leave room for differences, and would not exclude a certain degree of interaction. This position is not certainly and clearly taken by any of those who have studied this period, though Windleband and von Hertling seem to approach it.

However we should not consider these possible theories concerning the relation of Locke and English Deism mutually exclusive. They rather point out the element in the relation that should be regarded as central, which determines the general type of explanation that is offered; they suggest points of view from which we can study the period. The acceptance of one theory does not mean that the others were entirely wrong; it

does not exclude the presence, in a subordinate way, of elements that are central in other theories. We have a complex historical field which we can view from many points; we are seeking the point of view that will enable us to do fullest justice to known facts.

## CHAPTER II

### SOLUTIONS OF THE PROBLEM THAT HAVE BEEN OFFERED

#### 1. IN THE HISTORIES OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELATED STUDIES

The problem concerning the relation of John Locke and English Deism is not new; there are, in fact, very few students of the history of English thought who have not expressed their views on it. The conditions that gave rise to it are so patent that one cannot well read Locke and the Deists without coming upon it. You find men close to each other in time who frequently discuss the same problems and often use the same concepts in doing so; and the question as to their relation is simply thrust upon you.

As might be expected, there is not full agreement as to just what that relation is. Students of the history of philosophy are clearly aware of the problem, but there are perplexing elements in it that can be explained in different ways. The result is that the explanations that have been offered do not agree. Yet in spite of their divergence they tend strongly to emphasize all those factors that suggest a close causal linkage between Locke and Deism.

Überweg barely touches the problem. He very cautiously observes that "the philosophy of the so-called English Deists was more or less affected by the school

of Locke."[1] What does he mean by "the philosophy of the so-called English Deists"? Strictly speaking the Deists as a group had no philosophy. However, we may speak of a deistic philosophy of religion. If this is what he means, he makes Locke "more or less" responsible for Deism.

Kuno Fischer does not really discuss the relation of Locke and the deistic movement; he calls attention, however, to the dependence of Toland upon the Lockian epistemology. He says: "Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* appeared the year before Toland's book. Toland went farther in this direction and denied everything that transcends reason. He based his religious doctrine especially on Locke's epistemology; and the bitter struggle, which he called forth against himself, occasioned the attack of Bishop Stillingfleet on Locke."[2] This is one of the most circumspect statements that we have found. What he says is fact; and he makes no sweeping generalizations. As will be shown later, Lockian epistemology is unimportant in the development of Toland's thesis. However, Fischer's statement is open to several interpretations: "Toland went farther in this direction." It is evident from the context that he meant in the direction of rationalism. Was Locke responsible for Toland, or were they representatives of the same general movement, their respective points of view marking different stages in its progress? Fischer does not tell us. Perhaps he was more prudent than others in refraining from making a more definite statement.

[1] Überweg, *History of Philosophy* (New York, 1903), II, 375.

[2] Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (Heidelberg, 1904), X, 514.

Lechler touches upon this problem several times, but is also not very specific. After describing the development of deistic thought up until the last decades of the seventeenth century, he says that there were but two things necessary for Deism to become a power: the one, the freedom of the press, which came in 1694; the other, an intellectual leader who could speak the watchword, and Locke was the man.[1] Later, in speaking of Locke's repudiation of the views of Toland in his controversy with Stillingfleet, Lechler observes: "Yet we cannot avoid the conviction that Locke was self-deceived, and that he failed to recognize the germs of opposition in his own system, which must necessarily develop in his school, because in his personal convictions he did not wish to oppose in any way the existing systems of faith." Locke's influence in shaping the deistic movement is recognized; but he is not expressly called a Deist. Yet his systems of philosophical and religious speculation are treated as if they marked a stage, perhaps as if they *formed* a stage in the development of the deistic movement.

Leslie Stephen, in his generally thorough but sometimes confusingly detailed study of *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, makes a clear statement of his views. After speaking of the suggestiveness of the almost simultaneous appearance of Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* and Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*, he mentions Locke's spirited repudiation of Toland, which he justifies, for "no child or clergyman of the present time could accept the plenary inspiration of

[1] G. V. Lechler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus* (Stuttgart, 1841), p. 153.

the Scriptures with a simpler faith than this intellectual progenitor of the whole generation of eighteenth-century iconoclasts—the teacher of Toland and Collins, the legitimate precursor of Hume and Condillac, the philosopher before whom Voltaire is never tired of prostrating himself with unwonted reverence." Later, in his discussion of Toland, we learn that "the whole of his philosophy was substantially derived from his Master, Locke"; that he "is a follower of Locke, and in the path which leads to the purely sceptical solution of Hume"; that "Locke, the Unitarians, Toland, form a genuine series, in which Christianity is being gradually transmuted by larger infusions of rationalism"; and that "Collins was a favored disciple of Locke."[1]

Thus according to Stephen, Locke is the father of the revolutionary systems of the next century. It is true Locke himself strongly held to the supernatural factors in religion and saw no conflict between revelation and reason; but he was the teacher of a generation that more and more denied all positive religion. "Locke strikes, in all subjects of which he treats, the keynote of English speculation in the eighteenth century."[2] Stephen makes him very largely responsible for later Deism.

Very much in the same spirit we read under "Deism," in the latest edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica:* "In England the new philosophy had broken with time-honored beliefs more completely than it had done even in France. Hobbes was more startling than Bacon. Locke's philosophy, as well as his theology, served as a

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1876), I, 94 ff., 109, 110.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

school for the Deists. Men had become weary of Protestant scholasticism."

Though Falkenberg says but little that bears directly on this problem, that which he does say is very clear. In his *History of Modern Philosophy* he tells us that "Locke's demand for the subjection of faith to rational criticism assures him an honorable place in the history of English Deism" and that the "development of Deism from Toland on is under the direct influence of *Rational Christianity.*"[1]

Windleband holds a more conservative view and states it very circumspectly. He places Locke as the leader of the English Enlightenment.[2] Then later, in his discussion of natural religion, he notes the tendency of the Enlightenment to seek "the universal true Christianity by means of philosophy. True Christianity is in this sense identified with the religion of reason or

[1] Pp. 175, 181. Weber in his *History of Philosophy*, p. 391, says: "The freethinkers, who flourished in Great Britain and on the continent at the end of this period, and the philosophers proper, whom we have still to consider, are likewise descendants of Locke." Apparently Locke is as responsible for Deism as he is for Empiricism. H. E. Cushman in his *Beginner's History of Philosophy* (Boston, 1911) takes the same position as Weber. He traces various movements back to Locke, such as the empirical idealism of Berkeley and Hume, the sensationalism of the French and Deism. The Lockian philosophy of religion is made responsible for the deistic movement. And A. K. Rogers in his *Student's History of Philosophy* (New York, 1910) expresses almost the same views. He says, "Deism was an attempt to get rid of the supposed irrational elements of Christianity. It begins with a desire to explain away the mysteries of church dogma, and to show that between revelation and reason there is no contradiction. Thus, in Locke, it calls man back from theology to the simplicity and reasonableness of the New Testament, whose one essential article of faith is the Messiahship of Christ." Deism is in the writings of Locke.

[2] W. Windleband, *A History of Philosophy* (New York, 1893), p. 439.

natural religion."[1] This universal, true Christianity was at first "allowed the character of a revealed religion," which was in complete agreement with reason; revelation is above reason but in harmony with it. Such was the position of Locke and Leibnitz. "Proceeding from this idea," the Socinians had gone farther, and, though recognizing the necessity of revelation, they accepted only that as revealed which was rationally accessible. The next step was to set aside revelation as superfluous, which was done by the English Deists. Thus Windleband clearly places Locke in this historical lineage of Deism, but stops short of definitely identifying him with the movement; he suggests, but does not emphasize, his causal relation to it.

Höffding's view seems to be very much like that of Windleband, though he expresses it less cautiously. In his larger *History of Modern Philosophy*, it is merely touched upon. "The displeasure at Locke's theological standpoint was increased by the fact that it approximated so closely to that of the Deists that a work such as John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*, which appeared in 1696, and which was publicly burnt at Dublin the following year, seemed only to be its natural outcome."[2] In his *Brief History of Modern Philosophy*, he states his views more plainly, without, however, committing himself very clearly to any theory which would make Locke the progenitor of the Deists. He says: "The English Freethinkers (the so-called Deists) developed Locke's philosophy of religion more fully in

[1] W. Windleband, *A History of Philosophy* (New York, 1893), pp. 487, 488.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 381.

the direction of a more pronounced rationalism."[1] He sees that there is a close resemblance between Locke's views and those of the Deists; so much so that Toland's book seemed to be the natural outcome of the Lockian position. The Deists merely developed Locke's philosophy of religion farther in the direction of rationalism. He does not say that Locke is a Deist; but he holds that his philosophy of religion and the deistic doctrines form a continuous line of development.

In the views of Windleband and Höffding there is some suggestion of the theory which presents Locke and the Deists as one movement, the acknowledged divergence being due to the fact that the Deists from Toland on simply carry out that which was implicitly present in Locke's religious views from the beginning. Radical Deism would then be a later and more fully developed stage in the same movement.

It is either this view, or the one which makes Locke and the Deists constituent parts of one larger movement embracing other elements, that we find in von Hertling. He says: "Deism marks a further stage in the advancing development of rationalism in England. Locke and the theologians of Cambridge belong to an earlier period; but the development is thoroughly consistent."[2] How much does "rationalism in England" include? Is it made up only of the Cambridge Platonists, Locke and the Deists; or are there also other similar elements, which with these constitute one movement? From the

[1] *A Brief History of Modern Philosophy* (New York, 1912), p. 95.

[2] G. von Hertling, *John Locke und die Schule von Cambridge*, p. 176.

context we may infer that perhaps Tillotson belonged here; but we get no definite answer.[1]

### 2. IN THE SPECIAL STUDY BY CROUS

In 1910 there appeared as No. 34 in the series *Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte* a pamphlet by Ernst Crous, under the title *Die Religionsphilosophischen Lehren Lockes und ihre Stellung zu dem Deismus seiner Zeit.* The fore part of this, that is *Die Religionsphilosophischen Lehren Lockes*, had been published before as his Doctor's thesis, prepared under the guidance of Benno Erdmann. So far as is known to the writer, this is the only special study of the relation of Locke to Deism that has appeared; and it is limited to contemporary Deism. Crous devotes a little more than one page to the influence of Locke on later Deism. We give both his arguments and his conclusions in condensed form.

After a brief presentation of the views of Herbert and Hobbes, he sets forth the essential elements of the Deism of this early stage as follows:

> Reason is to be thoroughly applied to every field of religious life: It decides concerning the claims of revelation; . . . . it investigates the essence and origin of religion; it places all religions, Paganism as well as Christianity, on the same basis, in that it brings them all before its own judgment seat; it seeks in all

[1] A. C. McGiffert in *Protestant Thought before Kant* (New York, 1911) discusses rationalism in England from almost the same point of view (pp. 189 ff.). He puts Deism and at least some of the liberal theologians in one group, but he distinguishes men like Tillotson, Clarke, and Locke from the Deists and describes them as "supernatural rationalists."

religions the higher unity of the religion of reason and nature, and undertakes to reduce Christianity as nearly as possible to this ideal; . . . . it finds the essence of piety in morality (pp. 96 ff.).

Toland, Collins, Blount, and Locke accepted this program, though Locke refused to go as far as Blount and Collins, who make reason our only source of religious knowledge. But in determining the relation between reason and revelation, which now becomes the great question, Locke was the leader. He recognizes both as sources of human knowledge; however reason must decide upon the genuineness and sense of revelation. Thus in reality revelation is subjected to reason. This was a clear statement of the deistic doctrines. It is true we find certain modifications, but everywhere are the thoughts of Locke (p. 103).

Though Locke, in the matter of biblical criticism, is much more careful than the Deists of his time, he agrees with them concerning the interpretation of the Bible. He "demands that we understand the Scripture in the literal sense, considering, however, the whole background and all the conditions that influenced its composition" (p. 104).

According to the Deists the chief characteristics of true religion are clearness and reasonableness; reason can reveal to us all that is necessary to salvation; natural religion is superior to revealed religion. Locke did not share these views (pp. 105–6).

But when we come to the teachings concerning God, Locke again becomes the leader of the Deists. "He examines the formation of our idea of God and proves the existence of God, not from revelation or experience,

but from reason; and asserts that God's being is incomprehensible to us, though God can be known so far as such a knowledge is necessary for life and happiness." The writings of the Deists show plainly how influential Locke's teachings on this point were (p. 107).

"In complete agreement with contemporary Deism, and without any distinctive character of conception or statement, Locke holds that prayer, thanksgiving, and a virtuous life constitute the true worship of God. In agreement with Blount and Bury he considers morality the most important element in religion" (p. 109).

That Christianity must be reasonable, and that it is really nothing else than natural religion, which the Deists sought to show, was essentially the opinion of Locke (pp. 110–12).

"In the demand for toleration Locke stands on the same ground with all the Deists" (p. 112).

According to Crous we can sum up the relation of Locke's philosophy of religion to contemporary Deism thus:

> Locke is a Deist in so far as he appeals to reason in all religious matters. In the Deism of that period and in its field of interest sometimes he is the leader, sometimes he is a fellow-worker; now he is forerunner, again he opposes the movement which is pressing forward irresistibly. In demanding tolerance he was the leader among the Deists. In the doctrine concerning God he advanced their cause when he applied his theory of knowledge also to the idea of God and furnished his own particular proof of His existence. In delimiting reason and revelation he brought to a close the attempts of older Deism, and at the same time provided a basis for further discussion. It is true that in the question as to the essence of Christianity he offers no new thoughts, but he gave to the old deistic doctrines their most fitting expression. In his

explanation of the Bible, in his conception of worship, and in his judgment concerning heathenism he shared, on the whole, the current views of Deism without enriching them by his own contributions. In his judgment concerning the meaning and value of Christianity he sought to mediate between the Deists and their opponents, and, finally, in biblical criticism he turns altogether away from Deism (pp. 113–14).

Later Deism was not able to add anything to the discussion concerning the idea and being of God, or to say anything new on toleration. In the spirit of Locke it recognized the possibility of an external revelation but made its authority depend upon its conformity to reason and moral truth and evaluated it as a means of instruction or training. In the treatment of the problem of miracles they went far beyond Locke. In outspoken opposition to Locke, Tindal, Chubb, and Morgan limit Christianity to a renewal of natural religion. But later Deists show the influence of Locke: "Morgan especially conceives the meaning of Christian revelation exactly as Locke did" (pp. 114–15).

### 3. RÉSUMÉ

It is not difficult to sum up the results at which the authors quoted have arrived. Several of them, especially Überweg and Fischer, say little that bears directly on our problem. They are content to state the most important facts and stop there. They clearly recognize that there is some sort of relation between Locke and Deism, but they venture no theory as to what it is. Windleband recognizes a close relation between them, but does not place Locke among the Deists, though he clearly holds that he influenced the movement. Von

Hertling recognizes Locke and Deism and the Cambridge Platonists as distinguishable parts of a larger movement, which he calls "rationalism in England," and which is not further defined. But a large majority of those who have offered solutions to the problem which we are studying consider Locke very closely related to Deism in a causal way, if he is not one of them: he is their "progenitor"; they "are the descendants of Locke"; "from his theory of religion came Deism"; he "has an honorable place in the history of Deism." In almost all essential respects he is one of them—sometimes their leader, sometimes one who goes with them. There is a strong tendency to link him up very closely with the movement, to make him largely responsible for it or to identify him with it.

The investigators in the field of the history of philosophy whose views have been set forth, with the exception of Crous, have given us their results, not their methods. However they had no occasion to do so. Their task was the reconstruction, in the form of a written account, of the course of the development of thought, more especially of philosophical speculation. Accordingly their chief purpose was to present to us the results of their investigations; they may or may not indicate the methods that they followed. And yet they frequently present their results in such a way that one can guess their methods with some degree of certainty.

Looking over the passages cited above and studying them in their context, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the writers laid great emphasis upon the genetic or developmental way of viewing history. The individual systems appear as links in one great chain which extends

from age to age, from epoch to epoch, in the record of human thought. Locke's system was the normal development of that which preceded him and had in it the germs of that which was to follow; or, using Stephen's figure, he was the progenitor of the eighteenth-century iconoclasts. That is the linear, the one-dimensional character of the development of thought is emphasized; the various systems are made to appear as successive units in a linear series. This way of looking at things in the past is modified somewhat in certain instances, particularly by Windleband (perhaps also by von Hertling), whose purpose is to trace the development of concepts rather than individual systems. As a result he emphasizes more than others the contemporary relations of the great leaders. Historical movements are made to appear as the work of many minds; the great men cease to be the sole bearers of progress; however they still remain leaders. That is Windleband emphasizes the fact that the course of the development of thought in any given period has breadth as well as the linear character: it is more like a web than a single line.

In the special study of Crous we have a complete record of his investigations; we can follow him step by step to his conclusions; his method is as clear as his results. He too emphasizes the genetic way of interpreting history; but in selecting his characteristic factors or characteristic points of view, which he traces from early Deism through Locke to later Deism, as well as in determining Locke's relation to contemporary Deism, he is satisfied when he establishes resemblance. Herbert, Hobbes, Toland, Blount, and Collins assign a certain

authority to reason in matters of religion; Locke does the same: therefore in this respect he is a Deist. All the Deists advocate toleration; so does Locke, and utters his plea more powerfully than any of them; therefore "in the demand for toleration he was the leader among the Deists." Without any critical study resemblance is naïvely taken as a criterion for relatedness; the historical background, in which the resemblance appears. seems to have no meaning for him.

# CHAPTER III

## THE METHOD

### 1. A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF ERROR IN THE GENETIC METHOD

We saw that in the study of the history of the development of thought the genetic method was preferred by those who have investigated this particular field. It is the method that now prevails in historical investigations. The idea of development shapes our thinking when we attempt to reconstruct the past; our age is under the spell of evolution. But there lurk in the genetic method, when it is applied to a study of the progress of thought, certain dangers that we must be careful to avoid. It is a selective method; it takes from the period that is under consideration that which later became historically significant. But there is danger here, for when you center attention on one factor in a period you are likely to ignore or underestimate the importance of other motives. That which later became historically important may eclipse all else. The result is that the history as reconstructed lacks elements that were influential in shaping the course of events when the history was being made. The genetic or linear view of the development of thought is that which we get when we travel the main highways of progress: we learn to know the great men whose thought marked epochs in the world's history; but we often miss their lesser fellows

who formed, as it were, the background on which the great men appeared, which helped to determine their positions, and without which it is impossible to make any historical reconstruction of a period that will do full justice to all its elements. The genetic method in the study of the history of philosophy is not rejected here; but attention is called to a possible source of error in its use. If it is not applied comprehensively and critically, we are likely to miss factors that were influential in determining the movements in the period that is under consideration. It will be used in this study, but it will be applied in such manner as is best suited to our present problem.

### 2. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM DETERMINES THE METHOD

In one sense it is not difficult to define a proper method. In general we can say that a right method is such a mode of procedure as will enable us to realize our purposes. Now these, our purposes, whatever else they may be, are not capriciously chosen goals but are relevant to some particular field of interest. The tiller of the soil has problems pertaining to his sphere of action, which are determined by the needs to be supplied and by the other factors with which he deals. The questions that an architect must answer grow out of the situation that he, as an architect, is called upon to meet—a building is to be reared by labor from certain materials, and his method of procedure at each stage is chosen in view of these factors. Likewise the student of history finds that his plan for reconstructing the past is determined both by the sort of reconstruction that is desired and by

the character of the materials that are available. The sort of reconstruction that is desired and the character of the given data are the two factors that constitute the nature of a historical problem. That is, the nature of a given historical problem determines the method to be followed in solving it.

### 3. THE METHOD INDICATED FOR THIS PROBLEM

This investigation undertakes to determine, as far as possible, what sort of relation exists between Locke and English Deism. Or putting it in another form, How can we best conceive their relation, from what point of view can we get the best understanding of it? Which one of the possible theories concerning their relation enables us to co-ordinate the largest number of relevant facts in a significant way?

As has been shown, they are near each other in time. The span of Locke's life from 1632 to 1704 extended over at least a part of the life of almost every one of the Deists. But during their productive periods he was a contemporary of only a few of them; the deistic movement proper did not reach its period of greatest activity until after his death. Furthermore Locke and Deism have much in common; in rational speculation in the field of religion they often discuss the same problems, and in doing so they use largely the same concepts.

This would suggest the possibility of his having influenced it, that Deism was in some way and to some extent dependent on Locke; for it is a well-known fact that he exerted some molding influence on almost every movement of consequence of his own and the succeeding generation.

There are two lines of investigation that are open to us here. On the one hand, we may compare the respective systems and note the resemblances and differences and then interpret this simple relation of resemblance in terms of some other relation which may be closer, perhaps in terms of causal linkage or of co-ordinate relation as members of a larger whole. And on the other hand, we can search the contemporary literature for data that may help us to define the sort of relation that exists between them, for in order to know how Deism is related to Locke we must know how both are related to thinkers of their own and previous periods.

With the situation stated in this way, it would seem that the methodological problem is simple. Get your catalogue of likenesses and differences and interpret them critically, collect your other data and draw your conclusions. But in making any comparisons whatsoever between Locke and Deism for the purpose of establishing likenesses and differences, and in searching out historical linkages between them, we have already tacitly assumed that we know what we mean when we speak of Locke and English Deism; we presuppose that they are clearly defined historical units. Now a clear definition of a system of thought, either for the purpose of comparison or with a view to searching out its historical connections, is such a description as contains all of its characteristic features, that is, those elements that mark it as different from other systems of thought, that set boundaries so that you can treat it as something definite and clearly distinguishable. Hence if you want to find out what a system of thought really is, you cannot do so by studying it in its isolation; you must study it in

connection with other related systems; definition points you beyond the thing defined to the background in which it appears.

Furthermore when you undertake to define two systems of thought for the purpose of making a comparison between them, it is assumed that the comparison shall have meaning relevant to some purpose. In the present instance the comparison between Locke and English Deism is to have significance for the determination of the sort and degree of relation that exists between them. For this end mere likeness is of little or no value. It could have no more sense or significance for the purpose in view than there would be in saying that two men resemble each other in that both have excellent health, when the purpose is to compare them as scholars. If likenesses and differences, which constitute comparison, are to have meaning, they must be relevant to the field of interest, which is determined by our purposes.

But a further question now arises. How can we know when a given likeness or difference has significance for the determination of the kind and degree of relation, or when is a comparison meaningful for our purpose? To answer this concretely: We find both Locke and the Deists urging toleration. Is it significant for the solution of our problem to say that Locke and the Deists are alike in this respect? Not at all, for we shall see other men and other groups of men advocating it also. Again we find both Locke and the Deists magnifying the importance of grounding religion rationally and emphasizing natural religion. Here we have another resemblance, but we cannot tell what it means until we have examined

other systems adjacent in time and have determined what rôle these motives played in them. That is, if, in the determination of the relation between Locke and Deism, we are to use comparison, the likenesses and differences that we use must be significant for our purposes, and we can recognize such significance only by studying them on the background of the thought of the age in which these systems appeared.

One feature, therefore, of our problem is a study of Locke and Deism in relation to English thought in the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, which is the period in which these systems were developed.

However it may not be necessary for us to concern ourselves with all the various fields of human interest of this age; it is possible that that which is relevant to our purpose can be found within a comparatively small and well-defined portion of it. But in order to get the general background and to define in it our particular field of investigation, we must first make a survey in large outline of the thought of the age. We must, in a general way, see what men are thinking about and what motives control their thinking. We must note what general tendencies prevail. Then we can define systems, first in terms of interests or subjects thought about, and second in terms of tendencies of thought or points of view. And having defined Locke and Deism in this way, we shall have a foundation for making comparisons and getting other historical data that will enlighten us concerning the relation that exists between them.

When we seek to bring the thought of this age into a comprehensive outline, we can probably do it to best

advantage by grouping it about four chief centers of interest.

First, there were the politico-economic interests which concerned everybody. Probably in no other sphere of life is the evidence so plain that this was a period of transition. Within less than half a century the government had been overthrown three times. Perhaps in no other period of English history has political life been so intense. There were long-continued and bitter parliamentary and military conflicts, and the public debate by means of books and pamphlets was most vigorous.[1]

Second, there were the religion and theological interests, in which we, at least for the seventeenth century, include the ethical. Perhaps the age was more noted for sectarian rivalry than for piety. But be that as it may, the situation in the field of organized religion—and this included almost everybody—was intense. The principles of toleration were slowly gaining; but the rule of the Peace of Augsburg was to a large extent enforced by the party in power.[2] The administration of the affairs of the church was entangled with the political fortunes of the nation. All parties

[1] "It has been computed that within the twenty years from 1640 to 1660, not less than thirty thousand pamphlets and treatises issued from the press on the subject of ecclesiastical and civil government."—M. Curtis, *Locke's Ethical Philosophy* (Leipzig, 1890), p. 4.

[2] During the controversies that accompanied and followed the Reformation, there was a *modus vivendi* agreed upon at the Diet of Augsburg in 1555, according to which the princes could select the type of faith they preferred and enforce religious conformity to it in their respective realms. The principle of the religious peace of Augsburg was *cujus regio ejus religio.*

agreed in the conviction that the state must take account of the religious welfare of its members.[1] Thousands of clergymen were turned out of their pulpits because they refused to recognize the changes ordered by those in authority.[2] There were also the vigorous pamphlet debates, to which almost all of the great men of the day contributed.[3] However toward the close of the seventeenth century and during the fore part of the eighteenth century, the religious life of the nation waned.[4]

Third, there were the scientific interests, which occupied the attention of some of the greatest minds of the age. In true Baconian spirit men were ceasing to reason out how things must be and were beginning to observe how they are. Perhaps no fact has more significance in this connection than the founding of the Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge. It was the century of Harvey, Boyle, Sydenham, and Newton. The number of real scientists was growing, but there were still comparatively few.

Fourth, there were the philosophical interests, which were represented by a still smaller number of learned men. Bacon was perhaps rather a maker of programs than a philosopher; Hobbes conceived a great mechanical system, but he stood alone and had practically no followers; Locke founded the empirical school of philosophy; and the Cambridge Platonists were an

[1] Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, I, 1–66.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[3] Hobbes, Milton, Boyle, Newton, Locke, and many other scholarly laymen, and almost all of the prominent clergymen.

[4] Abbey and Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1878), I, 1, 2.

influential group. There are never many philosophers in any period, and there were not many here; but some of them were pathfinders.

There were these four great fields of human interest. Within each one of these four fields, there were two divergent tendencies, the conservative and the liberal. And though all shades of opinions were represented, broadly there were but two parties, the conservative and the liberal.

The conservative party represented the hold that tradition always has on the minds of many men. It sought to avoid change, to maintain things just as they had been; it was prone to appeal to authority, to determine issues of today by yesterday. In politics it generally stood for the divine right of kings; in religious matters, for revived scholasticism in theology and for intolerance;[1] in science it opposed the Baconian reform; and in philosophy it was still quoting Aristotle and the Schoolmen.[2]

Over against this conservative, tradition-loving group was the critical or rationalistic or liberal party. As we shall see later, it protested against tradition and authority in the name of reason and nature.[3] It used

[1] Bishop Sprat in 1667 felt that it was necessary "to defend the Fellows from the attacks and criticisms of Aristotelian philosophers. . . . . He tells us, indeed, that the objects and cavils of the detractors of so noble an Institution, did make it necessary for him to write of it, not in the way of a plain history, but as an apology."—Weld, *History of the Royal Society*, I, Preface.

[2] Bourne, *op. cit.*, I, 47.

[3] These two focal concepts of progressive speculation were inherited from a former period; an account of their origin and use would be interesting, but it would not be relevant to our problem.

these two concepts for correcting or criticizing or grounding institutions and for constructing systems. It represented a constructive and progressive motive as well as critical; it was by no means merely the expression of a negative spirit.

Though these two tendencies of thought are present in each of the four fields of interest described above, for the purposes of this investigation we can limit our attention almost wholly to the rationalistic-critical movement, for it is here that we find Locke and the Deists. The conservative motive in the thought of England of this period concerns us only as a common object of attack for all the progressive thinkers; hence it has a negatively determinative value.

We shall now submit a tentative definition of Lockian thought and of Deism. As we shall see later, it will be inadequate; in some respects we shall require something more definite. But it is sufficient for the purpose of determining more closely our field of investigation and for pointing out the lines that must be followed. In making this preliminary definition for our guidance, we have no difficulty in getting Locke's views; we know where to look for them, they are easily accessible. But when we come to the Deists the task is not so simple. As is generally the case with a movement or school of thinkers, it does not have a clear outline. We are, as it were, feeling our way, looking for the path that will lead us to our goal. For the present we accept as proper representatives of the deistic movement only those thinkers who have been generally recognized as constituting the movement when it was at its height—Blount, Toland, Collins, Tindal, Wollaston, Woolston,

Morgan, Chubb, and Herbert who was the father of the movement in England.[1]

In politics Locke was liberal; the Deists showed little or no interest.

In theology and religion Locke was rationalistic and critical in method and conservative in results;[2] the Deists were rationalistic and critical in method, and in their results were increasingly hostile to positive Christianity.[3]

In science Locke was liberal and progressive; the Deists showed no interest.[4]

In philosophy Locke was progressive, his method was rationalistic and critical; in so far as individual Deists had a system of philosophy, it represented the new movements.

We could define in like manner any other men or movements of this time, but it is not necessary. We

[1] Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 379; Falkenberg, *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 179.

[2] *Essay*, IV, xviii, 5, 6.

[3] Toland wrote *Christianity Not Mysterious* to prove that there was nothing in religion that was above reason. He accepted miracles (pp. 47, 90, 147) and assumes the divine origin of Scripture (Preface, pp. xv, xxiv, 4, 18, 38, 41, and elsewhere). When we come to Tindal, we find in *Christianity as Old as Creation* (London, 1735) a certain hostility to miracles which is not well defined; they have no evidential value (pp. 200, 370). "There are no miracles recorded in the Bible, but many of the like nature are to be found in pagan histories" (p. 192). He unhesitatingly sets up natural religion as the norm for all religions (pp. 59, 67, 69). Morgan asserts that so-called supernatural revelation cannot be relied upon, for there is confusion everywhere and man has nothing left but reason (*Physico-Theology*). These opinions may be taken as typical of the deistic movement when it was at its height.

[4] Bourne in his *Life of John Locke* gives several accounts of observations that he made in medicine and of his interest in the scientific discoveries of Boyle, Sydenham, and Newton.

shall have occasion to refer to their formative principles and to their conclusions, but it would not further our purpose to define them here.

From the definitions of Locke and Deism just given, it is clear that our field of investigation is limited; it covers only a part of the whole sphere of interests of England of the seventeenth century. Toleration has a political aspect, but it can be considered along with the religious interests. The deistic philosophy and its relations are unimportant. Both will be studied with the direct internal evidences of dependence of the Deists on Locke. Thus our investigation is limited almost exclusively to the theological and religious field and to the liberal thinkers in it.

### 4. RESULT OF THIS STUDY OF METHOD

In summing up this study of method we find that we can determine the sort and degree of relation that exists between Locke and English Deism, first, by making comparisons—that is, by setting forth likenesses and differences, and then interpreting them critically; secondly, by collecting and interpreting other relevant historical data. Both of these operations involve clear definition which is the determination of characteristic features; and this can be done only with reference to the whole background on which Locke and Deism appeared. Thus our investigation leads to a more or less extended study of the whole liberal movement of this period.

But we are confronted at once by an embarrassing situation. We are to make a comparison, and a comparison presupposes that we have already clearly defined the

elements that are being compared; whereas we have thus far only tentative definitions of Lockian thought and Deism. There is confusion and contradiction here that cannot be avoided. It arises from the fact that in the last analysis definition and comparison are not separable processes. Perhaps we should say that they are the same process regarded from the points of view of different interests. In definition we set forth the characteristic features of that which is defined for the purpose of identification, and in comparison we do the same for the purpose of studying it in certain relations. The two processes advance *pari passu*. There can be no clear definition which is not ultimately a comparison, and there is no comparison which does not at least to some extent define. In this study we shall gradually approach our definition of Locke's religious views and of Deism by the progressive elimination of factors that by critical comparison are found to be irrelevant. We shall then see what the likenesses and differences that exist between Locke and Deism mean in terms of some other relation.

With this understanding of the scope or our investigation, we shall first compare Locke and Deism with respect to their point of view. Both were rationalistic, both appealed to nature and reason in their speculations. We shall study the use that was made by them and by others of these two focal concepts.

Then we shall compare the conclusions at which they arrive concerning disputed points in the field of theological and religious interests. But in order to do this we must take into consideration the teachings of their contemporaries who discussed the same subjects.

And finally we shall examine the direct evidences of relation between Locke and Deism.

This is simply the genetic method with more emphasis than usual placed upon the study of contemporary thought. It aims to avoid the error that is likely to be made if the linear character of the development of any movement is so emphasized that significant factors are neglected. A number of those whose views have been quoted in chapter ii seem to have committed this error. It is as if they found certain elements in Locke, and finding them in Deism, perhaps further developed, they conclude, apparently without any further investigation, that Locke accounted wholly or in very large measure for Deism or was a part of the deistic movement.[1]

This method also differs widely from that which Crous followed in his special study, as set forth in the preceding chapter. He also makes comparisons between Locke and Deism. But in the method that is advocated here, agreements and differences are studied critically on the background of what others were thinking at the same time, and they are interpreted in the light of contemporary thought. Whereas Crous simply noted likenesses and differences, and, without determining their significance by a more extended comparison with what other men were then thinking, rather naïvely balances his list of likenesses and differences and concludes that in most respects Locke was a Deist.

[1] If we may venture a theory as to whence this conviction arose, we would suggest that it may be due to Voltaire, who considered Locke the father of all eighteenth-century movements, including the very radical systems of France. When the writers of histories of philosophy discuss Voltaire, their style has the vividness that is characteristic of the presentation of first-hand information; while their description of the English Deists often has a hesitant and somewhat uncertain manner which may indicate that their information is, in part at least, second hand.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE TWO FOCAL CONCEPTS

At this time everybody, at least every progressive thinker, appealed to *nature* and *reason* in grounding institutions and principles. In this Locke and the Deists agree; both were rationalistic and critical in method, as were also the other representatives of the progressive movement. The Deists differed from Locke and the other liberal thinkers in that they applied the rationalistic method more radically.

In setting forth the use that was made of these two focal concepts of speculative thought in England in the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth century, it will be convenient to study the progressive thinkers in three groups: the Rational Theologians, the Philosophers among whom is Locke, and the Deists.

### 1. ORIGIN OF THE TWO FOCAL CONCEPTS OF RATIONALISTIC-CRITICAL SPECULATION

We have described Locke, Deism, and certain other men and movements of this age as liberal or progressive, that is, as rationalistic and critical. This is descriptive of their intellectual attitude toward the problems they were considering. They were not prone to appeal to authority; they rather protested against authority, or scholasticism and tradition, in the name of freedom of

thought. They emphasized free investigation. In the first chapter we saw that this was the normal result of the progressive emancipation of man intellectually, scientifically, religiously, politically. This movement had its roots far back in the centuries. Man brought to light again the treasures of the ancient world, and this stimulated independent thought. He discovered nature, and himself as a part of it, and also that these ideas did not fit the authoritatively transmitted systems. Some seeing saw not, but many followed the new vision of truth; and their mental horizon grew until it could no longer be forced to fit mediaeval forms. And each discovery or invention was not merely so much achieved; newly discovered truth became at once a stimulus to seek more truth. A new spirit was moving, and moving mightily in the dawning of a new age.

But not only were scientific and philosophical systems challenged; all institutions, human and divine, were called upon to give an account of themselves. Once man had discovered nature, he began to explain things in terms of nature. In this he was helped by the new learning, which enabled him to know the prominent part that the concept of nature had played in the speculations of Greek and Roman thinkers. Before this, explanation had been almost entirely in terms of the supernatural; but now, in the new age, the concept of nature is used as an ultimate for grounding institutions. Grotius bases the authority of law, not on theological sanctions, but on human nature. Society is founded on principles that are in man—*ex principiis homini internis*.[1] And Hobbes would account for the state by making it a

[1] Höffding, *Brief History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 11.

convenient device for escaping conditions that were intolerable. Yet these conditions, which made necessary a society ordered under laws, sprang from the fundamental principles of human nature. In other words, the state was negatively grounded in nature.

Rationalism was another motive in the critical method which was influential in determining its results. This, however, was not foreign to the spirit of scholasticism when it was at its height. In fact the great systems of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas had in them the germs of that which later effected their overthrow. Albert recognized the natural law of reason as having authority in matters of religion. However there are questions for which philosophy has no final answer "and must remain standing before the antinomy of different possibilities." Here revelation decides. "Revelation is above reason, but not contrary to reason."[1] The position taken by Thomas Aquinas is essentially the same—that knowledge, which man by his unaided power can acquire, that is, philosophical knowledge, is but a lower stage in the realm of nature, which is completed by revelation in the realm of grace. And though the Scotists increased the dividing gulf between reason and revelation, when the new age came we find the leaders of the progressive tendency more and more appealing to reason, and in the field of religion they give it an authority along with revelation, and the most radical finally place it above revelation. At first "they conceive the relation between nature and revealed religion quite in accordance with the example of Albert and Thomas; revelation is above reason but in harmony

[1] Windleband, *A History of Philosophy*, p. 321.

with reason; it is the necessary supplement to natural knowledge."[1]

Accordingly it was to be expected that, once the rationalistic critical movement had begun in England, religion would not long remain unchallenged. It was also to be expected that when it was challenged it would be in the name of nature and reason. If religion is true we should be able to know its truths by a rational process, and we should find that it has its foundations in the very nature of things. In the period that we are studying we find men using these two concepts in the study of religious problems. They are the elements which constitute the rationalistic-critical method.[2]

Nature and reason will be treated separately in this study. However, in doing so we shall at times do violence to certain systems. For though they are generally distinguishable factors or motives in the speculation of this period, they are by some writers linked together in a way that is most puzzling. Even that widely used inherited expression "natural light" is not at all clear when we come to analyze it. It is made to stand for that natural mental equipment of man by which he comes into the possession of knowledge; hence it includes reason. Thus reason would appear as a part of nature; and as a matter of fact it is often treated as such. And again it seems to include not only the innate

[1] Windleband, *A History of Philosophy*, p. 487.

[2] This brief account of the source of the two motives, that we are here considering as applied in matters of religion, is in no sense an exhaustive discussion of their genesis; that lies beyond the purpose of this study. We are undertaking a study of certain problems in which they are involved and by way of introduction have indicated their probable origin, which is sufficient for the present purposes.

capacities of man, but also that truth, more especially religious and moral truth, which he can know from the world about him. We shall find that there is no consistent usage of the term reason or natural light. Its meaning varies often in the same writer. It is probable that some used it without any clear notion as to just what they meant by it.

There are also different senses of the concept nature. It sometimes is just the sensible world, the mechanically ordered realm about us. As such it stands in contrast with the spiritual world including God and man, or with the supernatural. Again it is made to include both of these. Then it is the whole of reality, the sum total of all being; and in this sense nothing is supernatural. Sometimes it seems to be an exaggerated idea of the immanence of God in His world. Then nature and God become almost identical; what nature does is the act of Deity. And often it means the native capacities in man, his natural endowment by which he is able to know truth, especially principles of action, God and his duty toward Him. And there are those who consider nature an eternal, unchangeable order, apparently independent of God, to which God and men in willing and acting must conform. We shall find some men consistently holding to one or another of these views, while others seem to use the term in several different senses.

The limitation of such a study as this prevents an exhaustive presentation of the part that this concept of nature plays in all of the important systems that were produced by the liberal thinkers of this period; the investigation will therefore be limited to those that were typical or influential.

## 2. THE USE OF THE CONCEPT OF NATURE

### A. THE RATIONAL THEOLOGIANS

Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* was much quoted by all parties in this period, including the Deists. Locke refers to him as the "judicious Hooker" in his *Essay* and speaks of him as an authority in his *Two Treatises of Government.*

He is seeking to derive order, more especially ecclesiastical order, not only from revelation, but also from nature. All government is based on this,[1] whatever form the government may take.[2] But nature is not conceived as something entirely separate from God; it "is nothing else but His instrument."[3] Nature as well as revelation teaches us that order must take the place of contention. "But of this we are right sure, that nature, Scripture, and experience itself, have all taught the world to seek for the ending of contentions." This results in establishing order.[4] Natural law is established by God; it is from God, by God's command.[5] Thus according to Hooker God is the author of nature, her laws are of His making, her voice is His instrument; hence he can well say: "obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world."[6] Things revealed in Scripture or in nature have the same divine authority.[7] For nature is of God, her order is from Him,

[1] *Essay*, IV, xvii, 7; *Two Treatises of Government*, Book II, chap. ii.

[2] Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, *Works* (Oxford, 1888), I, 146; p. 243.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 227.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 207.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[7] John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy* (London, 1872), I, 51.

her message is His word to us for our guidance, natural law is by His authority.

Even Stillingfleet, who later became Locke's critic, at least in his early period did not hesitate to say "the law of nature binds indispensably, as it depends not upon any arbitrary constitution, but is founded on the intrinsical nature of good and evil in things themselves." Such a law "if we respect the rise, extent and immutability of it, may be called deservedly the law of nature; but if we look at the emanation, efflux and origin of it, it is divine law," for "it depends upon the will of God" and therefore the obligation must come from Him.[1] And yet he tends to regard this law of nature, in its unchangeableness, as independent of God, for he also says: "The law of nature, where it is clearly intelligible, is paramount and cannot be superseded by any positive human or divine enactments."[2] God "cannot change the nature of moral obedience. He cannot make good evil or evil good."[3] It seems that we have here two different motives: the first is the voice of Hooker, the second is like the view of the Cambridge Platonists.

In Tillotson, whom, according to Collins, "all English freethinkers own as their head,"[4] we find a like

[1] That which is deduced from the "perceptive law of nature is of divine right." Quoted by Tulloch from Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, pp. 427, 428.

[2] Tulloch, *op. cit.*, I, 430.

[3] In establishing and shaping church polity, Stillingfleet appeals not only to Scripture and tradition but also to that which nature dictates. He thus deduces the fundamental principles for organizing the church (Tulloch, I, 437–38). The "light and the law of nature should guarantee the right of appeal" (*ibid.*, p. 441).

[4] A. Collins, *A Discourse on Freethinking* (London, 1713), p. 171.

use of nature as an ultimate term for giving account of religion. He considered natural knowledge of God the foundation for the ideas of good and evil and for all revealed religion,[1] the surest ground of religion.[2] In fact, "Christianity hath hardly imposed any other laws upon us but what are enacted in our natures, or are agreeable to the prime and fundamental laws of it."[3]

We may think that something of this kind was to be expected from Tillotson, whose liberalism was recognized, though his orthodoxy was not seriously challenged; but surely such a positive defender of Christianity against Deism as Sherlock will sound a more positive note. In his book, *The Trial of the Witnesses*, which appeared in 1729, and in a few years ran through fourteen editions, we have "the very centre of the orthodox position."[4] He says in a sermon that the law established proper social relations which, often disregarded, give occasion for repentance. Hence "repentance had reference to the law of nature against which men had offended."[5] He refers to the "law of reason and nature," which had been darkened; yet "the general principles of religion" were revealed in human nature.[6] Tindal quotes Sherlock on the title-page of *Christianity as Old as Creation* as follows: "The religion of the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature." Thus

[1] John Tillotson, *Works* (London, 1720), I, 405, 406.

[2] *Ibid.*, I, 436, 579.

[3] *Ibid.* (9th ed., 1743), I, 128–74.

[4] Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, I, 243.

[5] T. Sherlock, *Discourses Preached on Several Occasions* (Oxford, 1797), V, 137.

[6] *Ibid.*, V, 136.

nature is a datum from which, by a normal use of our faculties, we can know religious truths without revelation. Both Tillotson and Sherlock are less clear than Hooker as to what they mean by nature, but they go beyond him in magnifying its importance in problems of religion.

### B. THE PHILOSOPHERS

Turning from the theologians to the philosophers, including the Christian philosophers of Cambridge (we shall consider Herbert with the Deists), we find that Bacon's reforms emphasize nature, and that he recognized natural theology, although he assigned it a very modest rôle. Hobbes in his world of matter and motion reasons "back from the world to God," although God is really incomprehensible to man; yet "if we went back far enough we should necessarily reach an eternal cause which did not in its turn have a cause."[1] And organized society is devised as an escape from an intolerable state of nature; that is, the state is naturally though negatively grounded. Moral duties "have their elementary basis in human nature, but they derive all their social or organic effect from the supreme political power"; and religion, though it has its truths guaranteed by the authority of the sovereign, "has a natural foundation in human fear."[2] In both Bacon and Hobbes philosophy and theology are sharply separated from each other, the natural stands in a clear contrast with the supernatural. Their line of thought "takes as its foundation the data of external or internal nature, and seeks starting from

[1] Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 273.

[2] Tulloch, *op. cit.*, II, 27, 28.

these to arrive, by means of induction or deduction, at further results."

Among the philosophers "there is another tendency connected historically with Neo-Platonism, which believes there is a foundation for the highest ideas, more especially ethical ideas, which is exalted above all experience."[1] For the Cambridge Platonists, who were among the chief opponents of Hobbes, there are eternal truths objectively real and independent of the knowing human subject. There are ultimate fixed standards of morals,[2] and religion must conform to similar norms. If it does not refine, temper, and govern practice, it "falls short of the very principles of nature."[3] For Culverwell, who if not of this school is near to it, nature is "the origin of existence, it is the very genius of entity"; it "speaks the action of existence," and it is the principle working in spirituals as well as "the source of motion and rest in corporeals."[4] And the law of nature is from the eternal law; as Aquinas said, "The law of nature is nothing but the copying out of the eternal law, and the

[1] Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 287, 288.

[2] "It is impossible anything should be by will only, that is, without a nature or entity, or that the nature and essence of anything should be arbitrary." And concerning the moral law: Suppose such a law to be established, it must be either right to obey it, and wrong to disobey it, or indifferent whether we obey it or disobey it. But a law which it is indifferent whether we obey or not cannot, it is evident, be the source of moral distinctions; and on the contrary supposition, if it is right to obey the law, and wrong to disobey it, these distinctions must have had an existence antecedent to the law (R. Cudworth, *Immutable Morality* [London, 1731], Book I, chap. i). And in like spirit, "Moral laws are laws of themselves, without sanction by will" (Whichcote as quoted by Tulloch, *op. cit.*, II, 106).

[3] Tulloch, *op. cit.*, II, 106.

[4] N. Culverwell, *The Light of Nature* (London, 1857), pp. 38, 39.

imprinting of it upon the breast of a rational being." But in Culverwell a sort of Christian pantheistic view of nature prevails, which makes it dependent on or even identical with God, rather than the Platonic motive which has just been mentioned. This eternal law is not distinguishable from God.[1]

Taking the school as a whole, they sought to account for the highest ideas by assuming eternal and immutable standards or archetypes, which with some men seem to constitute a realm of reals separate from God; while in others the standards and the eternal law of nature seem to be an expression of God Himself. It was characteristic of the school to hold that our knowledge of the law of nature was an immediate certainty innate in the mind of man.[2]

When we come to Locke the concept of nature, although very important in some connections, seems to play a less conspicuous part. He uses it in several senses and is not always clear. In the *Essay* he refers to the law of nature frequently, and sometimes in important connections. Because he denies innate laws he does not wish to be understood as denying that there is a law of nature, which we can know by proper use of our senses and faculties, that is, by the light of nature without revelation.[3] This law of nature seems, at least

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 79, 98.

[2] The devout scientist Boyle saw in nature a revelation of God sufficiently clear to enable man to know Him and to grasp the fundamental principles of natural religion, which is "the foundation upon which revealed religion ought to be superstructed." From nature we get as it were the stock upon which Christianity must be engrafted (R. Boyle's *Works* [London, 1744], V, 46, 685).

[3] John Locke, *Works*, I, 44; also *Essay*, I, iii, 13.

in one form, to concern our duty toward God, as that can be inferred by the unaided capacities of man.[1] This appears to be the same as "divine law," for he says that by this he means "that law which God has set to the actions of men, whether promulgated to them by the light of nature, or the voice of revelation."[2] There is an order that arises from the nature of things, which we can know by a proper application of our faculties. We may infer that this order is from God, for He is the Creator and Author of all things.[3] Moral law is a part of the law of nature, and has God as its author.[4]

In discussing civil government, especially in the second book, he frequently refers to the "state of nature," apparently meaning thereby the condition of the race when socially unorganized. But man is not lawless here. "The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions." There is such a thing as "equality of men by nature";

[1] Boyle's *Works*, I, 37, 38; *Essay*, I, iii, 6. "I grant the existence of God is so many ways manifest, and the obedience we owe Him so congruous to the light of reason, that a great part of mankind give testimony to the law of nature." The true ground of morality "can only be the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in His hands rewards and punishments," etc.

[2] *Essay*, II, xxviii, 8, 11; *Government*, II, ii, 6.

[3] He seems to have the same thought in mind when he says, "Reason is natural revelation whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of the truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties" (*Essay*, IV, xix, 4).

[4] *Ibid.*, I, iii, 12.

that is, by virtue of what man really is.[1] Here the state of nature is set over against organized society, and the law of nature over against positive law.

Yet it must be admitted that Locke, when compared with others, makes but little use of the concept of nature in constructing his system; when he does so it is principally in the spirit of Hooker. Nature is a divine order which we can know; and her laws are God's laws which He there reveals to us. He certainly differs widely from the Cambridge Platonists.

### C. THE DEISTS

When we come to the Deists we find great variety of opinion. But though they differ as to what nature is, all agree in assigning it an important place in the study of all religious problems. It is an ultimate norm for testing religious truth.

In the system of Herbert of Cherbury, who is generally recognized as the founder of Deism, there are four groups of our numerous human faculties: natural instinct, sensus internus, sensus externus, and discursus. Of these, natural instinct is the most certain. From it we have the "common notions" which are innate in all men. Among these "common notions" we find his five fundamental principles of all religion. "For Herbert, natural means much the same as divine. For him, as for his friend Grotius, the law of nature is the law of God and of supreme authority." We find him writing in one place *deum sive naturam.*[2]

[1] *Government,* II, ii, 5.

[2] W. R. Sorley, *Mind* (1894), p. 501.

And coming to the less important deistical writers just before Toland and Collins, we find Blount speaking of his five articles, which follow closely those of Herbert, as "grounded upon the law of nature," which is "God's universal Magna Charta, enacted by the all-wise and Supreme Being from the beginning of the world."[1] He also asserts that there is a sanction arising "from the nature of things" before any human law. This is much in the spirit of Hooker.[2] Gildon before his conversion from Deism wrote of "nature, or that sacred and supreme cause of all things, which we term God."[3] Thomas Burnet used almost the same words.[4] God's immanence is so magnified that it seems to suggest a sort of pantheism.

Though Toland speaks frequenty of "natural law," "natural reason," and "natural religion," it is difficult to say just what he means by "natural." It is clear that in many instances he has in mind that which is neither God-given nor man-made, but it is impossible to define the content of the term more definitely.[5]

For Collins the term scarcely exists. He speaks of "natural light," but this is in a paragraph from Tillotson.[6]

Tindal, who with Wollaston represents the best scholarship and thought among the Deists, makes very

[1] C. Blount, *Religio Laici* (London, 1683), p. 94.

[2] *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1695), p. 93.

[3] Preface to *Oracles of Reason* (London, 1693).

[4] *Archiologiae Philosophicae* (London, 1729), p. xxii.

[5] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, 46; *Nazarenus* (London, 1718), p. 67; *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704), p. 117; *A Collection of Several Pieces*, etc. (London, 1726), II, 139.

[6] *A Discourse on Freethinking*, p. 173.

frequent appeals to nature. It is noteworthy that the concept has greater prominence in the systems of these two men than in that of any other Deist. Tindal mentions frequently the "law of nature" which is known to all creatures. It is perfect, eternal, unchangeable, and the gospel was not intended to change it;[1] all religions acknowledge it and it must be obeyed.[2] He even asserts that God's laws are built on the eternal reason of things, and that there is an unalterable reason of things according to which God must act when He acts.[3] We know by reason that this is true. You cannot prove anything to be God's will except that which His nature and the nature of things point out to be His will.[4] We have the "light of nature" which is none other than the "voice of God Himself."[5] The "book of nature" is in characters "legible by the whole world"; he who runs may read. The title of his book is *Christianity as Old as Creation, or The Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature.* Thus nature appears as that which stands out in contrast with revelation. It is the instrument of the primitive revelation or it is the primitive revelation itself. Though he makes frequent use of the concept, it is not further defined.

Wollaston emphasizes "the great law of nature, or rather as we shall afterwards find reason to call it, of the author of nature." It is that no intelligent being should contradict truth or that he should treat everything as being what it is.[6] The infinite original cause is the

[1] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, p. 8.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 246, 247.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[6] W. Wollaston, *Religion of Nature Delineated* (London, 1759), p. 41.

author of nature and what is done in it.[1] For Wollaston nature is God's handiwork, wherein His acts appear, from which His law, which is the law of nature, can be known.

In the writings of Woolston nature seems to play no part.

Morgan placed the ultimate foundation of religion in nature, not in revelation.[2] From nature we can know "the eternal immutable rules and principles of moral truth," which are always the same and known to all men, and which constitute natural religion.[3] He goes so far toward the Cambridge school as to teach that God does not create good and evil, that there is a rule of action prior to God's willing. Yet nature is not clearly defined; we cannot be sure what he understood by it. It may be understood either in the sense of Hooker or in the sense of the Cambridge Platonists, but its importance in his system is evident.

Bolingbroke finds our duties set forth so plainly in "the constitution of our nature" that we cannot fail to know them.[4] More circumspect than some of his fellow-Deists, he holds that Christianity is founded on the universal law of nature, and that God teaches the fundamental principle of this law; although it is not just a republication of it.[5] This universal law of nature is the

[1] W. Wollaston, *Religion of Nature Delineated* (London, 1759), pp. 129, 287.

[2] Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher* (London, 1740), III, 126; *Physico-Theology* (London, 1741), pp. 143 ff.; *Tracts* (London 1726), Preface, p. xvii.

[3] *The Moral Philosopher*, I, 94.

[4] H. Bolingbroke, *Works* (London, 1809), VI, 281.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

foundation of everything.[1] He gives us no further determination of nature or natural law. Is it God's creature, God's instrument for grounding things? Whether it has the same meaning as in Hooker's system or is something independent of God as the Platonists taught he does not tell us.

Chubb wrote *An Enquiry into the Ground and Foundation of Morality*, in which he undertook to show "that religion is founded in nature," and that this pure religion of nature "is grounded upon the unalterable nature and the eternal reason of things."[2] He starts out from the assumption that "there is a natural and essential difference in things," which is the "ground and foundation of moral truth;"[3] and divine rectitude is God's acting in harmony with such difference. His acts are always in harmony with the essential difference in things.[4] This is clearly the doctrine of the philosophers of Cambridge. Though he is the only Deist who announces it in unambiguous terms, it may be in the background of the teaching of Morgan and Bolingbroke.

### D. CONCLUSION

In this study of the place of the concept of nature in English thought of the period that we are considering we have found some confusion. Few thinkers hold consistently to one sense of the term. However we are

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 345 ff. In this passage he vigorously rejects the teaching of Hobbes, which bases morality on civil enactment.

[2] Thomas Chubb, *An Enquiry into the Ground and Foundation of Morality* (London, 1745), p. 40.

[3] Chubb, *An Inquiry Concerning Redemption* (London, 1743), p. 35.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

justified in drawing several conclusions that are relevant to our problem. In some form or other the concept of nature is present in the speculations of almost every liberal thinker that we have considered. The age was prone to believe that institutions and principles were adequately grounded only when it was proved that they were natural. Nature is the foundation of economies and institutions; it determines their character and gives them authority.

But when it comes to defining just what was meant by nature, there are radical differences. The views that were held seem to fall into two groups. On the one hand, we find God and nature more or less closely linked; it is His creation, its laws are ordained by Him, it reveals His will, and sometimes it seems to be identical with Him. And on the other hand, it is conceived as eternal, immutable, and at least in some sense independent of God, an order distinct from God to which His willing must conform; and sometimes the writings of one man seem to show both motives. But whatever the conception of nature, in practically every system "natural law," "natural light," "the book of nature," "the religion of nature," stand out in contrast on the one hand with man-made institutions, on the other with supernatural revelation. It is placed over against that which is positive, whether human or divine. In the consideration of the religious problem, which chiefly concerns us here, nature is an order or a datum that is contrasted with God's dealing with man in that special revelation which we find in the Bible.

Generally speaking Locke and the Deists understand the term in the same way. With the exception of

Chubb, and perhaps also of Morgan and Bolingbroke, they stand in the line that comes down from Hooker. The Cambridge way of thinking does not seem to have influenced the Deists until we reach the period of their decline.

We have here a similarity between Locke and Deism when it was at its height. Both use the same concept and they seem to understand it in the same way. But the likeness is just as marked between the Deists and certain prominent theologians and philosophers, many of whom lived before Locke. It was the point of view or method that prevailed at that time. Just as scholars today are likely to organize the data of a given science according to the genetic method because it is so widely accepted, so the leaders of English thought two or three hundred years ago sought to ground all institutions and principles in nature. Locke and the Deists stand in the main line of the progressive movement. When we study critically their resemblance in the use of the concept of nature, we cannot infer any other closer relation from it. Later, in considering natural religion, we shall see how Locke and the Deists are related in the importance that they assigned to the concept of nature in this relation.

### 3. THE USE OF THE CONCEPT OF REASON

The general movement of the age was toward free inquiry. Inherited systems and institutions were subjected to criticism; it was no longer enough that a conviction had behind it hoary tradition. If anything was to survive, it could do so only under the condition that good reasons were given why intelligent men should hold it. There is only one way for a man to know truth, and

that is by a proper use of his reason; whatever is accepted must be rationally grounded. Such was the spirit of the liberal movement in England at this time.

### A. THE RATIONAL THEOLOGIANS

Beginning with "the judicious Hooker" we find that he appeals to reason with a frequency that is surprising. Though he argues that it alone is not sufficient to ground that which is necessary to salvation,[1] he also holds that "there are but two ways whereby the spirit leadeth men into all truth . . . . one, that which we call by a special divine excellency, Revelation; the other, Reason."[2] For the earnestness of conviction does not guarantee the truth of opinions but the "soundness of those reasons whereupon the same is built." Only thus can we know that they are from the Holy Spirit and not from an evil spirit that might deceive us.[3] It is by the

[1] *Ecclesiastical Polity*, *Works*, I, 231, 232, 234, 281. He expressly taught that the law of reason does not contain all duties that bind reasonable creatures, but only those duties that men by using their natural wit may or should discover, which are common to all.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 151. The conviction that we believe on a basis of adequate reason is developed at some length (pp. 321–30). Even in matters of faith we must grant judgment some place. Belief cannot ignore evidence, though the authority of human judgment is not as strong as the testing of God himself (p. 323). "For men to be tied and led by authority, as it were by a kind of capacity of judgment, and though there be reason to the contrary not to listen unto it, but to follow like beasts the first in the herd, they know not nor care not whither, this were brutish. Again, that authority of man should prevail with men, either against or above reason, is no part of our belief" (p. 324). "Shall I add further, that the force of arguments drawn from the authority of Scripture itself, as Scriptures commonly are alleged, shall (being sifted) be found to depend upon the strength of this so much despised and debased authority of man? Surely it doth and that oftener than we are aware of" (pp. 299, 328).

light of reason that we know good from evil; reason directs the will by recognizing the good.[1] This light of reason is from God. The meaning of Romans 2:14 is "that by force of the light of reason wherewith God illuminateth everyone which cometh into the world," etc.[2] In fact the law of reason is a part of God's eternal law; that part which men may find by reason and to which they may know themselves to be bound.[3] There are lengthy passages in which he refers on almost every page to the "light of reason," "the law of reason," and "right reason."

Thus according to Hooker the rôle of reason is of fundamental importance. It can know a part of God's law for us and, though it cannot reveal to us all that is necessary for salvation, only on the basis of sound reason can we know when a belief is wrought by the Holy Spirit. He is seeking to give an intelligent reason, a reason other than tradition for the faith that is in him. The conviction that lies in the background of his thinking is that we can know the truth of our beliefs only by "the soundness of those reasons whereupon the same is

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 223, 225 ff. "And the law of reason or human nature is that which men by discourse of natural reason have rightly found out themselves to be all forever bound unto in their actions." Such laws are in harmony with nature and can be investigated by reason without the aid of revelation; and knowledge of such laws is general—the world has ever been acquainted with them. "Law rational, therefore, which men commonly used to call the law of nature, meaning thereby the law which human nature knoweth itself in reason universally bound unto, which also for that cause may be termed most fitly the law of reason; this law, I say, comprehendeth all those things which men by the light of their natural understanding evidently know, or at leastwise may know" (pp. 233–34).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

built." This involves a principle that is of far-reaching consequence: religious belief must be rationally grounded.[1]

Chillingworth after his reconversion to Protestantism demands a "rational conviction at the root of his religion." He is certain "that God has given us reason to discern between truth and falsehood," and he who does not use his reason does not know why he believes the truth. Though he asserts his belief in revelation most vigorously he requires that faith should be rationally certified.[2] Jeremy Taylor held practically the same view. Man should follow his own reason, guided only by revelation, not by human authority. Revelation is not challenged in the name of reason but reason provides grounds for accepting beliefs.[3]

Stillingfleet has very little to say about reason in matters of religion but his silence becomes eloquent when we remember that his criticism of Locke was occasioned by Toland's use of Locke's "new way of ideas" and that in this controversy Stillingfleet sought to identify Locke with the Unitarians. He objects to Locke's doctrine of ideas but his appeal to reason is

[1] "The work remains an enduring monument of all the highest principles of Christian rationalism—of that spirit and tendency of thought which everywhere ascends from tradition or dogmas to principles, and which tests all questions, not with reference to external rules or authorities, but to the indestructible and enlightened instincts of the Christian consciousness" (Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, I, 53). This same principle perhaps in a somewhat more rationalistic form was asserted by Lord Falkland (*ibid.*, pp. 161–64). And John Hales of Eaton "is the representative—the next after Hooker —of that catholicity yet rationality of Christian sentiment which has been the peculiar glory of the Church of England" (*ibid.*, p. 260).

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 332.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

scarcely touched upon; he did not find it objectionable. It is significant that he put in a headline "Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity . . . . from Scripture, Antiquity and Reason."

The orthodox Sherlock did not hesitate to say that if "the Gospel represents to us the law of nature, it need only to appeal to the reason of mankind for its authority,"[1] and that "the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature."[2] Warburton goes so far as to teach that "the image of God in which man was at first created lay in the faculty of reason only."[3]

These men were among the most prominent churchmen of their times. They were theologians who exerted a great influence in shaping the theology of the church, and, so far as the writer has observed, with the exception of Tillotson, their orthodoxy was never questioned. Therefore their rationalistic way of looking at things is all the more significant. Religious conviction that rests merely on authority has an uncertain foundation. When reasonable beings such as men believe anything, it should be because of sound reasons. Revelation is not challenged, but the acceptance of revelation must have a rational basis.

### B. THE PHILOSOPHERS

The teaching of Hobbes concerning the place of reason in matters of revelation are found in the thirty-second chapter of the *Leviathan*. Though he magnifies the authority of the Bible in a manner inconsistent with

[1] *Discourses Preached on Several Occasions*, V, 143.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 142.

[3] Quoted by Pattison, *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1861), p. 269.

his theories, he recognizes reason as an instrument given by God for knowing true religion, and thus it is in a sense God's word. However, the Bible may well contain some things that are above reason, although it cannot give us anything that is contrary to reason.

The Cambridge Platonists represent something new in Protestantism. As Tulloch expresses it, it was the first effort among Protestants "to wed Christianity and philosophy" and "to form the union on the indestructible basis of reason and the essential elements of our higher humanity." They were devoutly Christian, but thoroughly rationalistic. Writing in the spirit of the school and in its defense, an author who hides himself behind the initials of his name is quoted by Tulloch as follows: It is absurd to accuse them "of harkening too much to their own reason. For reason is that faculty whereby a man must judge of everything; nor can a man believe anything unless he have some reason for it," whether it be "the light of nature," "the candle of the Lord" in the soul of every man, or revelation. The most ancient should prove to be the most rational and the most rational the most ancient. "Nothing is true in divinity which is false in philosophy or on the contrary."[1]

Turning to these Christian philosophers themselves, Whichcote formulates the statement of the relation that obtains between reason and religion which is accepted by the other members of the school. Reason is not to be taken lightly, for it is from God. Hence there is no inconsistency in calling upon men to use it, for "the spirit in man is the candle of the Lord, lighted by God and lighting man to God."[2] He has given two lights to

[1] Tulloch, *op. cit.*, II, 41, 42.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 110.

guide us on our way, the light of reason which is ours by creation, and the light of scripture which is revealed by Him,[1] to which reason is not opposed. "There can be no faith without reason, nor yet any higher reason without faith."[2] And John Smith in like spirit preaches that religion does not extinguish reason, but rather fosters it. They who "live most in the exercise of religion shall find the reason most enlarged."[3] Tulloch sums up his position by saying, "that religion cannot be separated from reason, nor morals from piety, was of the nature of an axiomatic truth to him."[4] Cudworth held the same views as to the harmony between philosophy and religion, between reason and faith.[5] Man, God's creature, bears his image, "is endowed with the divine reason," the intuitions of which are eternal.[6] Moore also was a preacher of the rights of reason. To take reason away from the priest, under whatsoever pretext, is "to disrobe the priest" and "to rob Christianity of that special prerogative it has above all other religions in the world—namely that it dares appeal unto reason. . . . . For take away reason and all religions are alike true; as the light being removed all things are of one color."[7] In Culverwell's *Discourse on the Light of Nature* we probably have the most eloquent discussion of the relation of reason and faith that this school of pietistic rationalists produced. His avowed purpose is "to give unto reason the things that are reason's, and unto faith the things that are faith's"; to give faith her "full

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 114.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 185.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 233, 234.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 300.
[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 353, 354.

scope and latitude, and to give reason also her just bounds and limits"; and he significantly adds "this is the first-born, but the other has the blessing."[1] Reason is a royal gift of the Creator;[2] it discovers the moral light founded in natural light that is, in the light of reason, and that "there is nothing in the mysteries of the Gospel contrary to the light of reason."[3] By reason man can know the restraining laws that God has set, but it does not make the law.[4] It has its authority from heaven. "To obey right reason is to be persuaded by God himself."[5] But as the soul is the shadow of the Deity, "so reason also is a weak and faint resemblance of God himself," planted in us by God.[6] Even the movings and revelation of the Holy Ghost "are a rational light, as rational as a demonstration."[7] Before there can be faith in any soul "there must be a knowledge of the proposition to be believed." Before you understand the terms of a proposition "you can no more believe it than if it came to you in an unknown tongue."[8] However there are certain matters of faith which shall forever be above reason, though not contrary to it.[9]

The school taught that faith rests on rational grounds, that we believe on the basis of adequate reasons. Our ability to apprehend truth rationally is a gift of God,

[1] Culverwell, *Discourse on the Light of Nature*, p. 17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 90, 98.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 161–62.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 229–32. Tulloch in *English Puritanism and Its Leaders*, speaking of Milton, said that a "liberal rationalising spirit" distinguished certain parts of *Christian Doctrine* (p. 271). He also makes a like observation concerning Baxter (p. 381).

by which we know His will and what is worthy of belief. By it we distinguish the true from the false. The office and importance of reason is magnified, it is of God, it is divine; and yet they are careful to assert that it has its limits. There are truths that faith apprehends which are above reason, though not contrary to it.

When we come to Locke we find the same rationalistic way of viewing things that we find among the more liberal theologians and the Cambridge Platonists. Probably he is somewhat less enthusiastic than Cudworth and Culverwell, but he is as outspoken as any of his predecessors; he gives to the problem concerning the relation of reason and faith the most systematic expression that it has thus far received. It was a topic to which he devoted much thought. He returns to it again and again, often when least expected. Though a genetic study of the development of his opinions from year to year might show that during the last decade of his life he emphasized more than formerly the importance of a positive revelation, there is no evidence that he changed his views in any essential respect.

We find his full discussion of the problem in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth chapters of the fourth book of the *Essay*. The eighteenth chapter bears the title "Of Faith and Reason and Their Distinct Province." We shall let Locke speak for himself.

He defines reason as "natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within reach of their natural faculties; revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries, communicated by God immediately, which

reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives, that they come from God. So that he that takes away reason to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both, and does much what the same, as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope."[1]

Speaking of "enthusiasm" he says that if God expects us to assent to the truth of any proposition, "He either evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a truth which He would have us assent to by His authority; and convinces us that it is from Him, by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in. Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything. I do not mean that we must consult reason and examine whether a proposition revealed from God can be made out by our natural principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it; but consult it we must, and by it examine, whether it be a revelation from God or no." And if reason finds "it to be revealed from God, reason then declares for it . . . . and makes it one of her dictates." Without reason we could not know truth from vain conceits.[2] If a man believes without reason for believing, he does not seek the truth, nor does he obey his Maker who gave him those faculties to keep him from error.[3] But unaided reason cannot discover everything. There are some truths that are above reason, and here revelation should have the greater weight.[4] "But no proposition can be received for divine revelation, or obtain the assent due

[1] *Essay*, IV, xix, 4.
[2] *Ibid.*, IV, xix, 14.
[3] *Ibid.*, IV, xvii, 24.
[4] *Ibid.*, IV, xviii, 6, 7, 8.

to all such, if it be contradictory to our clear intuitive knowledge. . . . . For faith can never convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge."[1]

Perhaps of all the quotations from Locke concerning reason that have been or might be given, the most characteristic one is: "Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything." God gave it to us to use; by it alone we can know truth from error. We believe on the basis of sufficient reason. Faith is rationally grounded, reason certifies revelation, and the content of faith is rational. He repeatedly emphasizes the widely accepted doctrine that nothing in revelation can be contrary to reason, though it may enable us to know some things that are above reason.[2]

Thus far in our study of the use that is made of reason in speculation concerning religious problems, we have found little difference of opinion among the men that we have met. Some go a little farther than others in magnifying the office of reason in matters of religion, but there is no essential difference. Though Locke is much more elaborate in his statement of the relation between faith and reason, he simply systematizes the teaching from Hooker down. When the great bishop asserted that earnestness of conviction did not guarantee the truth of opinions "but the soundness of those reasons whereupon the same is built," he struck the keynote of progressive theology in England during the next century.

[1] *Ibid.*, IV, xviii, 5.

[2] In like spirit Boyle held that God had given man reason by which he could know the principles of natural religion, but that this was not enough (*Works*, V, 46). By reason we know that there are things above reason (*Works*, IV, 39 ff.), which are not contradictory to it (*Works*, V, 65, 682). It needs the help of revelation (*Works*, III, 414).

### C. THE DEISTS

When we come to the Deists we move in a different atmosphere. Some of them in their teaching differed only a little from the more liberal theologians. Yet the divergence is significant and can be easily detected. Reason becomes something more and revelation something less.

Beginning again with Herbert of Cherbury, we find that "natural instinct" gives man the greatest certainty and that it accounts for his "common notions," and that from these he gets his five articles of "the true Catholic Church, that is to say, of the religion of reason," which was the primitive, pure religion of man. Whatever is contrary to them is contrary to reason and therefore false; but that which conforms to reason, though above it, may be revealed.[1]

Blount felt obliged to stand by "common reason" rather than debase his "understanding in divine mysteries."[2] Reason is supreme; it gives us the fundamental articles of religion, and all those who live according to the rule of reason are Christians.[3] "What proceeds from common reason, we know to be true, but what proceeds from faith we only believe."[4] The test to which all extraordinary biblical accounts are subjected is that of reason.[5] Blount writes carelessly, but reason means more and positive religion means less than for anyone considered thus far. This is the first statement

[1] W. R. Sorley, *Mind* (1894), p. 501.

[2] *Religio Laici*, pp. 26–30.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 95.

[4] Blount, *Philostratus* (London, 1680), Book I, chap. v, illustration 6.

[5] *Oracles of Reason*, p. 33.

that we have found of the doctrine that unaided reason can grasp enough religious truth to mark a man as a Christian.

Toland's contribution to the movement as well as his general position is summed up in the unabbreviated title of his book, *Christianity Not Mysterious; or a Treatise Showing That There Is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor above It, and That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Called a Mystery.* Scripture and reason agree very well.[1] Christianity was divinely revealed from heaven.[2] Yet the proof of the divinity of Scripture rests upon reason[3] and there is nothing in it above reason;[4] yet that which reason reveals to us is not the full gospel.[5] Toland is almost as enthusiastic as Culverwell in magnifying the importance of reason. His denial that there can be anything above reason is an important change; it marks a stage in the growth of deistic rationalism.

Collins is still more radical. "Christ, the first begotten of God, is nothing else but reason, of which all mankind are partakers, and that whosoever live by reason . . . . are Christians; and that such were Socrates and the like."[6]

For Tindal reason is the great mark of dignity of man, "since our reason for kind, though not for degree is of the same nature with that of God; nay, it is our

[1] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, Preface, pp. xv, 25, 26.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. xxv. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 46. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 120.

[5] *A Collection of Several Pieces*, etc., pp. 138–41.

[6] *A Discourse on Freethinking*, pp. 123, 124. Sebastian Franck and Croonhert had held the same views (Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 60).

reason which makes us the image of God." It is the inspiration of the Almighty.[1] By it we distinguish false religion from the true.[2] In fact the religion of the Gospel is but the religion of reason.[3] Both are in complete agreement.[4] By magnifying revelation we weaken the force of natural religion and strike at the foundation of all religion.[5] For nothing can be accepted by intelligent beings which is above the use of reason.[6] Tindal conceives reason practically in the sense of Toland. However, when he considers the question of revelation he applies it much more radically. The religion of reason as a norm for all religions is vigorously asserted.

For Wollaston the religion of nature is but a system of theistic ethics, virtue is but the product of reason and truth, which every man has. He finds no necessity for revelation. To be governed by reason is imposed by God on rational beings.[7]

Bolingbroke, almost in the very words of Tindal, teaches that we cannot assume that religious truths are above reason,[8] which reveals to us the entire content of natural religion.[9] Reason was never subdued by

[1] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, pp. 22–24, 194.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 179.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[6] "If the Scripture was designed to be understood, it must be within the reach of human understanding; and consequently it can't contain propositions that are either above or below human understanding" (*ibid.*, p. 222).

[7] *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, pp. 35, 76 ff., 86, 87, 402.

[8] Bolingbroke, *Works*, VI, 282 ff.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

revelation, "but revelation was subjected to reason."[1] In fact, he goes so far as to say that he who claims a revelation added to reason is mad.[2]

In Morgan there is a strange contradiction. He seems to have been influenced by different motives at different times. In the volume of collected tracts he speaks the language of Hooker, the Platonists, and Locke, and claims that by revelation we get knowledge of things which unaided reason could not grasp. In this sense we can believe things above reason.[3] And yet this revelation is elsewhere not highly esteemed. He speaks of the "so-called supernatural revelation," which is confusion on all sides, so that there is nothing left but to judge of it all by reason.[4] For nothing miraculous or superstitious can have any authority superior to reason.[5] Revelation can give us nothing above reason.[6] Reason is the ultimate, sure, and certain court to which revelation must eventually appeal.[7] Morgan accepts revelation as a fact, but denies that it can give us anything above reason.[8]

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 288, 290.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 171.

[3] *Tracts*, p. 18.

[4] *Physico-Theology*, pp. 144 ff.

[5] *The Moral Philosopher*, III, 134.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 84 ff.

[7] *Physico-Theology*, pp. 328 ff.

[8] Thus *The Moral Philosopher* and *Physico-Theology* flatly contradict the position taken in the volume of *Tracts*. The latter appeared in 1726 and bears the marks of immaturity. It is distinctly on a lower level than *The Moral Philosopher* and *Physico-Theology* which appeared about a dozen years later. In it he also stands closer to the orthodox view and seeks to emphasize revelation; when he refers to it he speaks with a certain reverence. It is probable that this represents an earlier stage in his development and that his views changed between 1726 and 1737, when the first volume of *The Moral Philosopher* appeared. We can safely take the more radical views of his later period as representative.

Chubb has nothing to add to that which the other Deists have said. He admits the fact of revelation, sometimes with hesitation;[1] generally it is assumed as a matter of course.[2] But if men are to come into the right relation with Christ, they must submit themselves "to the law of reason or the rule of righteousness, which Christ requires."[3] For reason is the proper judge of all parts of revelation and must reject certain things in it as being contrary to it.[4]

### D. CONCLUSION

Looking back over what these men have said concerning the use of reason, from the great Hooker to the candlemaker Chubb, one cannot help being impressed by the marked likenesses and also by the radical differences that appear. There was an ever-increasing conviction that mere authority was an inadequate foundation for the faith of rational beings. It is true traditionalism yet lingered as a potent factor in the more conservative thought of the times. Many leaders in the church and in academic circles still lived in the atmosphere of an age that was dying: they were wont to appeal to that which was rather than to encourage free inquiry. But against this conservative tradition-loving tendency, there stood the party of progress. We have considered a number of the leaders and have studied

[1] *A Discourse Concerning Reason* (London, 1746), p. 11.

[2] *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted* (London, 1741), pp. 14, 15, 19.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[4] *A Discourse Concerning Reason*, pp. 12, 13, 19.

their way of looking at things. We find that in a genuinely rationalistic spirit they protest against the reactionary narrowness of the conservative party and attempt to demonstrate the claims of religion.

The demonstrations that were given were of course rationalistic. We must not be confused here; we are likely to think of rationalism as meaning that which appeared later on the Continent, more especially in Germany. But a characteristic feature of this continental rationalism is its hostile attitude toward positive religion. Here in England of the seventeenth century, and also later though in less degree, rationalism is a way of thinking rather than a type of doctrinal system. It is a tendency or point of view, a way of approach to problems, it is a persistent demand that all things believed shall be rational. The most striking thing about this period is that all parties agree in this conviction, the Churchmen and the Dissenters, the progressive orthodox clergy as well as the Arminians, Socinians, and Deists. All creeds and religion itself must stand or fall according as they meet the test of the prevailing rationalism. If we are to accept revelation and hold to positive religion, it must be for adequate reasons. At the opening of the century Hooker laid down, and by his own course illustrated, the principle that "the truth of opinions" is guaranteed by "the soundness of those reasons whereupon the same is built." This rationalistic-critical motive dominated the speculations of the progressive thinkers of the succeeding period. At the end of the century Locke stated the same principle in a more elaborate and systematic form, and we find it applied by such champions of orthodoxy as Stillingfleet

and Sherlock, as well as by the whole race of Deists. There was no essential difference as to the demand that religion must be rationally grounded.

But though there was this complete agreement concerning the fundamental attitude or principle, there was great divergence of results when it was applied. The favorite statement of the relation between the content of revelation and reason is the scholastic formula, that revelation may contain truths that are above reason, but cannot give anything that is contrary to it. This is clearly involved in Hooker's teaching and was expressly accepted by practically everybody except the Deists. We saw that even some of the earlier Deists held to it without question. Locke asserted and defended this principle and thus stood in the line of the rational theologians, the Cambridge Platonists, and a number of other progressive leaders of a more conservative type. But when we come to the period of the greatest influence of the deistic movement, we find a very different response to the demand for rationality in matters of religion. Toland flatly asserted that not only must religious truth not contradict reason, but also that it cannot be above reason, and that anything that is above reason must be rejected as not being a part of true Christianity. This is the keynote of the deistic conception of the relation between reason and positive religion. It is repeated by later representatives of the movement, sometimes in the spirit of Toland, but frequently it is more radically applied. In some instances revealed religion is declared to be superfluous and its documents hopelessly confused. The English rationalistic-critical movement of this period becomes, in

its later deistic development, aggressively hostile to all positive Christianity.

In a word, the period that we are studying was thoroughly rationalistic. Practically everybody, certainly every progressive thinker, held that religious belief was based on adequate reasons. Locke and such men of his generation as Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and Sherlock, and before him the Cambridge Platonists and the rational theologians, accepted revelation as a fact and believed that it could give us that which was above reason, though not contrary to reason.

Deism, except in the very beginning, held that if there was such a thing as revelation, it could not give us anything above reason, and became more and more hostile to positive Christianity.

Therefore it is evident that rationalism, although common both to Locke and Deism, is not peculiar to either. It is, however, characteristic of the age in which they flourished; and in so far as Locke or the Deists show this rationalistic tendency, they exemplify the working of the common spirit of their times.

And when we consider the distinguishing features, those elements that marked and characterized the deistic movement as a distinct tendency in religious thought, we find that it differs from all others in its radical application of this rationalistic principle. Here Locke and the Deists are far apart. Both were rationalistic and critical in their method, but they differ widely in the manner in which they applied this method. Locke was conservative; the Deists were radical. To say that the radical rationalism of Deism is only the conservative rationalism of Locke further developed, is to state a

dangerous half-truth that misrepresents the situation. It would be true under one condition—that Locke was the only rationalist of this period, or the only rationalist that exerted any influence. But we know that there were many others, that the whole atmosphere of progressive thought was rationalistic. Deism took this rationalistic tendency, that characterized at least the entire progressive movement of this age, and gave it that radical application which marks the deistic movement.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MAIN POINTS IN THE RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS OF THIS PERIOD

A thorough study of the views held in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would be a great undertaking. It was an age of individualism in religious opinion. Sects were multiplying rapidly and the rationalistic movement resulted in a great variety of beliefs. A survey of these with a view to producing a doctrinal history of the period would be an almost endless task. But the purpose of this investigation is the determination of the kind and degree of relation that exists between Locke and English Deism. For this it is not necessary to reconstruct the systems of divinity of each man, and then trace linkages. We can limit our attention to the main points of the religious debate that was then in progress. For it is among these that we shall find the marks that distinguish and relate Locke and Deism. Peripheral religious factors also vary, but they are seldom significant, and when they are they are generally closely joined to some cardinal point of debate. Therefore we will not miss matters of importance by limiting the scope of this investigation to the chief topics that were discussed.

#### 1. CONCERNING GOD

##### A. PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

If we were to judge of the religious faith of this age by the language of the controversies, we might conclude

that it was a time of great apostasy, when unbelievers and misbelievers were numerous and aggressive. Perhaps the favorite epithet for an opponent was "atheist," which seldom meant a denial of the existence of God, but only rejection of the system of doctrine which was held by the ecclesiastic who was doing the scolding. Many men who had elements of greatness lived in the dwarfing atmosphere of intolerance and suffered and unfortunately caused others to suffer from *rabies theologicum*. It was probably an age of belief rather than of unbelief, although it is true that religious faith was conceived largely as dead assent to doctrines rather than as a living motive force in life. But men were seriously interested in religion, and, at least among those whose influence was sufficient to cause their opinions to survive in books, there is practically no trace of atheism, although men were talking about it all the time.

We may say that everybody believed that there was a God. Men did not occupy themselves very much in trying to prove His existence. They were busy testing and proving religion. Generally it was assumed without much comment that man knew God and his duties toward Him either by common notions that were innate or by the use of reason which formulated proofs. Contrary to a common belief the Deists paid little attention to this part of natural theology; several of them do not even mention it. But Locke laid great emphasis upon what he calls his demonstration of the existence of God.[1]

[1] The fact that the existence of God was not challenged by any party probably accounts for the small amount of attention that was given to proving it. For our purposes the views held by others are not significant; they cast little or no light on the relation of Locke and Deism. It is not

He is not only full and explicit, but he returns to it again and again. It appears in a number of places in his works, often very unexpectedly. Instead of assuming that there is a God, or of barely touching upon the way in which we know it, as do the Deists, he systematically develops his own proof, perhaps recognizes the cosmological proof and explicitly rejects that of Anselm.

He regards our knowledge of God as very certain. In fact he speaks of it as a "demonstration." He believes that he can show that man by the "use of his natural abilities" can attain to knowledge of God[1] which cannot be doubted, for "it is as certain that there is a God as that the opposite angles made by the intersection of two straight lines are equal." In the opening paragraphs of the tenth chapter of the fourth book of the *Essay*, where he presents his so-called "demonstration," he says that the evidence of God's existence is "equal to mathematical certainty." He then proceeds to give his proof, which is as follows:

> I think it is beyond question, that man has a clear idea of his own being; he knows certainly he exists, and that he is something . . . . that actually exists. In the next place, man knows by an intuitive certainty,[2] that bare nothing can no more produce any real being than it can be equal to two right angles. . . . . If

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necessary that we should consider them here. Though the proof of the existence of God was not a point in the deistic controversy, it is presented here because it tends to show that the Deists are independent of the influence of Locke.

[1] *Essay*, IV, x, 2, 3, 4.

[2] The significance of Locke's psychological and genetic account of the idea of God has been much debated in Germany. Crous gives a good résumé of the views held by those who have discussed the subject (pp. 20–21).

therefore we know there is some real being and that nonentity cannot produce any real being, it is an evident demonstration that from eternity, there has been something; since what was not from eternity had a beginning; and what had a beginning must be produced by something else. Next, it is evident, that what had its being and beginning from another, must also have all that which is in and belongs to its being, from another.

The eternal source of being must also be the source of all power. Hence it is all powerful; and of all knowledge, hence most knowing; and this is what we call God. "From what has been said it is plain to me we have a more certain knowledge of the existence of a God than of anything our senses have not immediately discovered to us. Nay, I presume I may say that we more certainly know that there is a God than that there is anything else without us."[1]

In several places he seems to infer God from the observed purpose and order of the world. "For the visible marks of extraordinary wisdom and power appear so plainly in all the works of the creation, that a rational creature, who will but seriously reflect upon them, cannot miss the discovery of a Deity."[2] And again, speaking of the eye, he says "the structure of that one part is sufficient to convince of an all-wise Contriver. And he has so visible a claim to us as his workmanship that one of the ordinary appellations of God in Scripture

[1] *Essay*, IV, iii, 1 ff.; x, 6; xi, 1, 13; xvii, 2; iii, 27.

[2] *Ibid.*, I, iii, 9. This may be understood teleologically; it may also be read cosmologically. Crous well observes that this is essentially cosmological, and is distinguished from his ordinary or cosmological proof in the stricter sense of the word by the fact that the latter takes as its starting-point the intuitive knowledge of our own ego (Crous, p. 27).

is God, our Maker."[1] That Locke here is making use of the argument from design is very doubtful. If he is, it is neither clearly nor adequately stated, and it is so far from being emphasized that it appears only incidentally.

His attitude toward the ontological proof is moderately skeptical in the *Essay* and aggressively critical in an unpublished paper that Lord King included in his work on Locke. In the former he is content to observe that there are temperamental differences, and that for this reason some arguments have more force with some men than with others. Yet he thinks that he may say that to prove the existence of God from the idea of a most perfect being "is an ill way of establishing this truth."[2] In his commonplace book for 1696, under the heading *Deus*, he discussed "Descartes' proof of God from the idea of necessary existence." He rejects it, because you can just as easily prove eternal matter as eternal spirit; and, furthermore, although we can prove real being from real being we cannot prove real being from the mere idea of it.[3]

Locke's demonstration is but a special application of the well-known cosmological proof. It is very

[1] *Government*, pp. 1–53. Locke is arguing concerning the authority of parents over their children; they have such authority because they gave them being. He contrasts this with the complete authorship of our being which is in God. It is not so much the order of the parts of the eye as such that proves the existence of an all-wise Contriver as it is God's authorship of our being, that gives Him authority over us, that concerns Locke.

[2] *Essay*, IV, x, 7.

[3] The relation of Locke to the Cartesian proof of the existence of God was frequently discussed in Germany during the last century. Crous has made a good digest of the discussion (pp. 25–26).

doubtful whether he uses the teleological proof, and we have just seen that he expressly rejected the ontological, mentioning it as from Descartes.

Turning to the Deists we find that Herbert was sure of God's existence because he found the idea of God, as well as the other articles of natural religion, among the common notions that are given by natural instinct, and are innate and of all knowledge most certain. Blount seems to accept Herbert's views here, just as he did in case of the other articles of natural religion.[1] Toland is not clear. He says that reason is our ground for certainty that God exists, and in the same passage he appeals to common notions, apparently in the same sense as Herbert. He also speaks of common notions elsewhere.[2] Collins seems to know nothing about innate principles in this connection. However in one place, quoting from the opening of Hobbes's *De Homine*, he recognizes the importance of teleology as a proof of God's existence. We must conclude from the adaptation of organs that they were made for their respective needs by an understanding being. He who would not reason thus "ought to be esteemed destitute of understanding."[3] Tindal knows of only one thing that is innate in man; that is desire for happiness.[4] But we can know that there is a God "from the marks we discern in the laws of the universe and its government." From those "we can demonstrate it to be governed by a God of infinite wisdom and goodness," and he who

[1] Blount, *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 136.

[2] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, p. 31.

[3] *A Discourse on Freethinking*, p. 104.

[4] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, p. 22.

cannot grasp this by his reason cannot know that there is a good and wise God.[1] Wollaston expressly rejects innate knowledge of God,[2] but appeals to the cosmological proof at least twice,[3] and refers to the argument from purpose, although he does not work this out clearly. Morgan is impressed with the unity, order, wisdom, and design of the world. "All nature shines with Deity, and divine truth and perfection irresistibly makes its way to every rational attentive mind."[4] The other Deists do not seem to have any interest in proving the existence of God. They assume it as an unquestioned fact, and devote most of their attention to the relation of natural and revealed religion.

Accordingly it appears that the Deists as a class seldom touch the problem. Although at first they emphasize innate principles as a ground for our belief in God's existence, as the movement approached its most active and influential stage this gave way to the teleological proof and also, in case of Wollaston, to the cosmological proof. However they do not seem to have made a clear distinction between the last two arguments. For instance, we cannot be certain that Tindal did not reason cosmologically. But the proof of Anselm does not seem to have appealed to them. It is not certain that any Deist mentions it.

Summing up our results and comparing them with Locke's views, we find that early Deism taught that we have innate ideas of God, which Locke and Wollaston

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[2] *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, p. 36.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 114 ff., 156.

[4] *Physico-Theology*, pp. 140 ff.

expressly rejected. It seems that Tindal also rejected it and it was not mentioned by the other Deists. (In this respect, later Deism agreed with Locke.)

Locke's proof of the existence of God was the cosmological one. He thought it had the certainty of mathematical demonstration. Perhaps this was referred to by Tindal, but we find no trace of it in any other Deist. Thus in his main proof Locke seems to have exerted no influence on the Deists.

It is uncertain whether Locke recognized the teleological proof.[1] This was more widely held among the Deists than any other. Here the difference between them is very marked.

Locke expressly rejected the ontological proof. The Deists appear to have been silent about it.

### B. THE RELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD

*a*) *Providence.*—There is a widespread conviction that the Deists denied divine Providence; that they so reduced the supernatural that the doctrine of the immanence of God in the world of our impressions disappears. The God of the Deists is often made to appear as the apex of an abstract world-system, a creative being that started the world-process and then withdrew and is now separated and isolated from it; this is the

[1] Locke's practical neglect of the teleological proof becomes all the more striking when we remember that both Newton and Boyle, who were his friends, with whom he often discussed religious problems, emphasize the argument from design. Was Locke's failure to use this proof due to his keener critical sense which enabled him to see its weaknesses that were brought out later? We have found nothing that casts light on this.

"absentee God" of literature.[1] It is a tradition that is not well founded; the Deists who have survived in history did not hold such views.

Nowhere does Locke give us a specific statement of his conception of Providence. In fact he seldom mentions it. He conceives God as very clearly related to our well-being here,[2] as the supreme Preserver of mankind,[3] and through the bounty of His Providence has made the useful needs cheap and within the reach of all.[4] "He is constantly bringing about his purposes by ordinary means." He makes use of miracles "only in cases that require them" for the evidencing of some revelation or mission to be sent from him. In fact, as will appear later, Locke's whole conception of God's dealings with man, in revealing to him the plan of salvation and certifying it by miracles and fulfilled prophecies, and in making it effective, assumes an active immanence of God.

Locke repeated the prevailing views of Providence and had no particular reason to discuss it. It is to be regretted that Fraser, in the notes of his critical edition of the *Essay*, does not give his reason for saying that the

[1] Deism "has come into use as a technical term for one specific metaphysical doctrine as to the relation of God to the universe, assumed to have been characteristic of the Deists, and to have distinguished them from atheists, pantheists, and theists—the belief, namely, that the first cause of the universe is a personal God, who is, however, not only distinct from the world but apart from it and its concerns" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. "Deism").

[2] Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, I, 180, 396.

[3] Locke, *Works*, VII, 85 ff.

[4] *Reasonableness of Christianity*, *Works*, VII, 85.

idea of God "is found in very various stages of development, and with Locke himself is external and mechanical, excluding immanence in the actuality of the world of experience. It is the deistical idea, in short." The writer finds no justification for this assertion concerning Locke, nor for this imputation concerning the Deists, as will appear later. Both accepted the providential dealings of God with His world as a fact, as did almost everybody else.[1]

Turning to the Deists,[2] Blount is as outspoken in his belief that God does "lead and guide all our thoughts, words, and actions" as any orthodox believer,[3] that God leads men,[4] that a great political event was the act of God.[5] Toland and Collins are silent on the subject. But Tindal quotes approvingly from Clarke's Boylean lecture and holds that "God preserves the world by his continual all-wise Providence."[6] He believes that the Jews, as God's chosen people, were cared for providentially.[7] Wollaston taught that "God who gives existence to the world, does also govern it by his Provi-

[1] Fraser, *Locke's Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* (Oxford, 1894), I, 99; *Essay*, IV, xvi, 13.

[2] Richard Willis in *Occasional Papers* (London, 1697), p. 13, entered into the deistic controversy and finds no objection whatever to the deistic doctrine of Providence; he quotes the particular Deist against whom his attack is directed; from this we learn that he held that God superintends the actions of men.

[3] *Religio Laici*, pp. 59, 60.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 64.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 81, 83, 85. This is mentioned in a number of places. His implicit belief in Providence and the frequency with which he expresses it would impress any reader with this or any other work of Blount.

[6] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, p. 364.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

dence," and this even concerns "particular cases relating to rational beings."[1] Morgan, in the Preface to *Physico-Theology*, expresses the conviction that he demonstrates "the being, providence, continual presence, and incessant agency and concurrence of the Deity in all the works and ways of nature." He also criticizes those who would see the world running as a perfect clock without the Maker. He adds that such teaching may be good philosophy, but it is poor divinity.[2] But in a significant passage he vigorously criticizes those who do not see God acting through the laws of His world. He can "discover no difference . . . . between such sort of Deism and atheism itself."[3] The context indicates that he is defending the doctrine of Providence against those who would reduce to a minimum the supernatural factor in the ongoing of the world. If there were Deists who held such views, they were not among the leaders of the movement and leave no mark upon it.[4] Strange as it may seem, Chubb, the least educated of the Deists, is the only one who has given a systematic statement of the doctrine of Providence. There is a general Providence, by which God at the creation put the world under such laws as result in making proper provisions for the needs of the animal part of creation.[5] Then there is special

[1] *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, pp. 170, 171, 176, 279.

[2] *Physico-Theology*, pp. 25 ff. The seventh chapter is under the heading, "Of Divine Providence, or God's Preserving and Governing the World." He expressly accepts both general and special Providence.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[4] Boyle also makes a very vigorous defense of Providence; it seems to have been called forth by some definite attack. But there is no clue as to who made the attack (*Works*, V, 46).

[5] *A Short Dissertation on Providence*, *Tracts*, I, 142 ff.

Providence, which is a special interposition of God outside of the normal order, hence miraculous. For instance, a man passes a loose wall and it falls after he has reached a point of safety; such a conception of Providence "is controverted among Christians." It is inconceivable that God should be almost perpetually interfering, that there should be a sort of "perpetual patchwork." But he asserts without hesitation his conviction that God, for certain great ends, does interfere in the ongoing of the world.[1]

Accordingly we find no essential difference between the doctrine of Providence as set forth by Locke and as held by all the leading Deists. Both accept the prevailing view of God's relation to the world. Since it is a point on which there is no difference of opinion, it cannot in any way contribute to the solution of our special problem. This presentation is called forth by the more or less widespread belief that the Deists as a class denied Providence as commonly understood, that this was a distinguishing characteristic of the deistic movement, and that it was a point of dispute in the deistic controversy.

*b*) *Miracles*.—It does not seem to have occurred to Locke that the fact of miracles could ever be seriously challenged. He accepted them as events that actually took place, which reason convinces us are sufficiently attested in history. "Miracles, which are well attested, do not only find credit themselves, but give it also to other truths, which need such confirmation."[2] He appeals to them frequently as testimonies wrought of

[1] *A Short Dissertation on Providence, Tracts*, I, pp. 149 ff.

[2] *Essay*, IV, xvi, 13; xix, 15.

God to convince men of the truth of His revelation. In his *Essay on Miracles* he says that they are the "bases on which divine mission is always established, and consequently that foundation on which the believers of any divine revelation must ultimately bottom their faith."[1] They certified the Messiahship of Jesus to the Jews, they are the credentials which God has given the bearers of His message to the world.[2] Locke frequently emphasizes the evidential value of miracles. His form of statement may vary; sometimes he is less extreme than at others; but whenever he touches revelation his discussion is permeated by the conviction that it is miraculously attested.

This tendency in Locke to magnify the importance of the evidential value of miracles was not peculiar to him. Even the liberal Tillotson held that miracles were reasonable and may become, as in the case of biblical miracles, a convincing proof of revelation. This was also the opinion of Clarke.[3] Even the chemist Boyle not only held that miracles are a proof of the Christian religion, but went so far as to assert that they were necessary to support Christianity.[4] As we shall see later, miracles were considered such an important part of the economy of revelation that to challenge them was considered the same as to challenge supernatural revelation itself and also all positive religion.

Between this view and the general deistic attitude toward miracles there is a great contrast. Their evidential value is at first questioned, then denied, and

[1] Locke, *Works*, X, 264; also pp. 259 ff. [2] *Ibid.*, VII, 32.

[3] McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant*, pp. 200, 210.

[4] Boyle, *Works*, V, 48, 52.

the fact of the miracles is made to appear less and less probable, and eventually impossible. For Herbert alleged miracles and so-called revelation seemed to go together. Although he does not deny them, they could have meaning only for those who witnessed them. For us they are uncertain tradition.[1] It is difficult to gather from Blount's writings just what opinion he held concerning miracles. He accepts the account of the pentecostal gift of tongues,[2] believes that some accounts, such as that of Lazarus and Dives, are founded on truth, but enlarged and therefore need interpretation,[3] defends Burnet's critically skeptical attitude toward Old Testament miracles,[4] and says, when expressing uncertainty concerning certain miracles connected with the birth of Christ, that "to believe in any stories that are not approved by the public authority of our Church is superstition; whereas to believe them that are, is religion."[5] He also questions the evidential value of miracles. He would not depend upon them lest Simon Magus be his rival; and, furthermore, both miracles and doctrine come to us by tradition. It is the spirit of Herbert.[6] Though Blount did not reject miracles, his attitude was often skeptical and hostile. This was the beginning of the deistic criticism of miracles.

Coming to the leading Deists we find great difference of opinion concerning miracles. Some surprise us by

[1] Lechler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus*, pp. 48 ff.

[2] *Miscellaneous Works*, pp. 165, 166.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 2 ff.

[5] *Philostratus*, Book I, chap. iv, illustration 1.

[6] *Ibid.*, chap. v, illustrations 6 and 7.

their conservative views, while others are radical in their criticism. Toland, when he is arguing that Christianity is not mysterious, says plainly that "Christ proves his authority and Gospel by such works and miracles as the stiffnecked Jews themselves could not deny to be divine."[1] However a miracle cannot be contrary to reason.[2] He also accepts their evidential value.[3] But a quarter of a century after the publication of *Christianity Not Mysterious*, he expressed himself very skeptically on the Old Testament miracles. He thought that not more than one-third of them were real miracles. The pillar of cloud was smoke and the fire "a human contrivance."[4] It is probable that Toland became more liberal and perhaps less cautious in his later years. But even in his early publications the evidential value of miracles is not so great as with Locke and Boyle and other progressive leaders.

Collins seems to accept miracles as a fact,[5] although he is inclined to explain away some of them.[6] However a miracle is not sufficient to give authority to a prophet attempting to prove anything contrary to natural religion.[7] In fact even "the miracles wrought by Jesus

[1] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, p. 47. He defines a miracle in much the same sense as Locke and Clarke: "A miracle then is some action exceeding all human power and which the laws of nature cannot perform by their ordinary operations" (p. 144).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 145. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[4] *Hodegus* (London, 1720), pp. 5 ff.

[5] *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London, 1737), p. 33.

[6] *A Discourse on Freethinking*, p. 160.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 175.

are, according to the Gospel scheme, no absolute proof of his being the Messias, or of the truth of Christianity."[1]

Tindal, though hostile to miracles, does not expressly deny them, nor does he say that the Deists deny them,[2] but he believes there are many miracles found elsewhere that are of like nature to those of the Bible. In fact "there are no miracles recorded in the Bible, but many of the like nature are to be found in pagan histories";[3] they have no evidential value if evil as well as good beings can perform them.[4] He calls attention to Clarke's Boylean lecture, in which Clarke claims that there are indifferent or possible doctrines, in addition to positive or ethical, which can be believed on the witness of miracles.[5] Then Tindal adds: "Here these Deists beg leave to differ with him," both as to whether there are indifferent doctrines and as to whether they can be proved by miracles.

Wollaston is silent concerning miracles. Apparently they have no place in the religion of nature, which he delineated.

Woolston, in the sixth discourse on the miracles of our Savior, denies that there was such an event as the carnal resurrection of Jesus, and asserts that the accounts of it are absurd, impossible, and inaccurate. One might almost conclude from his discussion of it that Jesus was an impostor. At least this much is clear to him, many of the miracles recorded by the evangelists were never wrought, and those of Jesus "as they are nowadays

[1] *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, p. 33.

[2] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, pp. 373 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 192. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 200. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

understood, make nothing for his authority and Messiahship."[1] Woolston undertakes to explain these accounts allegorically. His attitude toward them is often that of coarse jesting.

Although Bolingbroke at times refers to miracles in a somewhat uncertain way,[2] he accepts them as confirmations of revelation wrought by God for the establishing of the Christian religion. Christ "proved his assertion at the same time by his miracles."[3] Bolingbroke's doctrine of miracles is that of the orthodox men of his times—that is, he accepted miracles as historical facts, out of the ordinary, wrought by God to attest the truth of His revelation to man.

Morgan, in the second volume of *The Moral Philosopher*, seems to hold almost the same opinion concerning miracles that we found in Tindal;[4] but in the first volume he simply assumes miracles as matters of fact[5] and believes that the power of working miracles has no connection with truth. False prophets also performed them.[6] The historical fact is not challenged; the evidential value is denied.

Chubb agrees with Morgan; at times he seems to assume a somewhat skeptical attitude toward miracles;[7]

[1] *A Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour* (London, 1728), pp. 3–5.

[2] *Works*, VI, 240, 258, 259.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 351. "The faith, which God himself came to earth to publish, which was confirmed by miracles, and recorded by divine inspiration," etc. Stupendous miracles accompany God's revelation of His Son (pp. 283, 285). St. Paul "worked indeed now and then a miracle, as it was given him to work them" (p. 288).

[4] *The Moral Philosopher*, II, 50 ff.

[5] *Ibid.*, I, 79.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 98, 99.

[7] *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted*, pp. 43 ff.

but he believes that they actually occurred, though they cannot afford certain, but only probable, proof that a revelation is divine.[1]

Generally speaking the deistic attitude toward miracles was hostile. However, few doubted that they actually occurred. Some of the biblical accounts might be questioned or even denied, but special divine intervention in the course of the world was not challenged. Some of the Deists held that miracles might be performed by other powers—by evil spirits or even by the devil. The miraculous as such was not considered impossible; but, with the exception of Toland and Bolingbroke, the Deists rejected the evidential value of miracles. They cannot prove the truth of revelation. This was a radical departure from the prevailing opinion of the times.

This attitude toward miracles stands in marked contrast with that of Locke. Nowhere in his writings do we find anything that suggests the hostile criticism of miracles that characterizes the Deists. The lion of rationalism is made to lie down in peace with the lamb of traditionalism and not devour it. For him miracles are facts in history, so well authenticated that we must believe them. They were special acts of God, wrought by Him to certify to the truth of His messengers, so that the man of sound reason had adequate ground for accepting His revelation. Locke's rationalism did not venture beyond the beaten paths, while the deistic rationalism opened up new lines of criticism. It

[1] *The True Gospel of Christ Asserted*, pp. 8 ff.; *An Enquiry Concerning Redemption*, pp. 105, 106; *Remarks on Britannicus Letters* (London, 1734), p. 1. In the latter part of *The True Gospel of Christ Asserted*, he assumes a very critical and somewhat skeptical attitude toward miracles, but he nowhere denies them as historical events.

questioned certain biblical records of miraculous events and attacked the long-cherished Christian conviction that miracles were an argument, perhaps an unanswerable argument, for the divine origin of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The contrast between these two views is marked. Locke accepts the scriptural accounts just as he finds them, and gives what he considers adequate reasons for doing so, and concludes that we have in the miracles of the Bible historical facts and divine witnesses to its truth. The Deists challenged at least some accounts of miracles and almost unanimously denied their evidential value. Theirs was another and a very different spirit.

### 2. REVELATION AND SCRIPTURE

We have learned that neither Locke nor the Deists conceived God as dwelling in isolation, unconcerned for the welfare of his world. We would therefore naturally expect that they would think of the Creator and Ruler and Upholder of the universe as having some special designs for man's well-being, some plans or principles for directing his life which He would make known to man. This is what we find both Locke and the Deists teaching. Everybody believed that God reveals His will, that man can know what God would have him do, and that rewards or punishments are ours according as we obey or disobey God's will. The fact of revelation is never challenged. But when we go beyond this opinions differ widely. Assuming that there is a revelation, some further questions arise. How is it given, how does God make known His will to man, how does the Infinite communicate to the finite? And, again, assuming that there is a revelation,

what is God's message to man, what does He communicate to us, what is the content of revelation? Can we take the Bible just as it is to be His revelation? These questions lead us to one of the chief battle grounds of the deistic controversy. Perhaps in no other field can we see so clearly the lines that divide the Deists from the more orthodox men of the period that we are studying. If you know a man's attitude toward revelation, you can classify him quite accurately. Here, as in the case of miracles, there is a radical difference between Locke and Deism. We shall see that this difference pertains to the relative importance that is assigned to reason and nature, as over against the supernatural factor, in mediating revelation, and to the consequent conception of the contents of revelation. In the preceding chapter we considered the place of reason and nature in religious matters. It will therefore not be necessary for us to make an extensive survey of the opinions of other writers of the liberal movement.

Though Locke does not give us a full and systematic discussion of revelation, he has indicated plainly what he holds concerning it, so that we can reconstruct his views with confidence. Worcester is right in asserting that Locke assumes the possibility of revelation without remark.[1] We may go farther and say that Locke assumes the fact of revelation, which he undertakes to define, limit, and rationalize as far as possible. In the *Essay*, Book IV, chapters xviii and xix, he discusses Faith and Reason and Enthusiasm, and makes many references to revelation. He defines faith as assent to

[1] E. E. Worcester, *The Religious Opinions of John Locke* (Geneva, N.Y., 1889), p. 23.

a proposition "not thus made out by the deductions of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God, in some extraordinary way of communication. This way of discovering truth to men we call revelation."[1] Perhaps his best definition of revelation is given in the passage already quoted in the study of reason in the preceding chapter, in which reason and revelation are contrasted. "Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties; revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately; which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proof it gives that they come from God." So that to deny reason in the interest of revelation "puts out the light of both."[2]

Reason and revelation in the narrower sense are set over against each other. Both are from God. Each brings to us some portion of God's truth; revelation enlarges natural reason by giving man something from God immediately, by some extraordinary means of communication, which is vouched for by reason.

Locke clearly teaches that revelation is no ordinary communication; its supernatural character never seems to have been questioned by him. We have just seen, in the preceding section, that he is convinced that its bearers come with the special stamp of divine approval in the miracles that God enabled them to perform. Being no ordinary communication from God, it was

[1] *Essay*, IV, xviii, 2.

[2] *Ibid.*, IV, xix, 4.

natural that it should be accompanied by extraordinary events.

He also holds that revelation brings us some things that unaided reason could never discover; it thus becomes supplemental to natural light. There are things that are above the reach of reason, of which we can have no knowledge; yet these "when revealed are the proper matter of faith," such as the rebellion of angels, the resurrection of the dead and the like;[1] and in certain things where reason can give us but probability, revelation "must carry it against the probable conjecture of reason." In the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, he was disposed to enlarge the scope of that which we have from revelation, that reason could not discover. He emphasized the contrast between the ethics of natural and revealed religion.

He also teaches that we accept revelation because reason certifies to its being revelation. Though revelation is supernatural and can give man that which is above reason, it cannot be accepted on its own authority.[2] We saw in the preceding chapter that it had its credentials from reason: and when we receive anything as revealed by God our assurance can be "no greater than our knowledge is that it is a revelation from God."[3]

[1] *Essay*, IV, xviii, 7. [2] *Ibid.*, 6.

[3] *Ibid.*, IV, xviii, 5. "Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it. This is the proper object of faith; but whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge; which can never permit the mind to reject a greater evidence to embrace what is less evident, not allow it to entertain probability in opposition to knowledge and certainty. There can be no evidence that any traditional revelation is of divine original, in the words we receive it, and in the sense we understand it, so clear and so certain, as that of the principles

Hence faith is a persuasion short of knowledge.[1] But once we are persuaded by sound reason that a revelation is from God, "we may as well doubt of our own being, as we can whether any revelation from God is true."[2]

The closing paragraph of Locke's first letter to Stillingfleet gives his attitude toward the Holy Scripture. It is his constant guide; it contains infallible truth, and he is ready to condemn and quit any opinion once it is shown to be contrary to any revelation in Holy Scripture.[3]

Though Locke's attitude toward revelation is thoroughly rationalistic, the conclusion at which he finally arrives is very conservative. He is convinced that he has sufficient reason for believing that the Scriptures are God's revelation to man with full divine authority, supernaturally given and certified by miracles and prophecy.

Locke accepted prophecy and its fulfilment as fact. For him it was not just a special part of God's supernatural revelation to man. It was given, as the rest of the Bible, in a manner that is out of the ordinary.

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of reason; and therefore nothing that is contrary to, and inconsistent with, the clear and self-evident dictates of reason has a right to be urged or assented to as a matter of faith, wherein reason hath nothing to do. Whatsoever is divine revelation ought to overrule all our opinions, prejudices, and interests, and hath a right to be received with full assent" (*Essay*, IV, xviii, 10).

[1] Locke, *Works*, VI, 144. This term played an important part in his controversy with Stillingfleet.

[2] *Essay*, IV, xvi, 14. "Not to believe what he has revealed . . . . calls his veracity into question. . . . . For the holy inspired writings being all of the same divine authority, must all equally in every article be fundamental, and necessary to be believed" (*Works*, VII, 234).

[3] Locke, *Works*, IV, 96.

But much of it has been fulfilled in the later stages of the revealing of the plan of salvation; and this becomes the proof of the divine character of all revelation. This is an additional witness to the truth of Scripture, which, as we have just seen, Locke considered synonymous with revelation. Miracles and prophecies fulfilled are evidences for revelation that no man with sound reason can reject. Paul confirmed the gospel by two sorts of arguments: the one was the revelations made concerning our Savior, by types and figures and prophecies of Him; the other by miracles.[1] "Christ, now He is come, so exactly answers the types, prefigurations and predictions of Him, in the Old Testament, that presently, upon turning our eyes upon Him, he visibly appears to be the person designed"; and the obscurity of many passages becomes clear.[2] Thus the New Testament has, in addition to the miracles that were wrought by Christ and the apostles, the proof from the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy.

When we study the teachings of the Deists concerning revelation, we find ourselves in a different atmosphere. Herbert did not deny revelation, but he conceived it as mediated to us under such conditions as make it very uncertain. It was real revelation only to him that first received it. To us of a later time it is but tradition; and the reliability of a tradition depends upon the reliability of the narrator and can never be more than probable. There was great opportunity for fraud, and as a matter of fact deception had been practiced.[3] Blount, apparently under the influence of

[1] Locke, *Works*, VIII, 86.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

[3] Sorley, *Mind* (1894), p. 507.

Herbert, asks, "Whether I am obliged to accept of another's revelation for the ground of my faith?"[1] He generally answers this question in a conservative way. "For my own part, I who believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, do in this point, as in all others, resign up my poor judgment to that sacred oracle."[2] However at times he assumes a critical attitude toward certain portions of the Bible.[3]

[1] *Religio Laici*, p. 94.

[2] *Anima Mundi* (London, 1679), pp. 25, 31, 95. The only account of the Jews that we can rely on "is the Old Testament Scriptures, which as everybody knows, was dictated by the Holy Spirit."—*Miscellaneous Works*, p. 136.

[3] *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 147; *Philostratus*, Book I, chap. vi, illustration 5; Book I, chap. xvii, illustration 2.

In the *Oracles of Reason* there is printed a letter to Blount from one whose identity remains hidden behind the initials of his name. He holds that revelation cannot be a necessary supplement to natural religion, because the latter is the only general means to happiness that has been proposed and must therefore be adequate and known to all men. This letter was published as a part of the *Oracles of Reason*, which was recognized as representative of the deistic movement at that time.

Stillingfleet's *Letter to a Deist*, which is said to be the first formal reply to Deism that is known, sheds much light on the sort of views that he was opposing. *Works* (London, 1709), II, 120 ff. The Deist whom he is answering found all manner of confusion in the Bible and sought out and magnified the difficulties. He set forth the points agreed upon which are but an enlargement of those which Herbert had held. His seven objections to the authority of Scripture are extremely radical: (1) There is no certainty of an event so long ago; we have many fictitious histories. (2) Probably these were written when no one lived who could contradict what was said. (3) They could more easily do this before printing was known. (4) Perhaps there were more impostors engaged in giving false revelation and miracles than we can now discover. (5) We should not take the testimony of Scripture or Christian writers, for they may be prejudiced. (6) Contradictions and inconsistencies in the Bible, unfulfilled prophecies, obscurity, imperfections of persons mentioned, justify suspicion of the truth of it. (7) We have cause to doubt the

Toland, in the Preface to *Christianity Not Mysterious*, frankly says: "In the following discourse the divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted."[1] For him the authority of God is the same as divine revelation; however this revelation "is not a necessitating motive of assent, but a means of information."[2] Yet the ultimate proof of the divinity of Scripture rests upon reason, and all doctrines and principles of the New Testament must agree with natural reason.[3]

Though Collins said that the Bible was "given us at diverse times by God himself,"[4] he also believes that a natural duty was "of more indispensable obligation than any positive precept of revealed religion."[5]

In Tindal we come to the more radical development of the deistic view of revelation. He starts out from the thesis that external and internal revelation must agree, must in fact be the same; the standard of the latter must be the basis for judging the former.[6] Hence revelation

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apostles' sincerity—they "might have indirect ends in divulging the miracles recorded in Scripture."

It is evident that Stillingfleet had in mind some writer who held almost all of the characteristically radical opinions of later Deism.

[1] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, pp. xxiv and 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 38, 65; *Vindicius Liberius* (London, 1702), p. 104; *Letters to Serena*, pp. 19, 56.

[3] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, pp. 32 ff., 46.

[4] *A Discourse on Freethinking*, p. 10.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 174. In the Preface to *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, he assumes a somewhat unfriendly attitude toward the Old Testament and sees difficulties in its divergence from the New Testament.

[6] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, pp. 8, 59, 188.

cannot supplement reason.[1] Therefore external revelation, in addition to the light of nature, is not necessary.[2] He even claims that had our documents of revelation asserted authority without relying upon reason, they would have had no authority.[3] Here reason is not only the authority that certifies that an alleged revelation is revelation; it becomes also the judge of that which revelation brings. Revelation is made to depend on reason to a greater extent than in any previous writer.

Bolingbroke would test the Old Testament, as every other historical work, by seeing whether its contents squared with experience.[4] By this test we find that "there are gross defects and palpable falsehoods in almost every page of Scripture." Their whole tenor is such that one who would believe in an all-wise Being cannot believe them to be His word.[5] He even says: "Can he be less than mad who boasts a revelation superadded to reason?" and then adds reason to revelation. And into such madness St. Paul, Augustine, Malebranche, and the Bishop of Cloyne fell.[6] And concerning the reliability of the records, we have only opinion to attest supernatural revelation handed down by tradition; hence there is a decreasing probability of its being true; while natural religion suffers no diminution. The original pure gospel of Christ was supplemented from

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 69. "Whatever is true by reason, can never be false by revelation" (p. 178).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 195. "The Scripture can be only a secondary rule, as far as it is found agreeable to the nature of things." The ultimate criterion of revelation is subjective (pp. 188, 190). Revelation so far as it is reasonable is not set aside by reason (p. 213).

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 210 ff.

[4] Bolingbroke, *Works*, VI, 238.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 171.

heathen sources; hence not all of the New Testament is gospel. Even in the very beginning it was changed by Paul, for his gospel is different from that of Christ.[1] Turning to the purpose of revelation, which, in spite of his racial hostility, he seems to accept as a fact, Bolingbroke finds that "it was not given to convince men of the reasonableness of morality, but to enforce the practice of it by a superior authority."[2]

Morgan assumes revelation as a fact.[3] Yet it is no guaranty of the truth of that which was revealed save to the first person who received it; for all who came later have the account transmitted through tradition.[4] In the *Tracts*, his first publication, he held that revelation may be able to give man that which unaided reason could not reach;[5] but in *The Moral Philosopher* he teaches that revelation cannot give us anything above reason, to which it must always appeal.[6] In fact the only thing left for us to do is to appeal to reason, for in so-called revelation there is confusion everywhere.[7] Morgan believes that he has proved that revelation is

[1] Bolingbroke, *Works*, pp. 303, 350 ff., 354–56; VII, 39 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, VI, 329, 330. In the Sermon on the Mount, "revelation commands what it is impossible to obey, without an assistance unknown to reason" (p. 331).

[3] *The Moral Philosopher*, I, 15, 20.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 82.

[5] *Tracts*, X, 18. In the preceding chapter he discusses the use of the concept of reason.

[6] *The Moral Philosopher*, III, 84 ff. Nothing miraculous or supernatural can have any authority over reason (p. 134). *Physico-Theology*, pp. 328 ff. The authority of any doctrine is grounded in nature or reason, not in the manner of its communication (p. 126).

[7] *Physico-Theology*, pp. 144 ff.

not infallible, and that those ancient Jewish historians were not under any unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost.[1]

Chubb recognizes some sort of revelation, and Christ as a mediator of a divine revelation to the world, and our accounts of these revelations of God as "in the main strictly true," though we must make allowance for error.[2] But our certainty of revelation rests not barely on the fact of "divine declaration," but "on the ground of reason."[3]

It will be instructive here to note what some of the critics of Deism indicated as the objectionable element in the movement. It is significant that their attitude toward revelation forms one of the main points of attack, and sometimes almost the only point of attack. Stillingfleet selects this as their most objectionable teaching.[4] Boyle discusses the objections of Deists to Scripture and revelation, and concludes that "Deists must, to maintain their negative creed, swallow greater improbabilities than Christians, to maintain the positive creed of the Apostles."[5] Richard Willis argues against those who say that revelation is impossible.[6] These were the early critics of the deistic movement; they knew it as it was a generation before Tindal uttered his

[1] *The Moral Philosopher*, III, Preface.

[2] *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted*, pp. xi, 12; *An Enquiry Concerning the Books of the New Testament, whether They Were Written by Inspiration* (London, 1734), pp. 5, 6.

[3] *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted*, pp. 137, 139.

[4] *A Letter to a Deist in Origines Sacrae* (Oxford, 1797), Vol. II.

[5] Boyle, *Works*, V, 660, 661.

[6] *Occasional Papers*, I; *A Letter to a Deist.*

radical views. Stillingfleet and probably Boyle directed their criticisms against unknown writers of a deistic literature before Toland and perhaps before Blount. It is evident that even in its early stages the deistic movement was characterized by a hostile attitude toward revelation; and it is also plain that the defenders of the more orthodox position considered this one of the most objectionable features.

In their attitude toward the prophetic portions of revelation we find a like difference between the Deists and Locke, who agrees with the more conservative writers of the progressive movement. Though Blount seldom refers to prophecy, he is very critical in what he says. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and many other prophets failed, for prophecies were suspended. Sometimes they deceived each other.[1] Toland scarcely mentions prophecy. He seems however to accept it as a fact.[2] Collins is critical and hostile in his attitude toward it, though he does not make an open denial of it.[3] However, he challenges it as a proof of revelation, assuming that in many instances an allegorical interpretation is necessary.[4] Tindal, contrary to what we would naturally expect, seeks to avoid the discussion of prophecy. Yet he shows that he is as critical here as elsewhere. He asserts that the apostles were deceived by prophecy; then how can we be certain?[5] Woolston accepted

[1] *Religio Laici*, pp. 37–47; *Philostratus*, Book I, chap. xvii, illustration 2; *Miscellaneous Works*, pp. 162–65.

[2] *Christianity Not Mysterious*, p. 90.

[3] *A Discourse on Freethinking*, pp. 153 ff.

[4] *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, pp. 35 ff., 41, 94.

[5] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, pp. 258–62.

prophecy as a fact, and even went so far as to say that he believed that the controversy concerning Christ's mission "will end in the absolute demonstration of Jesus' Messiahship from prophecy," and not from miracles. He would apply the allegorical method of interpretation to all prophecy.[1] Bolingbroke seems to accept prophecy as a fact, but does not discuss it.[2] Morgan holds that prophecy is no proof for us of the truth of anything that others report. He seems to accept prophecy as fact, but denies to it as well as to miracles any evidential value; Christ was not the fulfiller of Jewish prophecy.[3] Chubb did not mention prophecy in anything that he published; however in a posthumous pamphlet he asserted that it would not prove the truth of Scripture.[4]

Looking backward over the survey of the opinions of Locke and the Deists concerning revelation and Scriptures, we see that the difference in point of view or method, that was set forth in the preceding chapter, has brought its fitting results in their widely divergent attitudes toward supernatural revelation and its record. Both were rationalistic; both appealed to nature and reason as over against authority. But in making this appeal Locke was conservative and emphasized the limits of unaided reason in the field of religion, whereas the Deists were radical and magnified those factors which tended to weaken the authority of an externally

[1] *A Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour*, pp. 1, 2.

[2] Bolingbroke, *Works*, VI, 351.

[3] *The Moral Philosopher*, I, 343 ff.; II, xxviii.

[4] Chubb, *Posthumous Works* (London, 1748), II, 139 ff.

given revelation. Accordingly, when they come to the discussion of revelation, they consider it from different and ever more widely diverging points of view. One cannot pass from Locke to Tindal without being sensible of the great chasm that exists between them. The former, a reverent, pietistic rationalist, saw in every part of Scripture God's supernaturally given message for guiding man to salvation, which message he accepted as from God on grounds which his reason convinced him were sufficient; though this conviction fell short of certain knowledge. And once he was led on the basis of sufficient reason to accept a book as from God, he was ready to give up any opinion that was not in harmony with it. Though he believed that revelation could not and did not bring to man anything that was contrary to reason, its message might be above it. Tindal, whose chief book became one of the most influential and representative deistic writings, challenged revelation and the Bible in the spirit of a more radical rationalism; Scripture becomes only a secondary rule; revelation can give us nothing above reason and nothing that reason cannot attain; hence it is not necessary. The contrast could scarcely be greater. Locke is reverential in his attitude toward the old beliefs, and uses his rationalistic method to establish the supernatural sanctions; Tindal and the typical Deists are hostilely critical toward the old beliefs, and apply their rationalistic method to the destruction of the traditional supernatural sanctions in the interest of establishing the sole normative authority of that which is naturally mediated. The former is a "super-

natural rationalist"; the latter are anti-supernatural rationalists.[1]

Comparing the views of these very divergent systems concerning revelation, we find that Locke accepts supernatural revelation as a fact, and that the Deists also accepted it, but with considerable reservation. For him it was synonymous with the Bible; for the Deists it was not, though opinions differed somewhat in this, becoming more hostile as the movement advanced. Locke was convinced that we as rational beings could not accept anything, not even revelation, without sufficient reason; so were the Deists. But he also held that revelation can and does give us that which unassisted reason could not attain, though it is in harmony with reason; the Deists denied this, though here again there was some difference of opinion. Locke taught that revelation supplements reason; with few exceptions the Deists said that this was impossible. For Locke reason is insufficient to give us all that is necessary for salvation, revelation is necessary; again the Deists dissent. Locke accepted prophecy as a fact, and recognized in fulfilled prophecy evidence of the divine origin of Scripture; the Deists as a group, perhaps all of the more important Deists, also accept prophecy as a fact, but, with the surprising exception of Woolston, they deny to it any evidential value, and are generally skeptical and critical in their treatment of it.

[1] The term "supernatural rationalism" was used by McGiffert in *Protestant Thought before Kant*, pp. 199 ff., for describing the views of such men as Tillotson, Locke, Clarke, and others. It is accurately descriptive. Though they held firmly to the supernatural, they were thoroughly rationalistic.

With the help of naturalistic principles Locke attempted to free from blind authority-belief and to ground rationally the essential elements of the traditional view of revelation as supernatural; while the Deists became ever more hostile and skeptical toward it, challenging now this, now that, and, though they did not deny it outright, they reduced the supernatural in revelation almost to the vanishing-point.

### 3. RELIGION

At no time did the deistic controversy challenge the fact of religion. Just as everybody believed that there was a God, so they believed that man stood in some relation to Him which involved certain obligations on the human side. Attention has been called to the free and easy use of epithets at this time; the controversial literature was full of scolding names. But even if there were atheists, they were not Deists. Both the Deists and their critics accepted religion as an unchallenged fact. But since so many of the industrious orthodox pamphleteers identified religious faith with the acceptance of a set of authoritatively formulated dogmas, dissent from such man-made standards was considered irreligion. Even among the Protestants "human glosses," as Locke called such dogmas, were treated as rules of faith that believers must accept. This, along with "popery," was the religion of authority, against which the rational theologians, the Cambridge "Latitude Men," Locke, and the Deists were continually protesting. But religion itself was not denied at any time.

In the preceding chapter we noted the use that was made of the concepts of *nature* and *reason* in discussing

religious topics. We saw that they were extensively used throughout the period that we are considering;[1] they were important motives in the speculative thought of England at this time. At least the more progressive minds sought to account for and to justify the existence of principles and institutions by deriving them from nature or from nature and reason. Nothing should be accepted as true by an intelligent being, such as man, unless it is grounded in the nature of things and is in harmony with right reason.

### A. THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL RELIGION

It was inevitable that religion should be subjected to this test. If the lesser things of life are rational, certainly that which is man's "supreme concernment" cannot be irrational; and if human institutions have an anchorage in the nature of things, religion, which is a divine institution, cannot have less, and it may have more. And, above all, the heathen apparently without any revelation learned to know God and their relations to Him merely by the use of their natural powers. Natural religion was a fact that could be verified. This conviction was an inheritance from former centuries. The question at once arises as to its value, and as to what sort of relation exists between it and revealed religion. Which is supreme? Is it to be judged by positive religion, or is positive religion to be judged by it? These questions were much debated in England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and opinions

[1] They were a heritage from former periods, but whence they came need not concern us here. Their origin and the history of their use are not relevant to our problems.

differed widely. They constituted one of the significant problems of the age. We can classify men according to their answers. Though certain phases of this problem were touched upon in the study of the use of the concepts of nature and reason, its most important phase, which concerns the relation of natural and revealed religion, has not been adequately considered. We shall therefore make a critical survey of the views that were held concerning natural religion by the more influential progressive thinkers, from Hooker until the decline of the deistic movement.

*a*) *The rational theologians.*—The first two books of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* are concerning natural law and divine law. In the preceding chapter we saw that in his discussion of these subjects he has much to say concerning nature and reason, the source of their authority and what they can and what they cannot give us. This law of reason or nature is from God, and comes with His authority.[1] It can show us that there is a God, and certain of our duties toward Him;[2] but it is limited, it cannot teach us what we "should do that we might attain unto life everlasting"; the way of salvation is supernaturally given, revelation is necessary, it supplies the insufficiency of the light of nature.[3] According to Hooker man by unaided reason can know something of God and his relations to Him; the light of nature is sufficient to enable him to know certain duties, but the way of salvation must be supernaturally revealed. He clearly recognizes natural religion, though he scarcely uses the term, but he also emphasizes its limitations.

[1] Hooker, *Works*, I, 205, 227, 232, 233. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 231.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 333, also 234, 259, 269, and elsewhere.

This, with individual modifications, was the position taken by the rational theologians. It did not occur to anyone to deny that man by his natural powers could know God, and could have some sense of religion. Even Stillingfleet in his *Irenicum* taught that by reason we can discover the "law of nature" which comes from God, and therefore "cannot be superseded by any positive human or divine enactments"; and "things clearly deducible from the law of nature . . . . may be practised in the Church."[1] It is significant that Stillingfleet in his controversy with Locke did not find fault with Locke's attitude toward natural religion. Tillotson, another contemporary of Locke, would test revelation by our "natural notions about religion." Sherlock said in a sermon that "the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature," and that if it "represents the religion of nature, it need but appeal to a man's reason for acceptance." However he added: "The religion of the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature. It is so in part; it is all that, and more."[2] And a little later Prideaux in his *Letter to the Deists* went so far as to say: "Let what is written in all the books of the New Testament be tried by that which is the touchstone of all religion, I mean that religion of nature and reason which God has written in the hearts of every one of us from the first creation; and if it varies from it in any one particular" it is an argument strong enough to overthrow it. Even Bishop Butler, the great champion of orthodoxy against the Deists, writes in the first chapter of the second part of the *Analogy:* "For though natural

[1] Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, I, 427–30.

[2] *Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, V, 134–43, 148.

religion is the foundation and principal part of Christianity, it is not in any sense the whole of it." In fact he is ready to go almost as far as Prideaux, who published his book a few years later. "If in revelation there be found any passages, the seeming meaning of which is contrary to natural religion, we may most certainly conclude such seeming meaning not to be the real one."[1] Yet however much they magnified natural religion, and however plainly they recognized its normative character, they were all careful to say that it was inadequate to meet the religious needs of man. Some of these church leaders were considered liberal, but most of them were recognized as the great apologists of their time. We can safely take their views as representative of the orthodox progressive leaders in the church.

*b*) *The philosophers.*—The philosophers of the period recognized natural religion, but there was not full agreement as to the importance it should have. In our study of the use that was made of nature and reason as grounding principles for laws and institutions, we saw that though Bacon recognized natural religion he assigned a modest place to natural theology, and that Hobbes also recognized it, though he accounted for it in another way. In the union of philosophy and Christianity, which the Cambridge Platonists sought to effect, the place of natural religion was at least as clearly recognized as it was by the theologians. Whichcote's striking expression may be taken as characteristic of the whole school: "The spirit in man is the candle of the Lord, lighted by God, and lighting man to God."[2] With nothing but our

[1] *Essays and Reviews*, pp. 267, 268.

[2] Tulloch, *op. cit.*, II, 99.

natural faculties, we can "ascend the world's great altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God." Unaided reason can attain to a knowledge of certain of the fundamental elements of religion; but, however much man knows in this way, it still falls short of revelation; nature is not sufficient to attain all that God bestows.[1] The Cambridge Platonists are as careful to emphasize the limitations of that which nature through our reason reveals to us of God and our duties toward Him as they are to magnify the dignity and importance of the natural light, which is also divine, that shines in the soul of every man.

In full agreement with the rational theologians and the Cambridge Platonists, Boyle, who was really a theologian and a philosopher as well as a scientist, recognizes natural religion, which "as it is the first that is embraced by the mind, so it is the foundation upon which revealed religion ought to be superstructed, and is as it were the stock upon which Christianity must be grafted. For, though I readily acknowledge natural religion to be insufficient, yet I think it very necessary."[2] Boyle's estimate of natural religion might well be taken as representative of all the progressive thinkers of the more conservative tendency, whether from the camp of the philosophers or from the theologians.

It is evident that at the time when Locke was doing most of his writing natural religion was one of the chief centers of interest in religious speculation. Apparently almost everybody had an opinion concerning it; the more conservative men were engaged in setting its

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 70; also Culverwell, *The Light of Nature*, pp. 267, 272.

[2] Boyle, *Works*, V, 46, 685.

limits and the more liberal, as we shall see later, in magnifying its importance. In the preceding chapter we saw that Locke exalted reason and also recognized the importance of nature in accounting for things. He also was intensely interested in all matters pertaining to religion; it is really in the background of all his speculations and often appears when least expected. We would naturally think that since he treated so many problems in philosophy and religion systematically he would give us a thorough discussion of natural religion. But though isolated passages in his works show clearly that he recognized it as a fact, he nowhere makes an ordered presentation of his views concerning it. His interests in religious problems were focused rather on revealed religion and the rationalization of it than on that religion which man with his unaided capacity can attain.[1]

In discussing the imperfection of words he says: "Nor is it to be wondered, that the will of God, when clothed in words," should be liable to that uncertainty which "attends that sort of conveyance." We should be thankful that God by His works and Providence and the light of reason has enabled men, who know not His special revelations, to know Him and their relation to

[1] Worcester discusses "the comparative practical importance Locke assigns to 'revealed' and to what he sometimes calls 'natural' religion. One difficulty in the way of such an inquiry lies in the fact that Locke nowhere clearly states exactly what he understands by the latter expression and as all his specifically religious writings lie in the field of Revelation, his conception of a 'natural religion' is preserved in only a few brief hints," *The Religious Opinions of John Locke* (p. 30). Crous also calls attention to Locke's failure to discuss natural religion. He makes the very important observation that Locke does not enter into a thorough presentation of it, "but emphasizes the necessity of the sending of Jesus" (p. 106).

Him, so that they need not "doubt of the being of God, or of the obedience due Him. Since the precepts of natural religion are plain and very intelligible to all mankind, and seldom come to be controverted"; and revealed truths, expressed in language, are liable to the "natural obscurities and difficulties incident to words; methinks it would become us to be more careful and diligent in observing the former, and less magisterial, positive, and imperious, in imposing our sense and interpretations of the latter."[1] Here Locke is emphasizing the "imperfections of words"; he is not magnifying the importance of natural religion. Owing to this imperfection, which necessarily attends this way of conveyance, it happens that natural religion is not hampered by the uncertainty that necessarily attends the use of words, because it is mediated through the light of reason, while revelation is thus hampered because it is conveyed in words. Therefore natural religion has this one advantage over revealed religion, its principles are not hampered by the uncertainties of words. We are not justified, on the basis of this passage, in assuming that it has any other advantage; it may have many disadvantages.

A passage in *A Discourse of Miracles*, which was published posthumously, seems to give great prominence to natural religion. He says: "That no mission can be looked on to be divine, that delivers anything derogating from the honor of the one, only, true, invisible God, or inconsistent with natural religion or the rules of morality: because God having discovered to men the unity and majesty of His eternal Godhead, and the truths of

[1] *Essay*, III, ix, 23.

natural religion and morality by the light of reason, He cannot be supposed to back the contrary by revelation; for that would be to destroy the evidence and the use of reason, without which men cannot be able to distinguish divine revelation from diabolical imposture." Locke is certain that God gave reason to man, through which he discovers Himself to men as the one true God, and certain of man's duties toward Him. We must remember that much of this that we know by reason concerning God is of the nature of demonstrative certainty; and it is really a revelation of God, though through natural means. To set up anything in contradiction to this is to deny reason, and if we do this we are helpless; we have no way of distinguishing true revelation from that which is false. We should also recall in this connection that according to Locke faith is a persuasion short of knowledge. We may conclude from this passage that reason and the religion of reason or natural religion, so far as it goes, cannot be contradicted by other revelation. But we cannot conclude anything concerning the adequacy of natural religion.

If there is such a thing as natural religion, if man by the exercise of his reason can know the one true God and his duty toward Him, the question arises as to what place there is left for a supernatural revelation. We find Locke's answer to this in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* in his discussion of the faith of those who, because they lived before Christ or in a place where knowledge of Him had not come, did not have an opportunity to accept Jesus as the Messiah.[1] "Nobody

[1] The closing portion of the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, *Works*, VII, 128 to end.

was, or can be, required to believe what was never proposed to him to believe." God requires from every man according to what he hath, and he who makes use of the candle of the Lord will be sure to find the way to forgiveness.

But though the works of nature and man's reason show the way to God, man failed to know Him as he should. Several Greeks grasped the truth, but it was not communicated to the mass of mankind. Only the few have knowledge of the one true God. Christ came, and threw down the wall of partition, and showed that the knowledge of God was for all mankind. Furthermore, man lacked a clear knowledge of duty. "He that shall collect all the moral rules of the philosophers, and compare them with those contained in the New Testament, will find them to come short of the morality delivered by our Savior, and taught by His Apostles." And even if such a collection from ancient thinkers were made, and even if it equalled that taught by Christ, it would be entirely without authority. In Christ, who was sent by God, morality has a pure standard which revelation vouches.

Though Locke does not wish to minimize in any way the importance of reason, he finds himself compelled, by the religious and moral conditions that prevail and have prevailed, to admit that reason has not sufficed in matters of religion and morality. It seems that theoretically reason is capable of much more than it actually accomplishes, owing to the darkening influence of vice and the passions of men. We have seen already that he holds that revelation can and does give us that which is above reason, though not contrary to it.

Taking this lengthy discussion of the value to man of God's revelation in Christ, which Locke published in 1695 when he was still in the period of his greatest intellectual activity, as the standard for interrupting the short passage from *A Discourse on Miracles,* which he wrote the year before his death, and which was not published by him, we conclude that Locke recognized natural religion as a fact, that he magnified the importance of reason as that which certifies to revelation and which revelation cannot contradict, and that he emphasizes the limitations of the religion and morals which unaided reason can give. Natural religion for Locke is a norm for testing revelation only so far as concerns that which contradicts reason; revealed religion may and does contain elements that are above reason. He emphasizes the imperfections and limitations of all religions, save that which has God's special revelation as contained in the Bible. To interpret these passages in such a way as to represent Locke as making natural religion the sole standard for judging of all religion would be contrary to his entire spirit, and could not be harmonized with the limitations that he has set to reason nor the importance that he assigns to revelation.

*c*) *The Deists.*—But when we come to the Deists, we find a very different attitude toward natural religion. Herbert of Cherbury, their earliest representative, shows the spirit that dominated the movement when it was at its height. Scripture is very uncertain; for if there was a supernatural revelation it had authority only for him who first received it; for all others it is but tradition and can never be more than probable. But we find a sure foundation for religion in our common notions, which

we have from our natural instinct; and that which we have through natural instinct cannot be doubted. Among these common notions are the five articles of his universal religion. They are sure; they give us something definite by which we can judge all dogmas of religion. He does not deny revelation, but since any knowledge that we may have of it is so uncertain, and since these five catholic articles cannot be doubted, they should be supreme. Natural religion, which unaided reason can discover, is sufficient. Of course we must remember that with Herbert natural is almost synonymous with divine.[1]

Though Blount at times emphasizes the importance of revelation, as we have seen in treating that subject, he believes his five articles of natural religion, which are essentially the same as those of Herbert, are sufficient, and that what goes beyond them is likely to bring bad results because it is so uncertain. Common reason is our sure foundation in matters of religion; all faiths have been shaken save those which are founded on it.[2]

[1] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. "Herbert"; W. R. Sorley, *Mind* (1894), p. 492; Léchler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus*, pp. 42 ff.

[2] *Religio Laici*, pp. 81–91. In the *Oracles of Reason*, the letter to Blount from A. W. on pp. 197 ff. discusses "natural religion as opposed to divine religion" and concludes that revelation cannot be a necessary supplement to natural religion, because the latter is the only general means of happiness that is proposed; it must therefore provide man with everything that is necessary for his spiritual well-being. The entire letter is aggressively hostile to the supernatural elements in religion. See note under section on "Revelation" in this chapter. There were evidently a number of less prominent deistic authors, whose writings have not survived, or at least have not drawn the attention of the students of this period. From the limited information concerning them that we have, we are justified in concluding that they were more hostile to Christianity than Toland, or Collins, or even Blount. Their criticisms

Toland has little to say about natural religion, but he recognizes it. And his denial that revelation can give us anything above reason increases its normative authority as over against positive religion. He quotes Whichcote as saying that "natural religion is eleven parts in twelve of all religions"; but he adds that one main design of Christianity was to improve and perfect the knowledge of the law of nature.[1] Toland in *Christianity Not Mysterious* evidently wants to hold to Christianity in its orthodox form, or at least he wishes to appear to do so; he also wants to be distinguished from the Deists. But in *Nazarenus*, which appeared twenty-two years later, he is much more radical in his attitude toward revelation; the spirit of the book is more hostile toward traditional Christianity than anything that he had written.

Collins, strictly speaking, does not discuss natural religion, but he emphasizes "natural light" and sets natural duty over against revealed religion in such a way as to show plainly the great importance that he attaches to it.[2]

As we would naturally expect, Tindal gives a radical interpretation of the relation of natural and revealed

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seem to have anticipated almost all of the characteristic opinions of the later and more radical Deism. However, it may be that Toland was more radical in his views than he gave himself out to be; in reading his books one is likely to suspect insincerity.

[1] *Nazarenus*, pp. 67 ff.

[2] *A Discourse of Freethinking*, p. 173. He quotes Tillotson, whom he appeals to frequently (p. 174). Collins uses the central thesis of his book very loosely. Bentley is justified in criticizing severely his "perpetual juggle" about his term of art, freethinking, *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-thinking* (London, 1713), p. 65.

religion. His great deistical work, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, may be considered a discussion of the thesis, "natural and revealed religion differ in nothing." From the beginning God must have given men such rules of conduct as would guide them in doing that which is acceptable to Him, and "external revelation" can do no more. And if God gave man a religion from the beginning, was that religion perfect or imperfect? Certainly it was absolutely perfect, which means that it could admit of no change either by addition or diminution. Natural and revealed religion differ only as to the means whereby they are communicated.[1] The thesis of the sixth chapter is, "that the religion of nature is an absolutely perfect religion; and that external revelation can neither add to, nor take from its perfection; and that true religion whether internally or externally revealed must be the same." Assuming that the agreement of natural and revealed religion is an accepted fact, a further question arises: Which one is normative; when there is a difference between natural and revealed religion, which one should be followed? Consistent with his radical rationalism, Tindal holds that the religion of reason is always supreme. The law of nature is the standard of perfection, and by it we must judge antecedent to all traditional religion what is or is not proper and worthy of God.[2] "Could we suppose any difference between natural and traditional religion, to prefer the latter would be acting irrationally,"[3] for

[1] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, pp. 3–6. The gospel was not to add to natural religion which man had from the beginning, but to free man from the load of superstition (p. 8, also p. 79).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 59, also pp. 164, 178.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 328.

religion is blemished by that which is added to it beyond what natural religion offers; thus superstitions came in.[1] According to Tindal, Deism really consists in judging revelation by natural religion; its very essence is hostility, in some form, to revelation.[2]

For Wollaston religion is but an ethical system on a theistic background. He has nothing to say concerning the relative importance of natural and revealed religion. Natural religion exists in the sense of a moral duty. There is a law of nature that must be followed, and doing so is religion. He speculates in the spirit of Tindal and has nothing to add to the discussion of this point.[3]

Bolingbroke, though probably attaching more importance to revelation, occupies practically the same position as Tindal. He holds that to think that man is unable "to attain a full knowledge of natural theology and religion without revelation" dishonors man; revelation can add nothing to reason.[4]

Morgan, though more conservative than Tindal and Wollaston in some respects, is probably the most radical deistic writer in discussing the relative importance of natural and revealed religion. Natural religion is the sure and certain religion; if you exclude it you have no

[1] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, pp. 85 ff. and 141 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 368, 369.

[3] *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, pp. 2, 4, 41.

[4] Bolingbroke, *Works*, VI, 41, 171, 172, 282, 288 ff. Yet he admits, apparently inconsistently, that "there are many doctrines which reason would never have taught, nor is able to comprehend, now they are taught." This "cannot be denied" (p. 356). But the whole tenor of his writings runs in the other direction.

religion left.[1] "Revealed religion" is built upon tradition and human authority, and this "clerical or sacerdotal Christianity or revealed religion consists in the belief of doctrines which cannot be understood."[2] Natural religion is clear and sure and is the standard for all religions. Neither Chubb nor Woolston added anything to this discussion.

For the Deists natural religion has an increasingly honorable and important position. It is not only a genuine religion, but for most of the leaders from Herbert on it is the only sure religion that is free from the mysteries, uncertainties, and confusion that weaken the claims of positive Christianity. Hence the religious truths and principles that unaided reason can discover, or that God reveals to man through reason, are made the standard for testing all revelation. If supernatural revelation is acknowledged at all, it is of less value than the principles of natural religion, either because that which was revealed could have authority only for him who first received it, for to all others it was but tradition, or because revelation could not give man anything that was above his reason or beyond its reach. Or, expressing it differently, the Deists emphasized the importance and normative authority of natural religion and the limitations of revealed religion.[3]

Locke and others that we have studied also recognized the importance of natural religion, but they emphasized its limitation, its insufficiency. They sought

[1] *The Moral Philosopher*, I, 346, 434.

[2] *Ibid.*, Preface, also pp. 94, 117.

[3] "Accordingly Deism is essentially an elevation of natural religion, supported by free examination, to the norm and rule of all positive religion" (Lechler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus*, p. 460).

to show that it must be supplemented and that it actually is supplemented by revelation, which brings to man that which unaided reason could not attain. "The religion of the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature." To this the Deists would readily assent. But Sherlock and others, including Locke, would add: "It is so in part; it is all that and more."[1] That which is postulated over and above natural religion distinguishes the liberal non-deistical writers from the Deists. Revelation was not only a historical fact, as most of the Deists taught, but it actually brought to man something that unaided reason could never have attained. And that which it conveyed to man was of importance for his religious life.[2]

[1] Sherlock, *Discourses Preached on Several Occasions*, V, 134, 142. Preaching before the king in June of 1700, he defined Deism. It is "to believe a God and to deny all revealed religion" (I, 256).

[2] After setting forth the rationalistic motive in the theological speculations of all the parties of this period, Mark Pattison says: "According to this assumption, a man's religious belief is a result which issues at the end of an intellectual process. In arranging the steps of this process, they conceive natural religion to form the first stage of the journey. That stage theologians of all parties and shades travel in company. It was only when they had reached the end of it that the Deists and Christian apologists parted. The former found that the light of reason which had guided them so far indicated no road beyond. The Christian writers declared that the same natural powers enabled them to recognize the truth of revealed religion. The sufficiency of natural religion thus became the turning point of the dispute. The natural law of right and duty, argues the Deists, is so absolutely perfect that God could not add anything to it." The "Christian defenders . . . . never demur to making the natural the basis on which the Christian rests. . . . . Christianity is a résumé of the knowledge of God already attained by reason, and a disclosure of further truths. These further truths could not have been thought out by reason; but when divinely communicated, they approve themselves to the same reason" (*Essays and Reviews*, pp. 269 ff.).

B. RELIGION DEFINED AS MORALITY

Another significant point of dispute in the deistic controversy concerning religion is the definition of it largely or exclusively in terms of morality. Is religion mere morality, or is it something more? This is closely associated with and in a sense grows out of the problem of the relation of natural and revealed religion; in fact it might almost be considered a part of it. Men were convinced that unaided reason could know that there is a God, and that man has certain duties toward Him and toward his fellow-men, and that the performance of these duties brought divine approval and the neglect of them divine displeasure. Man's welfare here and hereafter depended upon knowing and doing his duty. It was a legalistic age; religion consisted in obeying the divine laws, and these were revealed to unaided reason. If there were "mysteries" in religion they were of less importance, for God had given them to only a few. From these premises it was easy to conclude that religion should be defined wholly or almost wholly in terms of morality. And as a rule speculation in the philosophy of religion was likely to do this just in the degree in which natural religion was given a normative authority over positive religion. The more radically men asserted the supremacy of reason in all matters of religion, the more they challenged the "mysteries" in revelation and magnified the ethical at the expense of the supernatural. As the supernatural waned in radical Deism, the ethical grew in importance, until religion was but a moral system on a theistic background.

Among the rational theologians we have no trace of this tendency to minimize the supernatural. Though

they emphasized nature and reason in their speculations concerning religion, they were always careful to show the limitations of the natural and the necessity of the supernatural. It is true that they conceived religion legalistically, after the manner of the times.[1] For Hooker revelation was primarily for directing action, the notion of law and duty was very prominent. And his successors held the same view: they emphasized the ethical factor in religion, and, with others, they probably helped to prepare the way for the more radical deistic writers who conceived religion in terms of an ethical system.

Among the Cambridge Platonists the moral element in religion is emphasized still more. Whichcote saw but two things in religion—morals and institutions—and morals are nineteen parts out of twenty of all religion.[2] Cudworth agreed with him. "The Cambridge Divines . . . . gave their chief interest and study to the moral side of Christianity and the divine power which it reveals in the life and sacrifice of divine love."[3] They emphasize the ethical element in religion more than any other writers outside of the rank of the Deists, but they never resolve religion wholely into terms of morality. In their systems revelation was always considered a necessary supplement to that which is mediated through nature.

[1] That in this period religion was conceived legalistically in England is seen in much of the theological literature, but it is not so clear just whence this tendency came. It may be due to the Calvinistic type of theology and perhaps also in part to the influence of Socinianism, both of which emphasized legalism.

[2] Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, II, 107.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

Locke, like his predecessors and contemporaries, conceived religion largely from the legalistic point of view. In the opening pages of the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Christ's redemption is made to consist in restoring what Adam lost by setting up the new law of faith, "which is allowed to supply the defect of full obedience," in lieu of the law of works which had been delivered to the Jews, which was, "Do this and live, transgress and die." Man could not yield perfect obedience, but faith can take its place; thus the immortality lost in Adam's fall is regained. But the moral elements of the law still hold. This faith was believing that Jesus was the promised Messiah; but in order to avail for salvation it must be accompanied by repentance. "Faith . . . . and a new life are the conditions of the new covenant." The law of works was too hard for man—perfect obedience, which it required, was all but impossible; hence Christ came with a new law, which is the law of faith; in this sense Christ is represented as a new lawgiver.[1] But the faith element, accepting as true what God wishes us to believe, is a necessary part of our obedience toward God. The great emphasis that Locke lays on faith and repentance makes the legalism in his conception of Christianity perhaps more apparent than real.[2]

Certain students of Locke's writings are disposed to interpret some of his statements concerning the place

[1] The whole doctrinal background in which this appears is well worked out by Worcester in the third chapter of *The Religious Opinions of John Locke*. Though interesting and instructive, it does not bear directly on this problem except in so far as it has been presented in very brief outline.

[2] *Reasonableness of Christianity*, *Works*, VII, the opening pages and pp. 128 ff.

morality should have in worship as proving that he is of the school of Herbert of Cherbury. In speaking of toleration Locke says: "A good life, in which consists not the least part of religion and true piety concerns also the civil government."[1] And in the opening pages of his first *Letter on Toleration*, he states that "the business of true religion . . . . is the regulating of men's lives according to the rule of virtue and true piety." This he sets over against ecclesiastical pomp and authority. But in this same portion of his discussion of toleration, he asserts that "faith only, and inward sincerity are the things that procure acceptance with God." Morality is the outward expression of the inward state.[2] The place of morality in religion is also emphasized in *Sacerdos*, which Bourne says was written before 1667 and was published posthumously.[3] Locke opposed, as vigorously as any man, that type of Christianity which magnifies the forms of righteousness and the pomp of outward worship; in doing this he emphasized the virtuous and pious life; the Christianity that does not regulate action and result in holiness of life is not genuine. But he is never in danger of making religion and morality synonymous.[4] On all essential points in

[1] Locke, *Works*, VI, 41.

[2] *Ibid.*, VI, 28.

[3] L. King, *Life of John Locke* (London, 1830), II, 84 ff.

[4] In the closing pages of *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, he gives reasons why Christ came to bring God's revelation to man. Among other advantages that we have through His coming is a clear and authoritative moral standard, for "a clear knowledge of their duty was wanting to mankind."

It was too hard a task for reason to establish morality in all its parts. The best that the philosophers discovered fell far short of the rules of

the definition of religion he probably agreed with the more progressive leaders of his day in the Church of England. He was legalistic in his conception of religion, after the fashion of that period, and he emphasized, to a limited extent, the ethical factors in religion; but in this he does not go as far as Whichcote and Cudworth.

In the deistic movement, especially when it was at its height, a different spirit prevailed. In the very beginning Herbert laid the foundation in his philosophy of religion for resolving all religions into morality. His universal principles were so sure, and a revelation that was mediated through tradition was so uncertain, that, as has been stated, his five articles were made normative for all religion.[1] The central element in religious life, according to Herbert, is worshiping by moral and pious living. Man also knows that he ought to repent for sins; this is one of the "common notions." But he would not know sin were it not for the moral law, in obeying which he worships God. Thus for Herbert the ethical factor in the religious life was all-important.

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the New Testament. And even if they could have found out their full duty, it would have lacked authority. But this is just one of the advantages that men have through Christ. He brought the new covenant and now man can have salvation through the law of faith instead of through the law of works, and faith believes what God would have us believe and that is that Jesus is the Messiah.

The statements by Crous on pp. 85 and 109 are misleading. On a small foundation, and by emphasizing what Locke mentioned only incidentally, he succeeds in putting him within the deistic movement. By a like process of reasoning he could make many others Deists.

[1] These five catholic articles are: There is a God; He ought to be worshipped; Virtue and piety are the chief parts of worship; Sin must be atoned for by repentance; Punishment and rewards follow this life.

Religion became little more than an ethical system in which the theological background was emphasized.

It is probable that Blount's position resembled closely that of Herbert, whose five articles greatly influenced him. He nowhere says outright that religion is morality, but the general tenor of *Religio Laici* is to magnify the ethical at the expense of the supernatural.[1] Though Toland seldom mentions the ethical factor in religion, it has considerable importance for him. But there is no effort to reduce religion to a system of morals.[2]

Tindal is the first one of the more prominent Deists to give us a complete statement of the relation of morals and religion. He is as radical here as elsewhere. According to Tindal religion consists "in the practice of morality in obedience to the will of God." The difference between morality and religion is this: morality is "acting according to the reason of things considered in themselves," while religion is "acting according to the same reason of things considered as the will of God."[3] Natural religion, which is about the only kind of religion that Tindal recognizes, is but an ethical system on a theistic background; it consists in observing the rules

[1] The letter from A. W. to Blount that was published in *Oracles of Reason* is much more radical than Blount. The writer identifies the rules of natural religion, which is about the only religion that he recognizes, with morality. He says the practice of obedience "to the rules of right reason" is "moral virtue" . . . . is "natural religion."

[2] The next year after the appearance of *Christianity Not Mysterious* (i.e., in 1697) Willis in *Occasional Papers*, p. 17, objected to the deistic foundation of ethics and expressed the conviction that we had better ground our morals on revelation than on the deistic principle laid down by reason. Collins is silent on the subject. See also *Nazarenus*, p. 67, and *A Collection of Several Pieces*, II, 121, 130, 138 ff.

[3] *Christianity as Old as Creation*, p. 192.

that reason discovers. And anything added to this is a blemish.[1] The whole of religion, according to the Deists, consists in performing all the duties of morality.[2]

For Wollaston religion is "nothing else but an obligation to do what ought not to be omitted, and to forbear what ought not to be done." If there is moral obligation, there is natural religion. The foundation of religion lies in the difference between the good and evil acts of men.[3] The whole of *The Religion of Nature Delineated* is but a theistic moral system, in which the naturalistic factor is emphasized, but the theistic foundation is never lost sight of.

Morgan agrees with Tindal and Wollaston; he says the same thing in different words. "By Christianity, I mean that complete system of moral truth and righteousness, justice and charity, which, as the best transcript of the religion of nature, was preached to the world by Christ and the Apostles." Morgan holds that natural religion consists of eternal and immutable principles of moral truth.[4]

Deism, in its beginning and at the time of its greatest influence, so emphasized the ethical factor in religion that it almost eclipsed the supernatural. After the manner of the times the Deists conceived religion legalistically. It consisted largely, perhaps almost entirely, in obeying certain laws. The legalistic way

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 13 ff., 141.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 366. Just at this time (1731) John Balguy in *A Second Letter to a Deist* (London, 1731) said that Deism is more than merely being governed by the obligations of moral fitness (p. 64).

[3] *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, pp. 4, 41.

[4] *The Moral Philosopher*, I, 94, 439.

of viewing religion, which prevailed everywhere, when united with the more radical rationalism and naturalism of the deistic movement, resulted in conceiving religion almost entirely in terms of ethics. Practically every serious thinker on religious problems would say that the religious life is a moral life; but few, if any, beyond the camp of the Deists would say that the moral life is always a religious life; or, as several of the Deists put it, that Socrates was a Christian. The essential element in natural religion is obeying rules that reason can discover; and natural religion is the standard for judging all religion. It may be that this tendency in Deism is but the doctrine of Cudworth further developed. Some of them speak of ethics in the language of Cambridge. But they do not accept the objectivity of the distinction between right and wrong as a point of departure from which to begin their discussions of religion or morals, as do the Cambridge Platonists. It is rather the spirit of Herbert that speaks in the more radical later Deism. Virtue and piety are the chief parts of worship, according to his fundamental principles of universal religion; and man knows this religion of nature by his unaided reason. Tindal and Wollaston and Morgan emphasized natural religion, which they practically or actually identified with morality, and made it the norm for testing all religion. Though their systems remained theistic, the supernatural was reduced to a minimum.

Locke clearly stands outside of this line of development. It is true that he emphasized the moral side of Christianity. But in doing so he contrasted it with the empty ecclesiastical forms and pomp that were notoriously barren of holiness of life. When the Deists

emphasized the ethical elements in Christianity or in natural religion; they contrasted them with the supernatural. Though they sometimes use the same language, they do not say the same thing. The supernatural relations and sanctions of the religious life occupy a much more important place in Locke's system than in Deism.

### 4. TOLERATION

A full discussion of toleration in England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would be a history of Nonconformity. For our purpose it will be sufficient to make only a general survey of the period.

We must remember that not all preachers of toleration were tolerant. One need but read Bourne's account of events at Oxford, just before and during the time of Locke's student days, to realize how often the advocates of toleration forgot their exalted principles when they had the power to coerce others.[1] With some individual exceptions toleration was never the creed of the party in power; it was generally the cry for justice of a party that was oppressed. However there were some leaders, we may say there were certain groups of leaders, who advocated it.

The spirit of the whole rationalistic movement in theology and related interests tended toward toleration. As we have seen, it fostered free inquiry; a corollary of this is toleration of resulting divergent opinions. If a man is to think for himself in religious matters, he must be free to think, he must have the privilege of holding his opinions unmolested by others.[2] This was the teaching

[1] Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, I, chaps. ii, iii.

[2] Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, I, 158ff., 164ff.

of Faulkland and Hales. Chillingworth held that the Apostles' Creed contained all the great principles of religion, and on these all men were agreed; hence the Protestants were divided not on matters of faith, but on minor matters of speculation.[1] He grasped the meaning of Protestantism and saw the real sense of "agreeing to differ." In this same class stands Jeremy Taylor's defense of *The Liberty of Prophesying*. It was probably the greatest plea of that century for the "liberty of Christian teaching within the Church." And in like spirit Stillingfleet wrote *The Irenicum of a Comprehensive Church*, though he modified his opinions later. Both Taylor and Stillingfleet set up broad and comprehensive principles as the ideal.[2] The Christian religion is a religion of peace and tolerance. The church has no right to require more than Christ Himself asked. There is no reason that can be given why the things that are necessary for salvation, as laid down by our Savior in His words, are not enough for membership in any church body. Unfortunately the Restoration was dominated by another and a very different spirit.

Contemporary with this movement, or perhaps a little later, the group of leaders at Cambridge exerted an influence for toleration. In some respects they strongly resembled the rational theologians, and yet they differed from them. Hales, Chillingworth, and Taylor, as we have seen, distinguished fundamental and nonfundamental, and advocated comprehension of sects by the Church of England on the basis of the funda-

[1] Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, I, pp. 325, 335, 341–43.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 344 ff., 411 ff.

mental articles of faith. Their interests centered in church polity; they would so modify the conditions of membership in the state church that it would "comprehend" all sects; their problem concerned the practical administration of the affairs of the church. The Cambridge divines, on the other hand, turned their attention to interests that were more profound; they discussed the nature of religion and raised critical questions in the spirit of the new speculation—questions which touched "the very essence of religious and moral principles." They attempted on philosophical grounds to say to just what extent men had a right to be dogmatic and to insist on a certain standard of orthodoxy. Though they came to practically the same views as Chillingworth and others concerning toleration, they reached their conclusions by a different way. It was religious philosophy rather than ecclesiastical polity that concerned them.[1]

Among these Cambridge divines, Whichcote conceived the essence and character of true religion in such a way that he could not understand how regenerate men, who agree on the great articles of faith and principles of a good life, could not overlook subordinate differences.[2] And Smith, Cudworth, and More were of the same opinion. In the midst of the warring sects they sought to grasp a nobler religious ideal which was common to all Christians. Freedom of conscience in all religious matters was sacred. Hence all true religion must be tolerant. The reason enlightened by revelation is a sufficient guide. The fundamentals were sufficient as a basis for church unity; it was unreasonable and against

[1] *Ibid.*, II, 1 ff. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 101 ff.

the real spirit of Christianity to demand uniformity of belief in that which is not central in religion. Man has no right to demand acceptance of more than Christ and the Apostles required. Because of their broad views they were soon known as "the latitude men." Cambridge Platonism became the center around which developed the latitudinarian movement. But this was a new message that the rational theologians and the Cambridge Platonists brought. It did not fit the prevailing conception; men were still too prone to define religious faith in terms of the acceptance of sectarian dogmas. Their counsel was rejected by both Anglican and Puritan.

Somewhat separate from these liberal theologians of the established church, and also apart from the Platonists at Cambridge, stood Milton, "the great interpreter of the Commonwealth." Though he was close to the Cambridge divines in many things—for they were of the Puritans[1]—he did not share their philosophical speculations. He approached toleration rather from the political or practical side. He wrote a *Treatise of Christian Liberty in Ecclesiastical Causes, Showing That It Is Not Lawful for Any Person on Earth to Compel in Matters of Religion,* and also a book on *True Religion, Heresie, Schism, and Toleration.* In the latter, which appeared at a time when it was dangerous to utter such views, he taught toleration for every religious opinion except idolatry, which is impiety, and popery, which is rather a political than a religious party.[2] Many of the greatest advocates of toleration, including Locke, excepted atheists and Romanists for these reasons. In

[1] Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy,* I, p. 7.

[2] *Ibid., English Puritanism and Its Leaders,* pp. 239 ff.

the period of the Restoration Milton was probably the greatest critic of the intolerance that then prevailed.

Locke saw very early in life the evil results of the prevailing intolerance. During his student days at Christ Church College men were driven from academic chairs for no other reason than that they were of another party than that which was in power. Clergymen were taken from congregations, some leaders of ecclesiastical parties were imprisoned, and in a few instances men suffered harm in person and estate. It is not surprising that as a young man, probably less than thirty years old, he saw the impossibility of church uniformity in doctrine and cultus. It was forced home upon him that honest men of religious conviction did not think the same on all matters, and that the points on which they differed were almost always not of cardinal importance for religious faith; they generally concerned doctrinal statements that were formulated by man—human glosses as he expressed it—and not the plain truths of revelation. In an essay entitled *Reflections on the Roman Commonwealth*, which was written, according to Bourne, about 1660, when Locke was twenty-eight years old, he presents Numa's principle of toleration in all religious matters most sympathetically, and traces schisms and heresies to "multiplying articles of faith, and narrowing the bottom of religion by clogging it with creeds and catechisms and endless niceties." He also sets limits to authority in enforcing uniformity. The Roman state is held up as an ideal of religious toleration.[1] About the same time, or very soon after, in an unpublished essay, he discusses the problem from a somewhat different angle,

[1] Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, I, 149.

with results that seem to suggest an extension of the power of the civil magistrates over indifferent things.[1] During the next seven years his experience in offices of state was extensive. He was secretary to the first Earl of Shaftesbury. Before 1667 he returned to the problem in *Sacerdos*, in which he shows that coercion in matters of religion is unreasonable.[2] And very soon after this he wrote his *Essay Concerning Toleration*, which is a fuller and more systematic treatment of the subject. Here, in the name of freedom of conscience, he advocates toleration for all religious beliefs, save such as contain tenets that are hostile to the state or society; hence Atheists and Catholics should not be tolerated.[3] In 1669 he incorporated religious toleration in *The Fundamental Constitution for the Government of Carolina*.[4] He touched upon the discussion of tolerance in several other writings before he wrote his great work on toleration, *Epistola de Tolerantia*, in the winter of 1685 and 1686. It was published in 1689, and was the first discussion of toleration by Locke that reached the public. This was vigorously attacked, and Locke wrote a second letter in its defense.[5]

It is very doubtful whether any other topic occupied Locke's attention as often as toleration. He returns to it again and again, now from one point of view,

[1] Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, I, p. 154.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 239 ff.

[5] Crous gives an excellent digest of Bourne's account of the development of Locke's views on toleration with considerable additional matter; he also gives a faithful presentation of Locke's arguments and conclusions; it is thorough and correct (pp. 51 ff.).

now from another. It probably is the determining motive of his most important theological treatise, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. But whether writing a pretentious work for publication or a short note or essay just to formulate his views, his fundamental principle was always the same. Every law-abiding citizen has a right to freedom of conscience in religious belief and worship, so long as this does not interfere with the rights of others.

A genetic study of the development of Locke's teaching concerning toleration would indicate that the determining motive is to be found in practical interests. An intolerable situation of intersectarian jealousy and oppression existed. In the interests of the well-being of all parties concerned, both as citizens of the state and as members of organized religious bodies, the situation demanded relief. Very early in life Locke set himself to devising a means of escape. He was thus led, primarily by the very practical question of church polity and the interests of state, in working out his views on toleration. In this respect he probably stands in closer relation to the rationalistic theologians than to the more abstractly philosophical Cambridge Platonists. For Locke toleration rose out of a very practical demand; it is a way of meeting a given situation, rather than the corollary of a theory of religion. His philosophy of religion is never wholly lost sight of, but it is not the determining and molding factor in his advocacy of toleration.

In the debate concerning toleration Locke's great service is that he gave a complete systematic presentation of his views; it may be said that he summed up the

best that had been written on the subject. Furthermore, he uttered his plea in the language of the more intelligent middle class, and he supported his position with the simple but convincing arguments of common sense. Milton reasoned more profoundly, and so did the Cambridge Platonists, but Locke, who was not burdened by the heavy Miltonic diction or by Platonic speculation, reasoned more convincingly for the reading public. As a result of this and the more fortunate conditions that obtained after 1688 his writings on toleration exerted a great influence. But he is not strictly a pathfinder here. A number of great men had spoken of it before him; practically all of the more progressive thinkers of the period urged toleration; Locke is just one of the most important men of this group.

The Deists, of course, were among those who wanted complete toleration. But, strange as it may seem, they had very little to say about it when their movement was at its height. From Blount to Chubb it is mentioned probably not more than two or three dozen times, and nowhere is there a formal discussion of it. These men came upon the stage after the great leaders, among whom was Locke, had practically won the battle. Hence they generally assumed toleration as an acknowledged fact; some of them never even mention it.

For Herbert religious toleration is the corollary of his five fundamental principles of all religion; these constitute the core of all true religion; whatever more there is in a religious system is uncertain and cannot be considered essential and binding. Therefore all who embrace these principles should be tolerated. Toland devotes a few pages to asserting and defending tolera-

tion.[1] Collins, Tindal, and Wollaston are silent on the subject. Woolston expressly assumes it.[2] Bolingbroke, in his vigorous protest against authority, several times condemns all forms of coercion in religion, and says that persecution is caused, not by the gospel, but by the systems that have been raised on it. This is the nearest approach to a discussion of toleration among the Deists.[3] Morgan refers to toleration in a very energetic way though briefly. Fundamentals in Christianity have been multiplied, with the result that the right of private judgment has been ignored.[4] For Chubb the only thing necessary for recognition as a Christian were the essential facts of the gospel and not men's opinions. Christ is man's sole lawgiver; no man has a right to force faith or subjection.[5]

Deism, at least in its period of greatest influence, paid but little attention to toleration. Conditions had changed since the days of the rational theologians and the Cambridge Platonists. Toleration was all but an accomplished fact, so far as concerned active coercion. Certain political disabilities continued for a century or more, but there was freedom of conscience to the extent that men could believe almost what they pleased in religious matters and yet live in peace. Toleration was no longer a living issue.

[1] *Vindicius Liberius*, pp. 107–15. He claims toleration for all save the Papists—they condemn all others and are under a foreign ruler. He believes that without religion civil liberty is impossible.

[2] *A Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour*, pp. 68 ff.

[3] Bolingbroke, *Works*, VI, 286, 290, 350, 483 ff., and in Vol. VII the orepart of his discussion of "Tolerance."

[4] *Tracts*, pp. xvi ff., also *Physico-Theology*, pp. 270 ff.

[5] *The Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted*, Preface, and pp. 3 ff.

The occasional references that the Deists make to it are not sufficiently extensive to enable us to know which principle determined their thinking on the subject, whether they were in the line that came down from the rational theologians, or in that which we have from the Cambridge Platonists. It is impossible, on the basis of their few incidental references to toleration, to determine whether they were close to the practical discussion of Locke or to the more speculative reasoning of Cambridge. But it is clear that toleration is not peculiar to Locke or the Deists; it is, however, a distinguishing characteristic of the more progressive thinkers of the whole period. We find it advocated by the Rational Theologians, the Cambridge Platonists, Locke, and the Deists; it was a doctrine common to many minds. The fact that both Locke and the Deists advocated toleration marks them as part of one movement, but not necessarily as constituting the whole of that movement; as we have seen, there were many others who held the same opinions. When the new order came after 1688, Locke, by his vigorous and plain appeal for toleration, became the leader of all those who advocated it, of whom a minority were Deists. He did not become the leader of the Deists, as Crous asserts.[1]

[1] Since toleration was not a point of dispute with Deism, it should not be discussed here if we were to adhere strictly to the principle that has guided in the selection of the topics that have been developed in this chapter. But Crous used it to prove Locke's identity with the deistic movement; hence this cursory account has been given of such portions of the debate on Nonconformity as were relevant.

## CHAPTER VI

### DIRECT EVIDENCE OF THE RELATION OF THE ENGLISH DEISTS TO LOCKE

Locke's influence dominated the period when Deism was most productive. The extent of this influence, as seen in quotations from Locke and direct references to him in the deistic writings, should therefore be investigated. It will appear that some of the Deists seemed to be wholly independent of Locke, while others were influenced by him, but in a way that is not significant, and that at least Bolingbroke appreciated the difference between the religious opinions of Locke and those of the Deists.

#### 1. LOCKE'S INFLUENCE IN ENGLAND AFTER 1688

Spinoza and Locke were born in the same year, 1632. Spinoza died in 1677 while Locke was traveling in France. Had Locke died at that time his name might have been preserved as the friend of Sydenham, or as the secretary of the first Earl of Shaftesbury and tutor to his son. He was recognized as a genial "student" at Christ Church, Oxford, of scholarly tastes and more than average ability; he had many friends, among whom were some of the most prominent men of the time; but he was comparatively unknown, he had done nothing to attract the attention of the public. Locke at fifty was a scholarly English gentleman, who, as he said when speaking of his unjust expulsion from Oxford in 1684, "had lived

inoffensively in the College for many years."[1] He suffered this expulsion, not so much from anything that he had done that called forth royal disfavor, as because of his association with Shaftesbury, whose political sun had set.

But just as England after 1688 was another England, so Locke after his return from Holland in 1689 was another Locke. It is probable that 1686 marks the literary turning-point in his life.[2] Before that he was the modest, retiring student; after that he was the author of books that marked epochs. Almost contemporary with his arrival in England appeared *A Letter Concerning Toleration;* it was both a plea and a challenge. In the letter "to the Reader" he says, "absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, is the thing we stand in need of. Now, though this has been much talked of, I doubt it has not been much understood—I am sure not at all practiced." We are not surprised that he at once drew the fire of the apologists of the old idea of uniformity. His book was vigorously attacked and stoutly defended. And while the debate was still on, his *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* came from the press, and English Empiricism started on its course. That same year he published two *Treatises of Government* and a second *Letter Concerning Toleration.* After this England knew John Locke. He at once became influential in political affairs; he was a counselor of ministers and statesmen. His political philosophy more and more shaped the political ideas of the new England of William and Mary.

[1] Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, I, 484.

[2] *Ibid.*, II, 45.

When the *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* appeared, England was without a philosopher. Hobbes had died in ill repute. Rightly or wrongly many held his materialistic philosophy responsible for the low morals of the Restoration.[1] Furthermore, the Baconian program had been gaining rapidly, especially since the founding of the Royal Society. The new science, which relied on experiment rather than on deductive speculation, was now well established and had vindicated itself by its results. England was ready for an empirical system of philosophy; and there were probably other factors in the general situation that helped to account for the influence that the *Essay* soon exerted. Within eleven years after its first appearance it had passed through four English editions and had appeared in a Latin version and also in French. As most epoch-marking books, it was much criticized. It had also its great defenders. For various reasons, many of which were not philosophical, it had probably more foes than friends; but among its friends were many of the greatest men of the time. But whether praised or blamed, it was the philosophy that was most discussed, and its author was generally recognized as the greatest living philosopher.

## 2. THE TEMPORAL RELATION OF LOCKE AND THE DEISTS

Attention has already been called to the fact that Locke and the Deists were close to each other in time. He was a boy of sixteen at Westminster when Herbert died; he was an unobtrusive "student" of Christ Church when Stillingfleet wrote his *Letter to a Deist;* he was in

[1] T. B. Macaulay, *History of England* (London, 1849), I, chap. ii.

his fifties when Blount was publishing his deistic writings, and in his sixties when Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* appeared. When he died in 1704, Collins was a young man of twenty-eight, Tindal was forty-seven, Wollaston, forty-five, Woolston, thirty-five, Bolingbroke, twenty-six, Chubb, twenty-five, and Morgan was about the same age. Locke's period of greatest activity began with his return to England early in 1689. And Lockian thought influenced many, perhaps most, of the progressive thinkers for some time after his death. With the exception of Herbert and Blount, all the more prominent Deists wrote during the period of Locke's greatest influence. At least Toland and Collins were personally known to him. Thus the deistic movement, which had its beginnings early in the century, but did not develop much strength until the last decade of the century, and did not reach its period of greatest influence until after Locke's death, covered the entire span of his life and extended nearly half a century beyond. However, the most important deistic writings and the most vigorous part of the deistic controversy came after his death; generally speaking, almost all the later deistic literature was produced in the period when Locke was the leading influence in English philosophy. He was progressive, rationalistic, and critical; so were they. You would expect to find the shadow of the *Essay* over the literature of Deism.

### 3. DIRECT EVIDENCE OF LOCKE'S INFLUENCE ON THE DEISTS

It is not easy to determine when and to what extent one writer influences another. There are several sorts of evidence, but no one kind of evidence can be taken

alone; it must be taken with others; and, as we saw in the study of method for this problem, its value must be estimated with the whole background before us. But the most important factors, from which the influence of Locke upon Deism can be determined, have been studied in the two preceding chapters, in which we considered the use that was made of the concepts of nature and reason, which played such an important rôle in the more progressive thinking of the age, and the conclusions that were reached on certain points that were under discussion. We studied critically the resemblances between Locke and the Deists; these afford the most important evidence of dependence. We found that though there were fundamental agreements there were also clearly marked differences. The significance of these agreements and differences will appear more fully in the concluding chapter. There is another important sort of proof of the relation of the Deists to Locke. Most of them wrote their books and tracts when Locke was the dominant figure in English thought, and almost of necessity their writings contain evidence of their relation to him and of their attitude toward him. We shall examine the books of the leading Deists to see what use they made of Lockian thought.

Of course the relation in time makes it impossible for Herbert to have been influenced by Locke in any way; and Blount, who committed suicide in 1693, published practically nothing after the appearance of the *Essay*. His two most significant works, *Philostratus* and *Religio Laici*, appeared in 1680 and 1683, respectively. There is no evidence that Locke was influenced by them. He expressly rejects Herbert's doctrine of innate ideas.

### A. TOLAND

Much has been made of Toland's dependence upon Locke. In 1695 Locke published the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, and the next year appeared Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*, in which he made use of Locke's definition of knowledge and other epistemological elements of his philosophy. Stephen is probably right in saying that "Toland attempted to gain a place in social and literary esteem by boasting of his intimacy with Locke, and by engrafting his speculations upon Locke's doctrines."[1] Though Locke repudiated Toland, Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, grouped them together in his contribution to the Unitarian discussion, to which Locke replied. This resulted in the well-known controversy between Stillingfleet and Locke. The *Essay* had been before the public six years, and was unusually popular for a philosophical treatise, the third edition having appeared in 1695. It had been criticized already, especially by Norris, and by Sherlock who objected to Locke's criticism of innate ideas. Stillingfleet undertook to review the whole philosophical system of Locke and to show that it tended to foster just that attitude toward the traditional views of Christianity which is found in Toland's book. This, no doubt, has served to emphasize Toland's alleged dependence upon Locke.[2]

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, I, 90–93.

[2] "Toland, an Irish Pantheist, in his *Christianity Not Mysterious*, has exaggerated some doctrines in the *Essay* and then adopted them thus exaggerated as premises of his own" (Fraser, *Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Preface, p. xli). At this period in Toland's life we find no evidence in his writings of a pantheistic bent; that seems to have been a later development.

Generally speaking the Lockian epistemology is adopted by Toland. In attempting to give his discussion a philosophical foundation in the opening pages of *Christianity Not Mysterious*, he accepts Locke's definition of knowledge, emphasizes the inadequacy of our knowledge of the essence of things, and distinguishes our knowledge of nominal essence, which we can attain, from knowledge of real essence, of which we have no manner of notion, and concludes that we know only the observable qualities of things (pp. 81 ff.). Toland also emphasized the necessity of clear and definite ideas, which is thoroughly in the spirit of Locke. But he went much farther than Locke in the application of these principles. Locke, as we saw, in spite of his rationalism always held firmly to the supernatural, largely in the orthodox sense. But in Toland's book Lockian doctrines were applied very differently from the way Locke intended they should be, as even Stillingfleet acknowledged, and it is probable that they underwent some change in Toland's hands. Locke in the debate with Stillingfleet frequently repudiated Toland, claiming that he "went upon another ground"; and Toland repudiated Locke twenty years later,[1] when he said, "I proceed upon different principles from Mr. Locke and principles that are better."[2]

[1] *Tetradymus*, pp. 190 ff.

[2] Though it would be unfair to quote Locke's critics in proof of his responsibility for Toland's views, or of his identity with the deistic movement, we can properly use them to prove the opposite. If Stillingfleet and Edwards do not make him out a Deist, it is very probable that he was not identified with the movement by others.

The controversy with Stillingfleet was started by the latter's attempt to join Locke with the Unitarians, which Locke resented. In

It is clear that so far as concerns the establishing of his more radical conclusions, and it is these that give Toland's book its character, the Lockian elements play an unimportant part. Toland seems to forget his philosophical foundation when he develops his philosophy of religion. He made no use of Locke in his later writings; but he called attention to the difference that exists between himself and Locke.

Zscharnack, in the introduction to his German translation of *Christianity Not Mysterious*, shows clearly that Toland's views as therein expressed could not have been influenced by the *Reasonableness of Christianity*.

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his reply Stillingfleet said that he was satisfied with Locke's attitude toward Scripture and was convinced that Toland used Locke's principles in a way in which Locke had not intended them to be used. Yet he insists that the grounds of certainty as set forth in the *Essay* lay him open to just such wrong use. He says in addressing Locke: "Your notions were turned to other purposes than you intended them." He is anxious to make this clear and repeats it a number of times. He wishes his reader to know that he recognizes clearly the difference that exists between Locke and Toland. He nowhere intimates that Locke is a Deist; he is satisfied with his attitude toward Scripture, though not with his views of the Trinity, which Locke persistently refuses to discuss. He also finds fault with certain of Locke's philosophical speculations, which he thinks may be used against supernatural revelation, but this he says is not as Locke intended (Stillingfleet, *Works* [London, 1710], III, 53 ff.).

Even the bitter Edwards, in his attack on *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, is satisfied to call Locke a Socinian and Racovian and to say that his book tended to atheism, that it had a "tang" of atheism; but he nowhere says that Locke is a Deist. Edwards was not the man who would refrain from using a scolding name for good manners' sake. It is very probable that if he could have fastened the reproachful name Deist on Locke, he would have done it; his failure to do so is significant. We may conclude that Locke's opinions were distinguished from those of Toland and that he was not considered a Deist by Stillingfleet or Edwards.

Toland's letters indicate that already in May of 1694 he was at work on his book, and that at that time the central idea was well developed. Zscharnack makes a very clear case for Toland's independence of the influence of the *Reasonableness of Christianity.* In this book Locke is thoroughly rationalistic, but he holds firmly to the supernatural; while Toland is also thoroughly rationalistic, but he shows a very marked anti-supernatural tendency. Both proceed from the same motive, both magnify reason, which is in harmony with the spirit of the age; the difference lies in the way the principle is applied. Toland is radical; Locke is conservative.[1]

### B. COLLINS

Collins does not show the influence of Locke anywhere in his *Discourse on Freethinking.* He mentions his name in a list of great men whom he calls freethinkers, Erasmus, Descartes, Grotius, Hooker, Chillingworth, Faulkland, Herbert, Hales, Milton, Whichcote, Cudworth, More, Temple, and Locke. Just a few pages before he had referred to Tillotson, "whom all English freethinkers own as their head." He also informs us that Carrol had called Locke and Clarke atheists.[2] In another work he quotes Locke and also refers to him in a

[1] In *Vindicius Liberius*, p. 37, Toland claims that *Christianity Not Mysterious* was read by the Bishop of Worcester, Mr. Norris, Dr. Paine, Dr. Browne, Dr. Beverly, and others. Some of these said it used unusual language, others that it favored Socinianism, "and a very few charged it with principles tending to Deism."

Toland seems to be anxious to be considered orthodox in his religious views. He objects very vigorously to being called a Socinian or a Deist (*Vindicius Liberius*, p. 150; *Nazarenus*, p. xxiii).

[2] *A Discourse of Freethinking*, pp. 85, 171, 177.

marginal note; but neither passage is important.[1] There is no evidence that Locke influenced Collins to any appreciable extent.

That Locke was called a freethinker by Collins is not significant for the determination of Locke's relation to Deism. Though the name "freethinker" was often used at this time, more especially after Collins wrote his book, as synonymous with Deist, it also had a broader meaning and was claimed by some of the orthodox theologians. In 1715 certain anti-deistic clergymen began the publication of the *Freethinker*.[2]

### C. TINDAL

Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation* appeared in 1730, and in three years passed through four editions; it was translated into German in 1741. It was at once recognized as a standard work of Deism and was known as the "Deists' Bible." Probably no other work is more representative of the movement.[3]

Tindal makes frequent use of the books of other writers on religious subjects, not only of those whom we associate closely with the Deists, such as Tillotson, whom he quotes at least a dozen times, and Burnet, to whom he frequently refers, but also of the more orthodox theologians, such as Scot, whom he quotes thirteen times, Prideaux, Nye, Taylor, Chillingworth, Sherlock, and Clarke. If we could determine affinity and dependence by a statistical survey of men quoted, we would conclude that Scot, Tillotson, Burnet, and Clarke were more

[1] *An Enquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (London, 1735), pp. 32 ff., 77.

[2] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. "Deism."

[3] Lechler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus*, p. 327.

responsible for shaping Tindal's radical views than Blount or Toland or Collins. He was probably making out the best case possible for his radical views from the writers who were considered good churchmen.

It is very significant that, in establishing the legislative authority of natural religion, he makes no use of Locke's philosophy. However there are several passages which might be used to show some dependence of Tindal on Locke. He quoted Locke just five times in his entire book; three of these passages are unimportant. On page 301 there is a marginal reference to Locke which has no significance. And there is a long quotation on page 235 from the *Essay* which emphasizes reason as the means that men have for distinguishing between true religion and superstition. In this same argument he uses passages from Chillingworth, Taylor, Chandler, and others. Certainly all the progressive thinkers and probably many of the very orthodox clergy would find nothing objectionable in the position here set forth.

On page 294 Tindal has a long quotation from the *Essay* (IV, xvi, 10) on the rules governing the value of testimony when it has been repeated. This supports the deistic contention, which began in Herbert, that, since our knowledge of revelation comes to us through tradition, it is of necessity not authoritative; revelation is authoritative as revelation only to the one who first receives it. Locke is discussing the degrees of assent and cites a well-known "rule observed in the law of England." Tindal takes this statement of the principle of law as made by Locke and makes a special application of it to the advantage of the religion of reason—an application which Locke did not make, which is contrary

to Locke's views concerning revelation, and which could have been made just as well by simply citing the recognized practice of the courts without mentioning Locke. Assuming that there is no contradictory evidence, and we have seen that there is such evidence, this passage would have no value as proof of the dependence of Tindal on Locke.

Coming to the two important passages from Locke, we find that Tindal, in arguing against certain positions of Clarke, dissents from Clarke's doctrine that natural light cannot reveal to man that the sinner has forgiveness, and against this he quotes, on page 391, the teaching of Nye and Locke,[1] who are convinced that by the light of reason man can know God as good and merciful and forgiving. The point at issue is not whether we can know God by reason, but whether we can know enough about Him to be sure that He is merciful. Clarke said we could not; Nye, Locke, and Tindal said we could.[2] The teaching is not characteristic of Deism. All those who held that the gospel is a republication of the pure, original religion, which was as old as creation, would not hesitate to assert it.[3] Though it was a liberal view, it was held by some rationalistic clergymen, who were generally considered orthodox. There is no proof here of the responsibility of Locke for Tindal's doctrine.

But the quotation from Locke's *Discourse on Miracles*, which was published posthumously, seems to be clearly

[1] Locke, *Works*, VII, 133.

[2] Whatever Nye was, he was not a Deist. Wallace in *Antitrinitarian Biography* (London, 1850), I, 331, exonerates Nye from the authorship of a Unitarian tract that had been credited to him.

[3] Sherlock, *Discourses Preached on Several Occasions*, V, 138.

deistic. It has been considered already in the study of Locke's attitude toward natural religion in the fifth chapter. Tindal is arguing that to magnify revelation is to weaken the force of the religion of reason, and to strike at all religion. In doing this he claims that even the Scriptures assume that man is an intelligent being, capable of knowing good from evil, and religion from superstition. And in support of this he quotes from Locke's *Discourse on Miracles:*

> That no mission can be looked upon to be divine, that delivers anything derogating from the honour of the one, only, true, invisible God, or inconsistent with natural religion and the rules of morality; because God having discovered to men that unity and majesty of his eternal godhead, and the truths of natural religion and morality by the light of reason, he cannot be supposed to back the contrary by revelation; for that would be to destroy the evidence and the use of reason, without which men cannot be able to distinguish divine revelation from diabolical imposture.[1]

Tindal believed that this passage teaches, (1) that no mission or revelation is true that admits of more than one God; (2) that men by reason know wherein honor of God consists; (3) that they must know by the light of reason what are the truths of natural religion and rules of morality.

This passage from Locke may be understood as teaching that natural religion is the supreme legislator for all religions, which is a characteristic deistic doctrine. This does not fit in with what Locke has said elsewhere, as was shown in the study of his views of natural religion But Tindal does not give it this radical interpretation, and it can be read, as we saw, in a way that is consistent

[1] Locke, *Works*, IX, 261.

with Locke's general position. He insisted that the natural light of reason is supplemented by revelation. Perhaps theoretically reason can know God and all morality, but actually it fell short and revelation was necessary. As was observed above, we may conclude from this passage that reason and the religion of reason or natural religion, so far as it goes, cannot be contradicted by other revelation. To this extent it may be considered to have a legislative authority over revelation; but one cannot conclude anything concerning the adequacy of natural religion, which Tindal and the typical Deists assert and Locke denies. Without twisting the sense, this passage, which Locke himself never published, can be understood in a way that is in harmony with the explicit statements that Locke published concerning natural religion. It is not an argument for the deistic position of Locke, and Tindal did not use it as such. There is also no reason for assuming that it influenced his general view.

There is no other evidence, so far as the writer knows, that would suggest the dependence of Tindal on Locke. These passages show that Tindal in proving certain of his theses used passages from the writings of Locke. Even if there were no evidence to the contrary, and in the preceding chapters we have seen that there is much, to conclude on the bases of these passages that there was dependence would be to rest an important hypothesis on a very small and uncertain foundation. If Tindal's views were borrowed, the number and the character of the quotations from Tillotson, Sherlock, Scot, and others would suggest them as the sources of his system. We can co-ordinate a larger number of facts, and can bring

them together with a smaller remainder, if we assume that the author of the Deists' Bible simply accepted the rationalistic and critical way of approaching religious problems, which was used by all progressive thinkers, including Locke, and applied it more radically than some others.

### D. WOLLASTON

In the *Religion of Nature Delineated*, Wollaston makes no use of Locke's philosophy, nor of any writing of his. Perhaps Locke's insistence upon the supernatural and the inadequacy of that which is purely ethical was so far out of harmony with the central thesis of Wollaston that he recognized in Locke another spirit, so different that he did not care to use any part of his system.

### E. BOLINGBROKE

Bacon is the philosopher whom Bolingbroke praises most, and Locke is the one whom he criticizes most. It is "our Verulam," "My Lord Bacon," "the herald of a new period," "astounding genius," before whose time the foundations were ill laid, but he laid them on the rock of nature and truth.[1]

He appreciates Locke as an empirical philosopher, who uses the psychological method. It is evident that he considered him one of the greatest thinkers of the age, greater than Descartes or Gassendi; the only person to be compared with him is Bacon.[2]

[1] Bolingbroke, *Works*, VI, 155, 156, 404; VII, 243, 406.

[2] "The first steps toward a right conduct of the understanding . . . . are an accurate analysis of the mind, a careful review of the intellectual faculties . . . . and an attentive observation of the whole intellectual procedure. . . . . When this is well and truly done by any writer, the reader will feel consciously that it is so; for he will perceive

But when we come to religious problems, which are the issues that concern Deism, he dissents from Locke practically every time that he mentions him, and his criticism is often severe. Locke is glaringly inconsistent when he argues in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* and in his commentaries on Paul's Epistle that there are degrees of historical probability. It does not fit in with what he said concerning error that attends the use of words. Locke is also inconsistent in asserting that the heathen did not know the one true God, though the works of nature were sufficient proof of Him.[1] He dissents from Locke's view concerning the origin of monotheism, that the Israelites were the only monotheists among the ancients, and rejects his teaching that mankind before Christ lacked a clear knowledge of duty.[2]

He criticizes Locke's doctrine that saving faith is to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. This may be the primary but it is not the sole object of our faith. "There are other things, doubtless, contained in the revelation he made of himself, dependent on and relative to this article, without the belief of which, I suppose, that our Christianity would be very defective."

Bolingbroke saw clearly that there was a fundamental difference between his view and that of Locke

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the phenomena of his own mind to be such as they are represented, and he will recollect that the same things have passed there, though he has not always, or at all observed them. This happens to me when I read the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. I am led as it were, through a course of experimental philosophy" (*Works*, VII, 603; see also VI, 162, 163).

[1] *Works*, VI, 188.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 187, 192, 218.

concerning man's native capacity. Locke "asserts the insufficiency of human reason, unassisted by revelation, in its great and proper business of morality. Human reason never made out an entire body of the laws of nature from unquestionable principles, or by clear deduction. Scattered sayings—incoherent apothegms of philosophers and wise men—could never rise to the force of a law." When Locke contrasts the supposed imperfect knowledge of the religion of nature, which the heathen had, with "the supposed perfect knowledge, which is communicated in the Gospel, what he advances stands in direct contradiction to truth."[1] Perhaps Bolingbroke understood Locke's attitude toward natural religion better than some of Locke's modern readers. He saw that Locke emphasized the limitations of reason in a way that he could not approve. Locke pointed out the imperfections of natural religion and the necessity of revelation, while Bolingbroke laid stress upon the sufficiency and perfection of natural religion, and its normative authority for all religion. They represented two different tendencies in the religious thought of the age, and Bolingbroke knew it.

### F. MORGAN

Morgan professes himself to be a disciple of Locke, though he seldom mentions him, and disagreed with him on important points; but Morgan, like Wollaston and unlike Tindal, makes little use of what others have said. After investigating and rejecting Locke's teaching concerning innate ideas, he praises his greatness and adds: "in almost everything else, I must own Mr. Locke

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 327 ff., 351 ff.

as my master, and the first guide and director of my understanding."[1] Yet, with the exception of one passage, this is the only evidence of Locke's influence upon him. He refers to complex ideas in almost the words of Locke; it is clear that he had the discussion of the *Essay* in mind. But he at once passes on without making any special use of Locke's teachings.[2]

He dissents from the main thesis of the *Reasonableness of Christianity:*

> Mr. Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* has proved that the one single point as a matter of faith which the apostles preached in and about Judea, after the resurrection, was this, that Jesus was the Messiah, according to the prophets; and, I think, I have proved that our Jesus, or the true Christian Messiah, and Saviour of the world, never claimed that grand essential character, of being the temporal restorer and deliverer of the nation, and that he never promised any such thing to bring it about, either then, or at any other time.

Morgan and Locke understood the Jewish Messianic expectation in different ways; Locke interpretes it after the traditional manner—the anticipated deliverer is Christ the Redeemer, the spiritual leader of the whole race, who was sent by God; Morgan understood the expectation of Israel to point to a temporal restorer and deliverer and not to the "true Christian Messiah and Saviour of the world." Probably this difference between Locke and Morgan is accounted for by the difference between the Lockian and deistic views of prophecy.[3]

[1] *Physico-Theology*, pp. 73, 74.

[2] *Ibid.*, 174 ff.

[3] A. Morgan, *Letter to Eusebius*, in *The Moral Philosopher*, II, 57. Locke is also mentioned on p. 141 to illustrate a point, but it is without significance; he could have used any other name just as well.

The references that Morgan makes to Locke show that he knew him and esteemed him highly, but they do not prove that he is dependent on Locke in any matters of importance. In spite of his owning Locke as his master and guide and director of his understanding, he does not use his writings. A study of Morgan's book would never suggest that he sat at the feet of Locke. Any theory that might be offered to account for this difference between Morgan's professed dependence on Locke and the practical ignoring of Locke that we find in his works would be very uncertain; Morgan's books give us no clue. It may be due to the fact that he recognized that there was an essential difference between them, as did Bolingbroke.

Woolston and Chubb give no evidence that they were even acquainted with Locke's writings.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The above is a complete survey of the direct internal evidence of the dependence of the Deists on Locke. With the exception of Toland and Tindal, the references to Locke in deistic literature are without significance. Wollaston, Woolston, and Chubb do not use his writings and do not refer to him. In Toland we have more evidence of Locke's responsibility for the deistic opinions than in any other deistic writer. But here it concerns only the philosophical background of his religious speculation, which plays a very unimportant part in the development of the thesis that he is seeking to establish. There is no evidence that the theological writings of Locke influenced Toland in any way, and later in life he seems to emphasize his departure from Locke. Collins,

though as a young man he stood in closer personal relation to Locke than any other Deist, gives no evidence of having been influenced by him. Tindal quoted Locke several times in support of certain theses that he sought to establish, but none of these passages are important in his philosophy of religion. If we were to establish Tindal's dependence on others by direct internal proofs, the evidence would point to Tillotson and Scot. There is no reason why Locke should be held responsible for the Deists' Bible, and, as we saw in earlier chapters, there are good reasons why we should think that he is not responsible for it. Bolingbroke appreciates Locke's importance as a philosopher, but he also saw clearly that between him and the author of the *Essay* there was a fundamental difference, which was shown in his persistent polemic against Locke's views on religious problems. And Morgan, though he claimed to be a disciple of Locke in most everything save the doctrine of innate ideas, shows no evidence of it in his books.

The internal evidence shows that Locke's influence on the deistic movement, when it was at its height, was small, that it was greatest in Toland and either negligible or without significance in the writings of Wollaston, Tindal, and Morgan, who wrote the most important and most characteristic deistic books. As the movement advanced, it seemed to get farther away from Locke, and either ignored him or assumed a critical attitude toward him, more especially toward his religious views.

When it is recalled that at this time Locke was the most important English philosopher, and that he exerted a molding influence in other fields, the Deists' independence of him becomes a problem. It is so contrary

to what we would naturally expect that it challenges us to seek an explanation. Probably Bolingbroke suggests the reason when he criticizes Locke for asserting the insufficiency of human reason in its great and proper business of morality, and the imperfect knowledge of the religion of nature, which the heathen had, when compared with the perfect knowledge, which we have in the gospel. When Locke makes this contrast between natural and revealed religion, to the disparagement of the former, "what he advances stands in direct contradiction to truth." As has been shown, both Locke and the Deists were rationalistic, but Locke emphasized the limits of reason and the necessity of a supernatural revelation, while the Deists emphasized the sufficiency of reason in morals and religion and its normative authority over revelation. We know that Bolingbroke understood the significance of the difference between him and Locke; it is probable that Wollaston and Tindal understood it also, and that this accounts for their indifferent attitude toward him. Had they considered Locke a supporter of their views, Wollaston, who seldom quoted from other writers, might have been silent, but Tindal would have paraded it in his book. Locke and the Deists differed radically; and the Deists knew it.

# CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

The nature of this problem called for a study of the relation of Locke and Deism on the background of the speculation of that period. This study has been completed. We shall now bring together the results, define and compare Locke's religious opinions with those of the Deists, and test the several possible theories concerning the relation of Locke and Deism by the relative facts that have been gathered.

### I. RÉSUMÉ

We saw in the fourth chapter that the age was dominated by two focal concepts, nature and reason. These were the two distinguishable but inseparable poles of liberal speculation. In order to be adequately grounded, institutions and principles must be both natural and reasonable.

Just as the idea of development dominates speculative thinking today, so the leaders of English thought three hundred years ago undertook to account for all institutions and principles by nature. It determines the character of things and gives them authority. In this all progressive thinkers agreed—the liberal theologians, the philosophers, including the Cambridge Platonists and Locke, and the Deists. As an ultimate concept for grounding things it characterized the whole age.

When we ask what is meant by nature, opinions differ widely, and there is confusion. We can, however, bring the various conceptions into two general groups. We found that the liberal theologians, Locke and the Deists, regarded nature as the fixed world or world-order, made by God and revealing Him and His will, and that the Cambridge Platonists tended to conceive nature as a fixed and immutable order more or less independent of God. Generally speaking Locke and the Deists agree in their way of thinking of nature and stand in the line which comes down from Hooker; Chubb is the only clear exception to this; Morgan and Bolingbroke speak in uncertain terms.

Furthermore, all liberal thinkers agreed in the demand that everything, including religion, should be reasonable. There was an increasing conviction that authority was an inadequate foundation for the faith of rational beings. If religion is true, it must vindicate itself before the court of reason. No one dissented from this thesis; practically everybody accepted the rationalistic way of looking at things. But there was wide divergence in the way this principle was applied, with consequent variations in results. Most writers on religious problems were content to use the scholastic formula, that revelation could give us that which was above reason but not that which was contrary to it. The liberal theologians, the Cambridge Platonists, Locke, and several of the early Deists held this view. But those Deists who represented the movement when it was at its height asserted that, if there was such a thing as revelation, it could not give us anything above reason. They tended to become more and more hostile

to positive Christianity. All parties were rationalistic; but the Deists were more radical in their application of the rationalistic principle.

Passing to the study of the difference between Locke and the Deists on disputed points, which constituted the fifth chapter, we found that nobody questioned the existence of God, but that there was some difference as to how it was proved. Locke considered the cosmological proof a demonstration, criticized the ontological proof, and probably ignored the teleological proof; while the Deists, though they paid little attention to proving God's existence, at first taught that we have innate ideas of God, but this doctrine was given up later, and when the movement was most influential they emphasized the teleological proof and practically ignored the cosmological proof. Locke and the Deists proved the existence of God in different ways.

There were also found unexpected agreements and some differences in the way God's relation to the world was conceived. Locke and all of the leading Deists accepted the doctrine of Providence in the traditional sense, though it was rejected by some unnamed writers, whom we know through the criticisms that were directed against them, and who were called Deists. Locke and all, or almost all, of the Deists accepted miracles as historical facts. But generally the deistic attitude toward miracles was hostile; they challenged certain biblical accounts of miraculous events and explained others away. Locke nowhere shows the skeptical attitude toward miracles that characterized the Deists. He accepted and emphasized repeatedly the importance of miracles as evidence of revelation, which was the pre-

vailing view of the time. The Deists, with the exception of Toland and Bolingbroke, denied all evidential value to miracles, and frequently emphasized and gave reason for this denial. This view characterized Deism; it was a radical departure from the views that were generally accepted, which were held by Locke.

Perhaps no points of dispute in the deistic controversy were more significant than the place and authority of revelation and of natural religion. Locke accepted supernatural revelation, which he identified with the Bible, and its authority, on rational grounds, as did practically all other progressive thinkers. It supplements reason with that which is above it, but not contrary to it, which unaided reason could not attain. He also recognized fulfilled prophecy as a proof of revelation. The Deists, with some reservations, accepted revelation as a fact, but they did not identify it with the Bible, and insisted, as a rule, that it could not supplement reason, and some believed that it was superfluous. All Deists except Woolston deny that prophecy has any evidential value. Though they did not deny revelation, their attitude toward it was more and more skeptical as the movement advanced; at last they reduced the supernatural almost to the vanishing-point.

All the liberal writers that have been studied recognize the importance of natural religion; but all save the Deists emphasize its limitations and insufficiency. They sought to show that it must be supplemented by revelation; they denied to it all legislative authority over against revealed religion. But the Deists emphasize the limitations of revealed religion and the importance and normative authority of natural religion.

There was also a difference between Locke and the Deists in defining religion. The legalistic way of conceiving religion prevailed in England at that time. But this, when joined to the more radical rationalism of the deistic movement, resulted in defining religion almost wholly in terms of morality. Locke in his definition of religion did not neglect the ethical side, but he emphasized the supernatural factors more than the Deists.

It was also shown that all progressive thinkers advocated toleration. This was a subject that was debated between them and the defenders of rigid conformity. It is really not a part of the deistic controversy.

### 2. DEFINITION AND COMPARISON OF LOCKE'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS AND DEISM

In summing up the results of this study we have really defined Locke's philosophy of religion and Deism. By taking into consideration the speculations of others, we have found that some very prominent elements common to both Locke and Deism are not characteristic features, but that they mark out and characterize the age rather than any particular writer or movement of the age.

Both Locke and the Deists were rationalistic and critical in their method of treating religious problems; both appealed to reason as over against authority. But Locke was conservative and the Deists were radical. He and all other liberal thinkers except the Deists emphasized the authority of an externally given revelation. He is reverential in his attitude toward old beliefs, and uses his rationalistic method to establish the traditional supernatural sanctions, as do the other

progressive thinkers; the Deists are hostilely critical toward old beliefs, and apply their rationalistic method to discredit the traditional supernatural sanctions in the interests of establishing the sole normative authority of natural religion. Both Locke and the Deists recognize the importance of natural religion. Locke insisted that it was insufficient and must be supplemented by revelation; the Deists held that it was sufficient and normative for revelation and all religion.

The resemblances are in the principles which shape their thinking, which were rationalistic and critical, and were common to the whole progressive movement; the differences are in the way these principles were applied and in the consequent results.

These differences were recognized at that time. Not even Locke's severest critics classed him among the Deists; and Leland, the persistent foe of Deism, writing only half a century after Locke's death, recognized Locke as differing from and separate from the deistic movement.[1] Bolingbroke was aware of an irreconcilable difference between his views and those of Locke, and probably Tindal was also. And Locke in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* classes himself as differing from the Deists and among their critics, for against such was the book written.[2]

[1] John Leland, *The Principal Deistical Writers* (London 1754), I, 51 ff., 380.

[2] There has been some difference of opinion as to whether Shaftesbury should be classed as a Deist. We are now in a position to determine where he belongs. He accepted revelation and inspiration as facts and expressly dissents from the deistic attitude toward revelation (*Characteristics* [1732], I, 53; II, 210; III, 74). He would not exalt reason above faith nor dare to oppose the sacred histories of religion

### 3. THEORIES TESTED BY FACTS

The data from which we are to form a theory as to the nature of the relation that exists between Locke and English Deism have been collected and critically reviewed. The problem now is to devise a statement of this relation that will fit the facts, that will enable us to co-ordinate our historical data with the least remainder.

The possible theories that might be formulated for setting forth this relation between Locke and English Deism were set forth in the closing section of the first chapter. We are now in a position to test them by facts.

*a*) It may be that the relation that exists between Locke and English Deism is causal, that the one in large

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(II, 207). In a striking passage he asserts his orthodoxy (III, 315, 316). "In the first place, it will appear, that through a profound respect, and religious veneration, we have foreborne so much as to name any of the sacred and solemn mysteries of revelation. And, in the next place, as we can with confidence declare, that we have never in any writing, public or private, attempted such high researches, nor have ever in practice acquitted ourselves otherwise than as just Conformists to the lawful Church; so we may, in a proper sense, be said faithfully and dutifully to embrace those holy mysteries, even in their minutest particulars, and without the least exception on account of their amazing depth. And though we are sensible that it would be no small hardship to deprive of a liberty of examining and searching, with due modesty and submission, into the nature of those subjects; yet as for ourselves, who have not the least scruple whatsoever, we pray not any such grace or favor in our behalf: being fully assured of our own steady orthodoxy, resignation, and entire submission to the truly Christian and Catholick doctrines of our Holy Church, as by Law established."

If Shaftsbury had been a Deist he could not have written this. From what we know of his moral character we are justified in accepting his own statement.

Leland, in *The Principal Deistical Writers* (I, 57 ff.), classes Shaftesbury among the Deists, but he probably confuses Shaftesbury's

degree accounts for the other. This would readily explain the likenesses. But a causal relation may work either way: Deism may be responsible for Lockian thought, or Locke may be responsible for Deism—the "progenitor" of the Deists, as Stephen expressed it.

1) If Deism is responsible for Locke, it is the Deism before Toland, the doctrines of Herbert and of the unnamed Deist against whom Stillingfleet wrote, and of the writer of the letter to Blount in the *Oracles of Reason*, and of Blount. The time relation makes it impossible for Toland and the later Deists to have influenced him in any way. Both Locke and the early Deists were rationalistic and they emphasize nature and reason as did many others; they probably understood

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approval of critical methods in the study of Scripture with hostility to revelation.

Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was a famous preacher and a leader in the church, has often been classed among the Deists. Perhaps more than any other writer, outside of the camp of the Deists, Tillotson emphasized the importance of natural religion. He taught that natural knowledge of God is the foundation of all revelation and that revelation must be in harmony with natural religion. But he also pointed out the defects of natural religion. It does not suffice. "Its sanctions have proved ineffective, and it has therefore been supplemented by revelation. The function of the latter is not to destroy or correct natural religion, but simply to make it clearer and more effective. . . . . Certain requirements are added by revelation, particularly that we should recognize Christ as the Son of God, worship God in His name, and receive the sacraments, but these are enjoined with the same purpose of promoting virtue."

Tillotson is evidently close to the Deists. But his insistence that revelation supplements natural religion, and that prophecy and miracles are proofs of revelation, show that he assigned a much greater place to the supernatural factors in Christianity than the typical Deists were ready to admit. He was probably one of the most radical of the supernatural rationalists, but not a Deist (McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant*, pp. 194 ff.).

nature in the same way. But they differed as to reason. Herbert claimed that his five universal articles of natural religion or the religion of reason were universal because they were innate, and Blount agreed with him in this, which was contrary to Locke's philosophy. They also differed radically in their attitude toward revelation and Scripture, and in their view concerning the authority of natural religion. As has been shown, they agree in those things that characterize the age, they differ in that which distinguishes Deism. These important differences make this theory untenable.

2) But perhaps the causal relation may be found to work the other way; it may be that Locke accounts for Deism. So many important movements can be traced to Locke that it would be natural for one, who chances upon marked resemblances between Locke and Deism, to assume that he shaped the movement. Locke was rationalistic; so were the Deists; Locke emphasized natural religion, so did the Deists; and there is internal evidence that the later Deists used Locke's writings, though in a way that was not significant. But there were radical differences between Locke and Deism. As has been shown, they agree in that which characterized the age and they differ in that which characterized Deism; this would suggest that they were products of the same period but that they developed differently, not necessarily that one was the cause of the other. If Locke was the cause of Deism, there should be conclusive evidence of the dependence of the Deists on Locke; such evidence does not exist.

Furthermore, the time factor makes it impossible that Locke should account for the deistic movement. It

began in England with Herbert, who died in 1648, and in 1678 it had become so strong that Stillingfleet attacked it. Whoever the anonymous Deist was, against whom Stillingfleet directed his polemic, we learn from the quotations in his *Letter to a Deist* (see note 3, p. 107) and from references that he makes to him that he held practically all of the views that characterized the writings of Wollaston and Tindal and Morgan. The same is true of the letter to Blount in the *Oracles of Reason*. The deistic movement was present in all its essential features before Locke could have influenced it. Locke could not have been the father of Deism.

*b*) The theories that we have considered thus far set Locke and Deism over against each other and treat them in a more or less complete mutual isolation. It may be that this is wrong, that they belong together, that they form one and the same movement, that whatever else Locke was he was one of that group of liberal thinkers in England of the seventeenth century, commonly known as Deists, who fostered free and critical thinking in matters of religion. If there are differences between him and Wollaston or Tindal or Morgan, these are due to the fact that they represent a later and more radical development of the movement. Deism is but Locke's philosophy of religion grown up; they took his principles and followed them to their logical conclusion. Thus all differences between Locke and Deism would be differences in the stage of development along one line; both were rationalists; the Deists were more radical than Locke.

But, as has been observed, practically all of the characteristic features of Deism had been developed

before Locke. Stillingfleet's unnamed Deist, though probably much less important, was as much of a Deist as the author of "the Deists' Bible," and the same can be said of the writer of the letter to Blount. But assuming that there was no time factor to argue against this theory, it would still be clearly unfair to identify Locke with the deistic movement in this way; for those principles of Locke, which the advocates of this theory say the Deists simply developed farther, were not peculiar to Locke but were held by practically every other representative of the liberal movement. The rationalistic and naturalistic motives in the speculations of Locke are not characteristic of him, they characterize the whole liberal movement. Even if the deistic doctrines are but the normal development of these rationalistic principles, it does not argue that Locke is identified with the deistic movement any more than many other liberal writers.

*c*) The theories that would define the relation between Locke and Deism as causal, or would conceive them as forming one movement and marking different stages in it, were rejected because they could not provide adequately for certain differences between Locke and Deism, and because they fail to meet the temporal conditions. The chief argument for them was the marked resemblance between the two systems. But as has been shown, the likenesses between Locke and Deism are no greater than the likenesses between Deism and many other liberal writers of this period; probably Tindal resembles Tillotson and Sherlock more closely than he resembles Locke. The Deists and Locke agree in their rationalistic way of looking at things, which

characterized the whole liberal movement, and they differ in that which characterized Deism. This suggests another way of stating the relation that exists between them.

They are co-ordinate parts of one and the same general movement. The rational theologians, the Cambridge Platonists, Locke, and the Deists constitute the party of progress. They are all rationalistic; they protest against scholastic tradition and intolerance in the name of nature and reason; they face the same foes and use the same weapons. Locke and Deism would then appear as different manifestations of the same spirit of the age, which was seen also in all other writers of the liberal party. They are distinguishable parts of one whole. Their common elements are the characteristic marks of the age, and their points of divergence are the characteristic features of the respective systems. The resemblances between Locke and Deism are not those of parent and child, but rather those of fellow-members of the same family. They are related, and closely related, but their relation is not causal, nor do they mark different stages of the same movement.

If we accept this theory, all difficulties with the time factor disappear. If they are co-ordinate parts of the larger liberal movement, deistic views may be held before or after or at the same time with Locke. The important differences between Locke and the Deists are provided for; they are the characteristic features that show that they are different parts of this one movement. And the significant resemblances, which are common to the various parts of this movement, show that in certain fundamental respects they are one.

If Deism is more radical in its application of the rationalistic principle, it is no more a further development of Locke than of the liberal theologians. Possibly Locke influenced some of the later Deists, but there is no evidence that he determined the movement to any appreciable extent; certainly he cannot be held responsible for the radical spirit which is the characteristic mark of Deism.

If this is a correct statement of the relation between Locke and English Deism, the prevailing views are wrong; Locke cannot be the father of the deistic movement, it cannot be merely a further development of the principles that he held, nor can he be considered a part of the movement. As was set forth in the second chapter, most students of the history of philosophy represent Locke and Deism as closely related in one or the other of these two ways. The special study of Crous, which makes Locke a Deist in almost all essentials, is also wrong. Crous misinterpreted the points of agreement and failed to observe many points of difference. The views of von Hertling and McGiffert and perhaps also that of Windleband are not necessarily contradicted by the theory concerning the relation of Locke and Deism which is advocated here. They seem to have grasped it partly, to have been moving toward it, but they did not understand it fully. Accordingly, this theory, which makes Locke and English Deism co-ordinate parts of the larger liberal movement of that time, either corrects or supplements the views that have been held hitherto.

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