

Introduction

John Locke (1632–1704) is best known for his “way of ideas” and political theory. His empiricist epistemology, which he expounded in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690), played a crucial role in the development of modern theories of knowledge and significantly influenced the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Moreover, his concept of state authority, which he tasked with the procurement, preservation, and advancement of civil interests, and his views on religious toleration, which entailed the separation of the state from religious societies, had a momentous impact on the liberal political tradition. Along with Isaac Newton, Locke was widely considered the major herald of the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe and America, to such an extent that, starting at least in the 1730s, there was a sort of “international cult” of Newton and Locke.¹ Today, more than three centuries after his death, Locke occupies a solid position in the canon of early modern philosophy, and the study of his political ideas is widely considered essential to comprehending modern political thought. The significance and influence of Locke’s way of ideas and political theory are undeniable, but have often been exaggerated, to the extent that labels like “founder of modern empiricism” and “father of political liberalism” are traditionally attached to this author. Locke’s foundational role in the history of modern empiricism is indeed debatable, given the early developments of this philosophical tradition in England before Locke and given, also, the skeptical implications of Locke’s way of ideas, as Victor Nuovo has aptly noted:

From a historical philosophical perspective, Bacon, Hobbes, Boyle, and Newton are the real founders of British empiricism, and they remained robust natural philosophers, notwithstanding their piety, whereas the customary trinity of Locke, Berkeley,

¹ B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 83–119; Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 515–527.

2 Introduction

and Hume, inspired by Locke's skepticism, leads into a metaphysical dead end, a cul-de-sac.²

Concerning the liberal tradition, Locke's political ideas definitely played an important role in the early stages of modern liberalism. However, I deem it incorrect to describe his mature political theory, which he expounded in *A Letter concerning Toleration* (1689) and *Two Treatises of Government* (1689, but dated 1690), as the starting point of this political tradition. In fact, various political dynamics, debates, and writings are at the origin of modern liberalism, the seeds of which, in England, may be found in the discussions on popular sovereignty during the Civil War and Interregnum – particularly in the emergence of what Quentin Skinner has defined “the neo-Roman theory of free states”³ – although only in the nineteenth century did terms like “liberalism” and “liberal” become of common use to define this political tradition. At any rate, and despite the exaggerations surrounding Locke's intellectual legacy, his achievements as a philosopher and a political thinker have significantly contributed to western culture. Nevertheless, his religious views are comparatively less well known, although they are no less important than his philosophical and political theories, and although his theological ideas conditioned his philosophical and political thought in various respects. Locke was indeed a “religious Enlightener” who endorsed reasonable belief as the coordination of natural reason and scriptural revelation. Thus, whereas I am far from endorsing Locke's or anyone else's religious worldview, I consider a thorough elucidation and reassessment of Locke's religion crucial to a better understanding of this author's work, context, and legacy.

Locke worked intensively on refining his philosophical and political theories during his exile in the Netherlands in the 1680s. He left England in 1683, under suspicion of involvement in the Rye House Plot to murder King Charles II and his brother James, although it is uncertain whether he was actually involved in this plot. In the Netherlands, he befriended such famous scholars as Jean Le Clerc and Philipp van Limborch and the English Quaker merchant and intellectual Benjamin Furly. Following his return to England in the entourage of Princess Mary in February 1689, during the Glorious Revolution, and the publication of his major political and philosophical works in 1689–1690, Locke settled at Oates Manor in Essex in 1691. Oates Manor was the home of Sir Francis Masham and his wife Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham – a daughter of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth and a “proto-feminist” philosopher. Locke brought his library of over 2,000 volumes to Oates, where

² Victor Nuovo, *John Locke: The Philosopher As Christian Virtuoso* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 249.

³ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

he devoted his later years mainly to theological writing, besides revising *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* multiple times. In the mid-1690s, he wrote and published anonymously his major book of theology, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, As Delivered in the Scriptures* (1695). He was subsequently involved in heated disputes about his religious views, particularly with the Calvinistic divine John Edwards (a son of the Puritan clergyman and heresiographer Thomas Edwards) and the Bishop of Worcester, Edward Stillingfleet, concerning mainly the anti-Trinitarian potential of his religious and philosophical ideas. In his last decade or so, Locke also wrote many theological manuscripts, most of which are now held at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and he worked on the unfinished *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul*, which appeared posthumously in several volumes between 1705 and 1707.

Although Locke wrote his most important works on religion toward the end of his life, his interest in religious themes permeated his thought since at least the late 1650s and early 1660s. His belief in divine revelation, in a divine creator and legislator, and in an afterlife with reward and punishment informs his philosophical, political, and moral views in all his major works. In fact, Locke's philosophical masterpiece, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, is not a secular book. The *Essay* tends toward theological investigation since it affirms God's existence as a creator and lawgiver,⁴ the crucial role of biblical revelation as "enlarging" natural reason,⁵ and the need to believe in things "above reason" revealed in Scripture.⁶ As John Yolton has explained in *The Two Intellectual Worlds of John Locke* (2004), the *Essay* also presents numerous references to "angels," "spirits," and "other intelligent beings" and provides a profoundly religious account of what it means to be human: "Since the human soul turns out to be one of those spirits among the ranks of spirits, we can locate man, human finite Beings, on the chain of being."⁷ Locke's way of ideas supports belief in the existence of spiritual beings in that the *Essay* describes revelation as "natural Reason enlarged by a new set of Discoveries

⁴ John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Liv.9, p. 89, II.xxiii.12, pp. 302–303, and IV.x.1–6, pp. 619–621. In the present study, I refer to this edition when not indicated otherwise.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.xix.4, p. 698. ⁶ *Ibid.*, IV.xvii.23, p. 687, IV.xviii.6–10, pp. 693–696.

⁷ John W. Yolton, *The Two Intellectual Worlds of John Locke: Man, Person, and Spirits in the "Essay"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 7–8. In the present study, I abstain from exploring Locke's considerations on the existence of angels, spirits, and other intelligent beings for two reasons. First, Yolton's book provides a thorough analysis of this subject in particular. Second, the present essay focuses on Locke's account of Christianity in the *Reasonableness* and other religious writings, on the moral and soteriological implications of his version of Christianity, and on philosophical, moral, and political issues that, although covered by Locke in other writings, are relevant to his views on morality and salvation.

4 Introduction

communicated by God immediately”⁸ and admits conjecture as a method to “reach” what sense experience cannot discover. What Locke called “the probable Conjectures of Reason” played an essential part in both his investigation of the natural world and his consideration of scriptural revelation.⁹ Thus, Locke’s struggle to comprehend religious truth and find the way to salvation in his later theological writings is in continuity with his philosophical inquiry in the *Essay*. Moreover, Locke wrote the *Essay* not only to explore the foundations of human knowledge in matters of natural philosophy, but also to shed light on morality, which he defined as “*the proper Science, and Business of Mankind in general.*”¹⁰ His political writings, too, are informed by a strong attention to morality, which he conceived of in markedly religious terms. For instance, in *A Letter concerning Toleration*, he maintained that the “Business of True Religion” is morality (and, consequently, he denied toleration to atheists and Roman Catholics mainly for moral reasons).¹¹ Similarly, in the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, he described human beings as God’s workmanship, servants, and property, “sent into the World by his order, and about his business” – namely, to respect the divine moral law of which they are bearers.¹² Briefly, Locke’s reflection on morality runs throughout his work and, being grounded in theism and combined with a religious, specifically Christian conception of life, unites his thought.

Several scholars have highlighted the religious dimension of Locke’s thought since John Dunn’s seminal study *The Political Thought of John Locke* (1969) called attention to “the intimate dependence of an extremely high proportion of Locke’s arguments for their very intelligibility, let alone plausibility, on a series of theological commitments.”¹³ When making this point, Dunn was referring especially to Locke’s political theory. Several years later, John Colman’s book *John Locke’s Moral Theory* (1983) discussed the relation of Locke’s religious ideas to his moral philosophy, which Colman described as a “consistent theological ethic” grounded in Locke’s consideration of God’s Creation and of humanity’s position in the Creation.¹⁴ Dunn’s and Colman’s

⁸ Locke, *Essay*, IV.xix.4, p. 698.

⁹ *Ibid.*, IV.xviii.8, p. 694. See Yolton, *Two Intellectual Worlds*, pp. 47–54.

¹⁰ Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.11, p. 646.

¹¹ John Locke, “A Letter concerning Toleration,” in John Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration and Other Writings*, ed. Mark Goldie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), pp. 1–62 (8, 49–53).

¹² John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, rev. ed., ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 271.

¹³ John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the “Two Treatises of Government”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. xi. See, also, Richard Ashcraft, “Faith and Knowledge in Locke’s Philosophy,” in John W. Yolton (ed.), *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 194–223.

¹⁴ John Colman, *John Locke’s Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), p. 9.

conclusions regarding Locke's political and moral ideas can be applied to other parts of his thought. In the past four decades or so, several studies have stressed the significance of Locke's religious interests, concerns, and views to virtually all areas of his philosophical production. In this regard, Nicholas Wolterstorff has correctly noted that "a striking feature of Locke's thought is that religious considerations enter into all parts of his thought."¹⁵ Moreover, in a recent, excellent monograph, *John Locke: The Philosopher As Christian Virtuoso* (2017), Victor Nuovo has highlighted the religious character of Locke's work, particularly of his logic, physics, ethics, and theology:

Locke's philosophical work is clarified and explained when it is considered as the production of a Christian virtuoso, which is to say, of a seventeenth-century English experimental natural philosopher, an empiricist and naturalist, who also professed Christianity of a sort that was infused with moral seriousness and with Platonic otherworldliness overlaid with Christian supernaturalism.¹⁶

I concur with Nuovo's characterization of Locke as a "Christian virtuoso," because Locke always viewed natural reason and biblical revelation as mutually sustaining and complementary. Locke's theological concerns, interests, and ideas indeed pervade his philosophical, political, and moral thought. Consequently, Locke's oeuvre in its different areas is the production of a *Christian* philosopher. But Locke's religious views are significant for yet another reason, as his theological reflections resulted in a unique version of Christianity. Although Locke expounded his religious views unsystematically, given also his dislike of systems of doctrine and his hostility to claims of religious orthodoxy, an original and internally coherent form of Protestant Christianity emerges from his public as well as private writings. In the present study, I aim to provide a thorough, comprehensive, systematic reconstruction of Locke's Christianity, which I consider in its complexity and originality. To this purpose, I concentrate on *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and other writings on religion that Locke composed in his later years. I also take into account Locke's reflections on subjects relevant to his moral and soteriological investigations in his philosophical and political works. While acknowledging that Locke's writings in different areas represent different projects, I disagree with Peter Laslett's, John Dunn's, and others' claim that Locke's work is affected by a sort of incoherence, which these interpreters have described as resulting largely from the theological commitments that conditioned his

¹⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Locke's Philosophy of Religion," in Vere Chappell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 172–198 (174).

¹⁶ Nuovo, *John Locke*, p. 1.

6 Introduction

philosophical, moral, and political inquiries.¹⁷ I rather agree with John Marshall, Victor Nuovo, and others whose studies have pointed to the internal coherence of Locke's thought considered in its entirety.¹⁸ Therefore, the present book argues that Locke's different projects cohere and that the religious dimension pervading virtually all the parts of his thought is one of the main factors determining this coherence.

Besides examining several works by Locke, the present study considers the intellectual context of his religious thought and his involvement with various theological currents. Locke's religious ideas are Protestant in nature in that, as Locke himself often declared, he adhered to the Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, according to which the Christian Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Nonetheless, Locke's religion presents several points in common with heterodox Christian currents such as Socinianism (founded by the Italian anti-Trinitarian and anti-Calvinist author Faustus Socinus in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century) and Arminianism (named after the Dutch anti-Calvinist thinker Jacobus Arminius, professor of theology at Leiden from 1603 to his death in 1609). Various similarities between Locke's theological ideas and Socinian and Arminian views have led Arthur Wainwright to conclude that "on the theological map of his day [Locke] was somewhere between Socinianism and Arminianism."¹⁹ Both Socinians and Arminians focused, like Locke, on the interplay of biblical revelation and natural reason. An emphasis on Scripture and reason as complementary led Socinians, Arminians, and Locke to reject ecclesiastical tradition and deny, or at least disregard, doctrines that they considered unscriptural or irrational. This approach was inspired by Protestant standard objections, advanced by Lutherans and Calvinists as well, to ecclesiastical tradition, which is the Catholic rule of faith. However, Socinians, Arminians, and Locke rejected as unscriptural or irrational even some of the basic tenets of mainstream Protestantism, especially regarding soteriological issues. Based on their reading of Scripture, they all argued that the essence of Christianity lies in a few simple principles that can be deduced unambiguously from the biblical text. Therefore, Socinianism, Arminianism, and Locke's religion, along with other Protestant irenic currents and authors – from Jacob Acontius and Richard Hooker in the Elizabethan Era to the Arminian-influenced English latitudinarians of

¹⁷ Peter Laslett, "Introduction" to Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 3–126; Dunn, *Political Thought*. Laslett's edition of *Two Treatises*, with his introduction, first appeared in 1960.

¹⁸ John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Nuovo, *John Locke*.

¹⁹ Arthur W. Wainwright, "Introduction" to John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul to the Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians*, ed. Arthur W. Wainwright, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 1–88 (58).

the seventeenth century – were expressions of the “way of fundamentals.”²⁰ One of the main common features of the currents and authors representing the way of fundamentals was their opposition to Calvinist predestinarianism, with the consequent adoption of a moralist soteriology. Highlighting, albeit to different extents, the role of the human will and reason in accepting God’s assisting grace, they regarded both graciously enabled faith and moral works as contributing to salvation. Locke too, like Socinians and Arminians, rejected predestination and upheld a moralist soteriology. His theological writings present several other similarities with Socinianism and Arminianism. For instance, he shared the Socinians’ rejection of original sin, their emphasis on Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, and their mortalist views, which were in line with *thnetopsychism*, namely the doctrine that the soul dies with the body and will need a divine miracle to be resurrected on Judgment Day. Concerning Locke’s relation to Arminianism, his concept of grace as *assisting* grace was consonant with the basic principles of Arminian soteriology. Furthermore, his views on the atonement were inconsistent with the satisfaction theory and echoed, instead, the governmental theory formulated by Hugo Grotius (who was an Arminian in theological matters) and later adopted by Limborch and other Arminians.

²⁰ Several historians have questioned the accuracy and usefulness of the category “latitudinarianism.” See, for instance, John Spurr, “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church,” *The Historical Journal*, 31:1 (1988): pp. 61–82; Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 13–21, 143, 542–545. Spurr, Levitin, and others have concentrated on some substantial differences, in doctrinal and ecclesiological matters, between various authors commonly termed “latitudinarians.” Moreover, they have called attention to the absence of a “latitudinarian party” in post-Restoration England. Nonetheless, I deem it appropriate to use the category “latitudinarianism,” which is rooted in the labeling, and self-labeling, of several Arminian-influenced Church of England divines as “latitude-men” or “latitudinarians.” I find this category useful to denote beliefs and attitudes shared by a group of clergymen including, among others, Edward Stillingfleet, John Tillotson, Edward Fowler, and Gilbert Burnet. The “latitude-men” upheld a moralist soteriology emphasizing human reason, free will, and morality. *Contra* Calvinist predestinarianism, they maintained that human beings are able to accept or resist God’s *assisting* grace and that good works contribute to salvation. Moreover, the latitudinarians aimed to relax the terms of conformity in such a manner as to “comprehend” Protestant Dissenters – or, at least, the least radical Dissenters – within the Church of England. Finally, the latitudinarians were keen to cooperate with the political authorities and to grant the latter a significant role in ecclesiastical policy-making, particularly after the Glorious Revolution, while the High Church party advocated a larger autonomy for the Church. See Martin I. J. Griffin Jr., *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); William M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660–1700* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993). On latitudinarianism and Locke, see John Marshall, “John Locke and Latitudinarianism,” in Richard W. F. Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, Perez Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 253–282; G. A. J. Rogers, “Locke and the Latitude-Men: Ignorance As a Ground of Toleration,” in Kroll, Ashcraft, Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science, and Religion*, pp. 230–252.

8 Introduction

Briefly, Locke was well acquainted with the main tenets of Socinianism, Arminianism, and still other theological currents and authors – especially English currents and authors belonging to the Protestant tradition of the way of fundamentals. He took into account these theological currents in his reflections on religious issues, particularly in his manuscripts, and he found their views compatible with his own conclusions concerning several theological subjects. But, when reflecting on theological matters, Locke always took the Bible as his point of reference, for he regarded Scripture as the ultimate source of religious truth. Accordingly, he was always careful to make sure that his conclusions were in line with, and indeed grounded in, the biblical text.²¹ Locke's conviction that natural reason and scriptural revelation were complementary and mutually sustaining informed his theological investigations, his biblical hermeneutics, and his consideration of specific theological traditions. Thus, he did not hesitate to disagree with the Socinians when he judged some of their doctrines to be at odds with scriptural revelation and natural reason. In fact, Locke did not share Socinus's outright denial of the atonement. Furthermore, he conceived of the Law of Nature as created by God, reaffirmed and contained in the revealed Law of Faith, and hence eternally valid in its entirety. Conversely, according to Socinus and his followers, God's Revealed Word contradicted and invalidated some parts of the Law of Nature and, thus, replaced it. Finally, Locke's Christology was not Socinian proper, because in the *Paraphrase* he hinted at Christ's pre-existence. Though, he never talked of the Son as a divine person, and his Christology was not Arian proper, given also his Socinian-like emphasis on Christ's resurrection and exaltation. He developed an original Christology, presenting both Socinian and Arian elements but irreducible to Socinianism or Arianism. Likewise, Locke's mortalism, his explicit and unambiguous denial of original sin, and his public silence on the Trinity place his religious thought outside of the Arminian theological tradition. Therefore, whereas Wainwright's positioning of Locke's religion "somewhere between Socinianism and Arminianism" on the "theological map of his day" makes sense, Locke was neither a Socinian nor an Arminian. Locke's religion cannot be assimilated to any theological current in particular, for it is a unique, original, Scripture-based form of Protestant Christianity, which the present study attempts to clarify in its various aspects and implications.

²¹ As a conforming, practicing member of the Church of England, Locke accepted the biblical canon of this church. He owned and annotated several Bibles, including, among others, a 1648 English Bible printed by William Bentley: LL 309, BOD Locke 16.25, Bentley Bible, interleaved. He also used a polyglot New Testament: LL 2864, BOD Locke 9.103–9.107, *Le Nouveau Testament* (Mons, 1673), interleaved and bound in 5 vols.

Chapter 1, “The Context and Background of Locke’s Biblical Theology,” explains the reasons that led Locke to publish his religious ideas in the mid-1690s. This chapter focuses on Locke’s opposition to antinomianism and deism and on his search for scientific or theoretical foundations for morality. While Locke refused antinomianism as denying the efficacy of good works to salvation, he opposed the deistic notion of the religion of nature as sufficient to salvation, and he rejected the deistic view of Jesus as merely the restorer of the Law of Nature. He judged both moral conduct and faith in Jesus *as the Messiah* to be crucial to eternal salvation, as he explained in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. A markedly religious conception of life and morality, however, pervaded Locke’s moral inquiry much before the composition of the *Reasonableness*. In the *Second Treatise of Civil Government* and *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, he described obedience to the God-given moral law as a duty toward the divine creator and legislator.²² He regarded the divine moral law as discoverable by natural reason (at least in principle) or through divine revelation. Locke believed that natural reason could not comprehend all divine revelations. However, he argued that assent to anything, including the status of a revelation as divine, ought to be based on rational assessment. Therefore, he abhorred enthusiasts’ claims to divine revelation unsubstantiated by rational assessment and inspired, instead, by irrational drives and their unwillingness to employ their rational capabilities. While comparing natural reason to a “dim candle,” he affirmed its aptness to serve purposes that “may be of use to us.”²³ Nevertheless, the *Essay* contains no rational demonstration of moral principles. Locke acknowledged the limitations of human knowledge in matters of morality and religion, although he thought that ethics and theology had different epistemological statuses, since he regarded morality as demonstrable (at least in principle) while he considered most theological knowledge as falling within the scope of probability – with the significant exception of our knowledge of God’s existence, which to Locke is demonstrative and implies an understanding that we have duties toward our creator. His painstaking search for the foundations of morality eventually led him to resolutely turn to biblical theology in the *Reasonableness*. In this treatise on the question of justification – namely, on what it is that “justifies” human beings who have sinned and, hence, enables their salvation – Locke continued his moral inquiry; but, instead of investigating the epistemological foundations of ethics, he aimed to promote the practice of morality and the development of moral character through a Scripture-based theological ethics, as the following chapters explain.

²² Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 271; Locke, *Essay*, IV.iii.18, p. 549, IV.xviii.5, pp. 692–693.

²³ *Ibid.*, IV.xix.8, p. 700, I.i.5, pp. 45–46.

In Chapter 2, “Engaging with Scripture and Heterodoxy,” I examine Locke’s approach to Scripture and his involvement with Socinianism and Arminianism. After outlining the tenets of these theological currents and clarifying Locke’s familiarity with Socinian and Arminian texts, ideas, and intellectuals, this chapter analyzes Locke’s use of Socinus’s proof of Scriptural authority. Since Locke claimed, in the *Reasonableness* and its two vindications (written against Edwards’s charge of Socinianism), that his account of the Christian religion was based on Scripture alone, he needed to prove the divine authority of Scripture. To this purpose, he followed Socinus in highlighting the excellence of Christ’s moral precepts, in pointing out the consistency of Old Testament Messianic prophecies with their fulfillment in the New Testament, and in describing Jesus’ miracles as confirming his Messianic mission. According to Locke, biblical miracles, although being only secondary evidence of Christ’s and other divine messengers’ mission, have a divine origin and can easily be distinguished from fake or demonic wonders, in that biblical miracles either glorify God or reveal matters of great concern to humanity (e.g., matters relevant to deliverance and redemption). Locke’s proof of scriptural authority enabled him to develop a historical method of biblical interpretation, according to which he considered the biblical texts in relation to both their respective contexts and the biblical discourse as a whole. Locke emphasized the internal consistency of Scripture but made a distinction between two levels of authority. He thought that the revelations made by Christ during his earthly life, and recorded by the Gospels, were more important than the Apostles’ elucidations of Christ’s message in their epistles. Drawing particularly on the four canonical Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, he concentrated on what he took to be the fundamentals of Christianity – that is, faith in Jesus the Messiah, repentance for sin, and obedience to the divine moral law. Thus, while following the way of fundamentals, he developed an original doctrine of the fundamentals.

Chapter 3, “A Scripture-Based Moralistic Soteriology,” examines Locke’s views on the natural and revealed law. Locke saw the Law of Nature as divinely given and, hence, as universally and eternally valid in its entirety. This notion of the Law of Nature, which locates him in the natural law tradition, permeates his political thought. Locke’s natural law theory, relying on a view of God as a creator and legislator, is grounded in both natural and biblical theology, given the role that both rational and Scripture-based arguments play in his justification of natural rights and duties in the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. Locke even saw scriptural revelation as sufficient to establish natural rights and duties, since he regarded Scripture as infallible. In the *Reasonableness*, he maintained that natural reason alone had never grasped the content of the Law of Nature in its entirety. Therefore, the Law of Moses, revealed in the Old Testament, made the divine moral law