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“Christian Philosophy of John Locke:

An Essay on the Role of Christian Lawyers and Judges within the Secular State”©

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The ideas expressed in this Apostolate Paper are wholly those of the author, and subject to modification as a result of on-going research into this subject matter. This paper is currently being revised and edited, but this version is submitted for the purpose of sharing Christian scholarship with clergy, the legal profession, and the general public.

PREFACE

The organized Christian church of the Twenty-First Century is in crisis and at a crossroad. Christianity as a whole is in flux. And I believe that Christian lawyers and judges are on the frontlines of the conflict and changes which are today challenging both the Christian church and the Christian religion. Christian lawyers and judges have the power to influence and shape the social, economic, political, and legal landscape in a way that will allow Christianity and other faith-based institutions to evangelize the world for the betterment of all human beings. I write this essay, and a series of future essays, in an effort to persuade the American legal profession to rethink and reconsider one of its most critical and important jurisprudential foundations: the Christian religion. To this end, I hereby present the seventh essay in this series: “Christian Philosophy of John Locke.”

INTRODUCTION¹

“What is truth?” asked Pontius Pilate, as he responded to Jesus’ claim that he is a “witness to the truth.”² This, at least for me, is the foundational question for the Christian faith and the persistent preoccupation of all true Christians. Hence, I have chosen “Christian Philosophy of John Locke” as the topic of the seventh essay in this series, because John Locke impressed me as a sincere Christian who was deeply devoted to ascertaining the truth. Most importantly, Locke introduced me to what then appeared to me as a rather novel idea: “*religious superstition*” was incompatible with true Christianity! For Locke, Biblical accounts of miracles were not the substance of true Christianity; but the Christian faith could be proven with scientific and mathematical principles! How fascinating! Locke thus led me down the path of Christian empiricism, and there I have remained ever since. In law school, and throughout my career as an American lawyer, I viewed both the

¹ This essay is written in memory of the entire Political Science faculty at Morgan State University during the late 1980s and early 1990s, including Professor Vernon Gray, Ph.D.; Professor Joseph Overton, Ph.D.; Professor Hudson, Ph.D.; and Professor Michael Kamara, J.D. These men developed my mind, critiqued my research and writings, and encouraged me to pursue law as a noble profession. (Unfortunately, there were also superb guest-lecturers and visiting professors whose names I cannot now recall.)

² John 18:38.

law and the world largely through the empirical lens which John Locke created. For this way of conceptualizing the world appeared to be a natural extension the Catholic and natural-law worldview that had engulfed me during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

John Locke taught me how to be an intellectually-disciplined empiricist and how to hold the Christian religion accountable to science and reason, and vice versa. Moreover, Locke insisted that science and reason are the true essence of the Christian faith. His Christian theology asserted that the existence of God could be proven through self-evidence reasoning. And all of this excited and inspired me to view my academic studies (mathematics, the biological and physical sciences, economics, politics, etc.) as sub-sections of theology and the Christian faith. I could no longer view conventional Church service on Sunday's as the total sum of the Christian experience. The Oxford-trained Locke had introduced me to the "high-Church" Christianity of the Seventeenth-Century Anglican Church. This version of Christianity appeared to be an extension of the natural-law ideas from Roman Catholicism. And so, in many respects, Locke's philosophy bridged the gap, at least in my mind, between natural law and Anglo-American common law. Both legal systems were governed by that same understanding of "reason," as Locke so lucidly defined "reason" in his writings.

In addition, Locke introduced me to an elementary form of Christian apologetics as well. That is to say, I found Locke's understanding of the Christian faith to be quite persuasive, and I often relied upon his fundamental ideas in my defense of Christianity, both in writing and in oral discussions with fellow classmates and colleagues. I was, during my undergraduate years, a growing Afro-centric scholar who was fascinated by the African origins of humanity, religion, and various aspects of world civilization. As an African American Christian, I naturally sought out all the ancient traces of the Christian roots and heritage in Africa. Moreover, I enjoyed debating with Afro-centric, non-Christians about the African influences in Christianity and the universal meaning of the Christian faith as a reflection of fundamental elements in aspects of African spiritualism and Egyptian mysticism. Nevertheless, my classmates often confronted me with what they described as implausible, supernatural "Christian fantasies" and "Church priest-craft." Indeed, I could not deny that the Christian Church had made many grievous errors throughout the centuries, but I believed that I stood with great

authority—St. Augustine and St. Thomas—whenever I rejoined by asserting that the true Christian faith is often distinct from a few corrupt leaders within the organized Christian Church. I did not deny Church corruption and the Christian heresies and grievous theological errors throughout history. However, John Locke’s Christian empiricism helped me to conceptualize the true Christian faith as a reflection of universal truth—a truth that cut across cultural barriers and languages. And this was my weapon, throughout my debates, in my defense of the Christian faith.

John Locke’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” had a great influence upon my understanding of the Christian faith, because it led me to pursue my academic coursework with religious zeal. For I was not simply a student taking undergraduate college courses, but I was a Christian student taking college courses in order to promote my own Christian growth in service to the kingdom of God. All knowledge was in my mind interconnected and led to the truth of God. I thus reasoned: “*Christianity is ‘truth.’ Christianity is ‘love.’ For this reason, all secular knowledge comes from God alone.*” And, with respect to those persons who used examples of Church corruption as their basis for rejecting Christianity, I thus reasoned and rejoined: “*Christianity is not coterminous with the actions of some church members or groups who claim the Christian faith.*”

It was through John Locke that I attained a very firm understanding that Christianity essentially separated itself from Judaism and other world religions, in that Christianity’s fundamental claim is that to it is the “truth.” As a direct result of John Locke’s writings, I began to understand that “truth” is the foundation of the Christian faith. In fact, both “truth” and “love” were the means and the basis for ecumenical dialogue; and “truth” and “love” led to true, interfaith cooperation. And, because I believe these things dearly, my objections and debates with non-Christians were always conciliatory, kind-hearted, and respectful.

When I think back upon my growth in the Christian faith, I could not have grown much at all without the so-called “secular” philosophers—including the economists, atheists, agnostics, Marxists, existentialists, spiritualists, etc., etc. I studied these and other world religions as an extension of my Bible study! Importantly, *I did not seriously study John Locke as a secular philosopher or as a political theorist. Instead, I studied Locke’s writings because I was interested in*

*his Christian theology and worldview. Locke thus became an integral part of my private theological and biblical studies.*³ Specifically, sometime during my undergraduate studies, I had carefully studied the *Gospel of John*, and I had reached the conclusion that the fundamental message of Jesus of Nazareth could be bifurcated into two phrases: “love” and “truth.” “What is truth?” is an important question that Pilate asked Jesus, in the New Testament. However, John Locke also dealt with the very important question, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Thus, I concluded that Locke’s painstaking efforts to get to the heart of the matter, and to understand the “truth,” are precisely the essence of being a Christian.

As I recall, as I studied Locke’s ideas and the *Gospel of John*, I thus developed an embryonic conception of Christian ideals as encompassing the whole sum of secular law and secular philosophy, in this manner:

Jesus of Nazareth	Truth	Love
Secular Law/ Political Philosophy	Science	Ethics

In fact, during my casual conversations with non-Christian college classmates—which were sometimes acrimonious debates-- about religion and Christianity, I would often refer to Jesus of Nazareth’s fundamental message of “love” and “truth,” as *the “love-truth” dynamic*. What I meant by the “love-truth” dynamic was that Christ wanted all men and women to “love” each other through fair dealing and good faith, while at the same time, he wanted them to have *fidelity towards the “truth.”* Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* reflected, in my mind, the earnest effort of a Christian to understand the “truth.” Thus, the New Testament texts, together with the writings of John Locke, enabled me to conceptualize *Christianity as being coterminous with “universal love” and “universal truth”—as being identical to reality itself!*

In fact, I had reached the conclusion that the “reality” of “Christianity” was the same reality as expressed in math and science, in literature and philosophy, and

³ Like most undergraduate political theory courses, the subject of “John Locke” was summarized in a book chapter that I was assigned to read. However, my initial readings of Locke’s original writings stemmed from independent research into the Christian faith.

in the liberal arts. And the writings of John Locke certainly reinforced this understanding. I also understood the Christian religion to be the purest, most untainted form of reality. In reaching this conclusion, I was particularly influenced by the *Gospel of John*. The *Gospel of John* thus instilled within me the foundation upon which I would later build my secular academic curriculum, secular legal theories, and political, social, and economic philosophies. For in the *Gospel of John*, I found the following passages:

With respect to the “Christian law of love,” Jesus had said, “[a] new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”⁴

Jesus had said that the Holy Spirit, as the “Comforter,”⁵ is the “Spirit of Truth.”⁶

Jesus had said that the “Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things”⁷

And, finally, Jesus had also said that, “I am the way, the truth, and the life....”⁸ “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth....”⁹

Locke’s writings reflected this idea of a “Spirit of truth.” He did not hesitate to interject the Christian faith in his writings, but he also insisted that reason must not be discarded for the sake of vague, often-erroneous ideas of faith. Locke was a serious searcher for “truth.” His search of “truth” appeared to reflect religious zeal, in that he believed that he himself had a “love for truth.” “He that would seriously set upon the search of truth,” Locke observed, “*ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love for it*. For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it.”¹⁰ This lone statement, at least as I conceive it, reflects the true role of Christian lawyers and judges within the secular state; and it captures the true essence of what it means to be a Christian.

⁴ John 13:34.

⁵ John 15:26.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John 14:26.

⁸ John 14:6.

⁹ John 16:13.

¹⁰ *The English Philosophers From Bacon To Mill* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1967), p. 396.

SUMMARY

This paper analyzes John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In this landmark essay, Locke explains how Christians should approach matters of faith; and, second, he reveals how Christians should make rational judgments about matters that are unclear or that can only be determined by ascertaining their experiences and probabilities— here, Locke provides useful advice for how modern-day lawyers and judges should search for the truth in matters before the courts. In either case, Locke admonished Christians to have a deep respect for “truth.” This admonition sunk deep within my consciousness and never left me. In fact, Locke used the word “love” to describe the actual nature of the desire for truth. “He that would seriously set upon the search of truth,” Locke observed, “ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love for it. For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it.”¹¹ Here I think, Locke unwittingly describes the fundamental duties of Christians in general, as well the competencies for Christian lawyers and judges within the secular state: they should be men and women who love truth, and who will zealously search for truth.¹²

In Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he painstakingly sets forth the fundamental elements of how the human brain functions; how it attains knowledge through the use of its five senses (i.e., sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell) as well as through reflection. According to Locke, there are two basic types of ideas: “simple ideas” and “complex ideas.” Human beings use language to express these ideas, but Locke cautioned against labeling dissimilar things or ideas with the same name. For secular lawyers and judges, this admonition forewarns against “sophistry” and relying upon “verbal truths” that bear no resemblance to the ideas which are reflected in nature. Locke viewed this form of “sophistry” as an enemy of both the human understanding and justice. And he observed that the challenge of bringing clarity to the human understanding was the duty of those persons who love “truth.” Through implication, Locke suggests through the text of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that this love for truth is also the same duty of the true Christian as well. Hence, when I first became an attorney, I believed that the duty of a Christian is to ascertain universal truth, and that this

¹¹ *The English Philosophers From Bacon To Mill* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1967), p. 396.

¹² This is the philosophical foundations for the idea of “Due Process of Law.”

duty bore a very close resemblance to the professional standards imposed upon secular lawyers and judges—the only difference being that a Christian’s search for truth extends over from the realm of reason into the realm of faith, whereas secular lawyers and judges must operate within the restricted realm of reason. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke acknowledged that human judges should retain humility, since the “realm of reason” is fraught with uncertainty; since the human mind—unlike the mind of God—is not all-knowing, cannot extend out into infinity, and does not contain all knowledge. Thus, Locke reasoned that the human mind must rely upon deductive and inductive reasoning, based upon its understanding of things as they exist in nature, thus taking into account their substances, propensities, and probabilities.

PART I. John Locke

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, John Locke was in my mind the most important of all philosophers, because his writings supplemented my bible study, increased my awareness of Christian superstition, and enabled me to reflect upon a law of God that is truly eternal and universal. John Locke lived during a time when learned men customarily reconciled their scientific and political ideas with the “law of God” or the Bible. And it was this “law of God” that attracted me to his writings and, I think, also served as the foundation of Locke’s “Liberalism”—which influenced the American Founding Fathers decades later following Locke’s death. Agnosticism, atheism, and the like were not at the heart of John Locke’s philosophy, for Locke was an educated “high-church” Anglican. Locke never relinquished traditional, conventional Christianity, even as he advanced his knowledge of politics, science and medicine. For Locke, all truth was subservient to the law of God. And so, due to Locke’s understanding and influence, I approached my upper-level courses in college, and later in law school, with this same perspective.

A. Biography of John Locke

Locke was the son of a country attorney. He grew up amid the disorders of civil war. In 1652, he entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he remained as a fellow for many years.¹³ Significantly, Christ Church, Oxford University¹⁴ was,

¹³ Ibid., p. 237.

and still is, a prestigious academic institution that was governed by the Church of England.¹⁵

Christ Church... was originally founded by [Roman Catholic] Cardinal Wolsey as Cardinal's College in 1524. The college buildings took over the site of St. Frideswide's Monastery which was suppressed by Wolsey to fund his college. The monastery dated back to the earliest days of Oxford as a settlement in the 9th Century A.D. When Wolsey fell from power in 1529, the College became property of King Henry VIII. Henry re-founded the College in 1546 and appointed the old monastery church as the cathedral of the new diocese of Oxford. The new institution of cathedral and university college was named Aedes Christi, which is rendered in English as Christ Church. It is due to its ecclesiastical function that Christ Church's principal, the Dean, is always a clergyman. The dual life of church and college continues to complement each other after 500 years, forming a unique community in the centre of Oxford. Since 1980 Christ Church has been co-educational, admitting women, who now make up half of the student body.¹⁶

An excellent summation of Locke's religious background, philosophy and general biography is as follows:

John Locke... was an English philosopher and physician, widely regarded as one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers and commonly known as the "Father of Liberalism." Considered one of the first of the British empiricists, following the tradition of Sir Francis Bacon, he is equally important to social contract theory. His work greatly affected the development of epistemology and political philosophy. His writings influenced Voltaire and Rousseau, many Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, as well as the American revolutionaries. His contributions to classical republicanism and liberal theory are reflected in the United States Declaration of

¹⁴ <http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Independence.... With regard to the Bible Locke was very conservative. He retained the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. The miracles were proofs of the divine nature of the biblical message. Locke was convinced that the entire content of the Bible was in agreement with human reason (*The reasonableness of Christianity*, 1695). Although Locke was an advocate of tolerance, he urged the authorities not to tolerate atheism, because he thought the denial of God's existence would undermine the social order and lead to chaos. That excluded all atheistic varieties of philosophy and all attempts to deduce ethics and natural law from purely secular premises, for example, man's "autonomy or dignity or human flourishing". In Locke's opinion the cosmological argument was valid and proved God's existence. His political thought was based on "a particular set of Protestant Christian assumptions.

Locke's concept of man started with the belief in creation. We have been "sent into the World by [God's] order, and about his business, [we] are his Property, whose Workmanship [we] are, made to last during his, not one another's Pleasure." Like the two other very influential natural-law philosophers, Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf, Locke equated natural law with the biblical revelation, since in their view both had originated in God and could therefore not contradict each other. "As a philosopher, Locke was intensely interested in Christian doctrine, and in the *Reasonableness* he insisted that most men could not hope to understand the detailed requirements of the law of nature without the assistance of the teachings and example of Jesus." Locke derived the fundamental concepts of his political theory from biblical texts, in particular from Genesis 1 and 2 (creation), the Decalogue (Exodus 20), the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12), the teachings of Jesus (e.g. his doctrine of charity, Matthew 19:19), and the letters of Paul the Apostle. The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) puts a person's life, his or her honourable reputation (i.e. honour and dignity), and property under God's protection. Freedom is another major theme in the Old Testament. For instance, God's actions in liberating the Israelites from Egyptian slavery in the

Decalogue's prologue (Exodus 20:2) were the precondition for the following commandments. Moreover, Locke derived basic human equality, including the equality of the sexes ("Adam and Eve") from Genesis 1:26–28, the starting point of the theological doctrine of *Imago Dei*. To Locke, one of the consequences of the principle of equality was that all humans were created equally free and therefore governments needed the consent of the governed. Only when Locke had derived the fundamental aspects of his concept of man and ethics from the biblical texts – life, equality, private property, etc. –, did he examine as a philosopher which consequences they had in the abovementioned way. Following Locke, the *American Declaration of Independence* founded **human rights on the biblical belief in creation**: "All men are *created* equal, (...) they are endowed by their *Creator* with certain unalienable rights, (...) life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Locke's doctrine that governments need the consent of the governed is also central to the *Declaration of Independence*.¹⁷

During my collegiate days, John Locke shaped my understanding of Anglo-American constitutional (i.e., “social contract theory”), natural law, and common law. Actually, during college and law school, I had no idea that Locke had had a great influence upon the American Founding Fathers. I only saw correlations and parallels between Locke’s thinking and American constitutional principles. I can recall speaking to my constitutional law professor, John Nowak, about his impression of John Locke’s ideas of the social contract. I felt then that Locke’s ideas bore an indirect correlation to various constitutional principles, but I had no idea that Locke had had a significant influence upon the Founding Fathers.

B. American Influences of John Locke

Not until several years after law school did I later discover that John Locke had had a profound influence upon the American Founding Fathers! I thought to myself that I was not alone in my admiration of Locke,-- even the Founding Fathers were drawn to his ideas as well! But what significance this had on the meaning of American constitutional law, I did not know of for sure. I could only

¹⁷ “John Locke,” Wikipedia On-line. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke.

surmise that Locke’s writings could be referenced as an authoritative source of key elements of American constitutional law, although I can cite no federal or state cases where this had ever been done.

Without going into the depths of the Founding Fathers’ separate and distinct ideas about the foundations and extent of civil government, my objective here is to show that John Locke’s Christian ideas of justice, property rights, natural law, and reason had a profound impact upon these Founding Fathers. Michael Warren has written in “America’s Survival Guide,”¹⁸ that “[t]he Founding Fathers drew heavily upon English philosopher John Locke in establishing America’s First Principles, most notably the recognition of unalienable rights, the Social Compact, and limited government.” Jason Parker has written in “John Locke’s Influence on the Founding Fathers,”¹⁹ that “[t]he impact of John Locke’s writing and ideas had on the American Revolution, and its subsequent founding of the United States of America, is readily apparent to most who study this writer and this particular country’s history.... While Locke’s influence on the founding of our country is just one writer among many, his particular influence seemed to have had the greatest impact and the strongest ripple effect. His ideas stand not only the test of time, but a real-world test in the form of the United States of America.” USHistory.org states: “The single most important influence that shaped the founding of the United States comes from John Locke, a 17th century Englishman who redefined the nature of government.” David Barton in “John Locke—A Philosophical Founder of America,” has written that “John Locke... is one of the most important, but largely unknown names in American history today. A celebrated English philosopher, educator, government official, and theologian, it is not an exaggeration to say that without his substantial influence on American thinking, there might well be no United States of America today—or at the very least, America certainly would not exist with the same level of rights, stability of government, and quality of life that we have enjoyed for well over two centuries.”²⁰ And, finally, Church Braman in “The Political Philosophy of John Locke, and Its Influence on the Founding Fathers and the Political Documents They Created,” has written that “philosopher John Locke created what would

¹⁸ <http://www.americassurvivalguide.com/john-locke.php>

¹⁹ <http://selfdeprecate.com/politics-articles/john-locke-founding-fathers/>

²⁰ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/libissuesarticles.asp?id=99156>

become the philosophical source for the founding principles of the United States.”²¹

Unlike St. Augustine and St. Thomas, whom I greatly admired, John Locke was not so remote in time to the foundations of Anglo-American law and American constitutional jurisprudence. And, for this reason, I concluded that Locke had taken the essential ingredients of the Catholic faith and translated them into an objective political philosophy which became the foundations of the *Declaration of Independence* and the *United States Constitution*. And John Locke was no Deist, but rather he was a rather conservative Anglican churchman! Hence, the Christian influences upon the Founding Fathers and their founding documents are great was due in part to John Locke.

In the Part II of this paper, I shall only concentrate my analysis on the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,²² and, God willing, I shall address Locke’s essays on civil government in a separate paper.

PART II. “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding”

In this section, I have provided a brief outline of Locke’s essential thesis in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. The text material came from the same book which I have had in my personal library since 1989, which contains my personal notes, highlighted sections, and markings. I have re-reviewed this text material in light of what I believed were the most salient points more than twenty-five years ago. As I can recall, the most salient Biblical lessons that I took from this essay is that all “truth” is the essence of the Christian faith; that truth may be ascertained through reason, which is a form of natural revelation; and that religious revelation that contracts truth is not revelation from God. (Years later, I began to see parallels between the Christian duty to search for Truth, and the professional standards of lawyers and judges within the secular civil state.) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* further cemented my fundamental understanding that true Christianity is “scientific.” And I have since viewed with suspicion any idea that the Christian faith stands for tradition and superstition, while the secular state and modern university stands for progress, learning, and

²¹ <http://www.chuckbraman.com/political-philosophy-of-john-locke.html>

²² *The English Philosophers From Bacon To Mill* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1967).

light. I view such utter misrepresentation of the Christian faith as intellectual dishonesty—as anti-Christ (i.e., “against world truth and world love”).

A Summary of John Locke’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding”

“He that would seriously set upon the search of truth, ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love for it. For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it.” -- John Locke

Chapter I Of Ideas In General, and Their Original. Locke asserts the supremacy of “sensation”—hearing, seeing, tasting, feeling, and smelling—is the “great source of most of the ideas we have.” He calls “ideas” as “the object of thinking.” He asks, How do we come by our ideas? He adds “experience” [i.e., “reflection”] to “sensation,” as an additional source of our ideas. “Our observation, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understanding with all the materials of thinking.”

Chapter II Of Simple Ideas. Locke believed that ideas can be described as “simple” or “complex.” He describes simple ideas as fairly uniform concepts that are easily understood by most rational human beings. These simple “ideas thus united in the same subject are as perfectly distinct as those that come in by different senses; the coldness and hardness which a man feels in place of ice being as distinct ideas in the mind as the smell and whiteness of a lily, or as the taste of sugar and smell of a rose: and there is nothing can be plainer to a man than the clear and distinct perception he has of those simple ideas; which, being each in itself uncompounded, contains in it nothing but one uniform appearance or conception in the mind, and is not distinguishable into different ideas.” According to Locke, “simple ideas” are “the materials of all our knowledge, are suggested and furnished to the mind only by those two ways.... *Sensation* and *reflection*.” Locke concluded that “complex ideas” were nothing more than a combination of “simple ideas,” where we “repeat, compare, and unite” simple ideas, “even to an almost infinite variety....”

Chapter III Of Simple Ideas of Sense. Locke believed that simple and complex ideas can come into our minds only through our various senses and by reflection. “First, then, there are some which come into our minds by *one sense only*. Secondly, there are others that convey themselves into the mind by *more senses than one*. Thirdly, others that are had from *reflection only*. Fourthly, there are some that make themselves way, and are suggested to the mind, by *all the ways of sensation and reflection*.”

Chapter IV Idea of Solidity. Locke concluded that “solidity” is ascertained through the sensation of “touch.” “[I]t arise from the resistance which we find in body to the entrance of any other body into the place it possess, till it has left it.”

Chapter V Of Simple Ideas of Divers Senses. Locke concluded also that the senses of “seeing” and “touch” sometimes combine to provide us with dual senses. “The ideas we get by more than one sense are of space or extension, figure, rest and motion. For these make perceivable impressions both on the eyes and touch; and we can receive and convey into our minds the ideas of the extension, figure, motion, and rest of bodies, both by seeing and feeling.”

Chapter VI Of Simple Ideas of Reflection. Locke next describes the learning process. We reflect upon information attained through our senses, and then we take “other ideas, which are as capable to be the objects of its contemplation....” In other words, we engage of innovative thinking about possibilities and probabilities, based upon our learning.

Chapter VII Of Simple Ideas of Both Sensation and Reflection. Here, Locke reasoned that there are “other simple ideas which convey themselves into the mind by all the ways of sensation and reflection: viz., pleasure or delight, and its opposite, pain or uneasiness; power, existence, unity.”

Chapter VIII Some Farther Considerations Concerning Our Simple Ideas of Sensation. Over time, and through reflection and experience, “real positive ideas” begin to develop in the human mind and understanding. “Thus the ideas of heat and cold, light and darkness, white and black, motion and rest, are equally clear and positive ideas in the mind....”

Chapter IX Of Perception. Locke defines “perception” as the act of “reflection,” from which we accumulate our “experiences.”

Chapter X Of Retention. To Locke, memory and contemplation allow human beings to retain the “perceptions,” “reflections” and accumulated “experiences.”

Chapter XI Of Discerning, and Other Operations of the Mind. Locke believed that the human mind has the ability to discern the difference between different objects and their natures or qualities. This allows human beings to observe “universal truths” through “uniform impressions” of the mind. For Locke, the beginning of human knowledge is the ability to observe and examine “things as really they are, and not to conclude they are as we fancy of ourselves, or have been taught by others to imagine.”

Chapter XII Of Complex Ideas. Locke describes “complex ideas” in a variety of ways, as follows: “The acts of the mind wherein it exerts its power over its simple ideas are chiefly these three: (1) Combining several simple ideas into one compound one; and thus all complex ideas are made. (2) The second is bringing two ideas, whether simple or complex, together, and setting them by one another, so as to take a view of them at once, without uniting them into one; by which wa it gets all its ideas of relations. (3) The third is separating them from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence; this is called abstraction....”

Chapter XVII Of Infinity. Locke believed that we come by our idea of “infinity” from out understanding of “space.” “The power of enlarging his idea of space by further additions remaining still the same, he hence takes the idea of infinite space.... This, I think, is the way whereby the mind gets the idea of infinite space.”

Chapter XXI Of Power. Locke believed that our idea of “power” comes from observing constant change in ourselves and in our environment. “The mind being every day informed, by the senses, of the alteration of those simple ideas it observes in things without, and taking notice how one comes to an end and ceases to be, and another begins to exist which was not before; reflecting also, on what passes within itself, and observing a constant change of its ideas, sometimes by the impression of outward objects on the senses, and sometimes by the determination of its own choice; and concluding, from what it has so constantly observed to have been, that the changes will for the future be made in

the same things by like agents, and by the like ways; considers in one thing the possibility of making that change; and so comes by that idea which we call power.”

Chapter XXIII Of Our Complex Ideas of Substances. Locke next tries to grapple with the human understanding of “substances,” including “spirits.” “Thus, we come to have the ideas of a man, horse, gold, water, etc., of which substances, whether anyone has any other clear idea, farther than of certain simple ideas coexistent together, I appeal to everyone’s own experience. It is the ordinary qualities observable in iron or a diamond, put together that make the true complex idea of those substances, which a smith or a jeweler commonly knows better than a philosopher; who, whatever substantial forms he may talk of, has not other idea of those substances than what is framed by a collection of those simple ideas which are to bound in them.”

Chapter XXV Of Relation. Locke believed that “simple” and “complex” ideas may be compared and related to each other, thus forming in the mind a “law of relations” or “relatives.” “When the mind so considers one thing, that it does, as it were, bring it to and set it by another, and carries its view from one to the other: this is, as the words import, *relation* and *respect*.”

Chapter XXVI Of Cause and Effect And Other Relations. Similarly, the “law of relations” often reveal the “law of cause and effect.” According to Locke, these laws could be ascertained through “observation” and “experience.”

Chapter XXVII Of Identity and Diversity. Similar to his analysis of substances, Locke opines that living creatures have their own unique identities and qualities which the mind attains a level of understanding about. “We have ideas but of three sorts of substances,” concludes Locke, “(1) God. (2) Finite intelligences.(3) Bodies.” We may thus attain an identity of God, man, animals, and vegetables. To Locke, such identity impressions involved assessing the qualities of personalities and finite spirits.

BOOK IV: Of Knowledge and Probability.

Chapter I: Of Knowledge In General. Here, Locke begins to develop his theory of ideas in order to show how knowledge is attained. “Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy, of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge; and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge. For, when we know that white is not black, what do we else but perceive that these two idea do not agree? When we possess ourselves with the utmost security of the demonstration that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, what do we more but perceive that equality to two right ones does necessarily agree to, and is inseparable from, the three angles of a triangle? ...—But, to understand a little more distinctly, wherein this agreement or disagreement consists, I think we may reduce it all to these four sorts: (i) Identity, or diversity. (ii) Relation. (iii) Coexistence, or necessary connection. (iv) Real existence.” Locke goes not to explore the dimensions of “truth” inasmuch as truth can be examined, observed, experienced, and recorded in the memory of the understanding. “There are several ways,” Locke observed, “wherein the mind is possessed of truth, each of which is called knowledge.”

Chapter II: Of the Degrees of Our Knowledge. Locke next describes different degrees of knowledge, such as “intuitive” knowledge and “demonstrative” knowledge. “These two, viz., intuition and demonstration, are the degrees of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but *faith* or *opinion*, but not knowledge, at least in all general truths.”

Here, Locke begins to differentiate knowledge from religious faith, but nevertheless acknowledging throughout the entire treatise that all knowledge comes from God.

Chapter III: Of the Extent of Human Knowledge. Here, Locke provides a measuring tape for determining the reliability of our knowledge. How do we know that we even the knowledge of our ideas? Locke asserts that through intuition, reason, and sensation, we come into contact with our knowledge. Hence, Locke concludes that our ideas are much broader than our knowledge; but much of our ideas have not been verified or, as it were, remains unverifiable. Locke also concludes that our knowledge falls short of reality, since we still do not know all that can be known. Such knowledge beyond our comprehension is within the providence of God. But, of critical importance, Locke believed that laws of morality were as demonstrable as “any demonstration in Euclid.”

“The idea of a supreme Being, infinite in power, goodness, and wisdom, whose workmanship we are, and on whom we depend; and the idea of ourselves, as understanding rational beings; being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such **foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration**: wherein I doubt not but from self-evident propositions by necessary consequences, as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out to anyone that will apply himself with the same indifferency and attention to the one as he does to the other of these sciences. The relation of other modes may certainly be perceived, as well as those of number and extension: and I cannot see why they should not also be capable of demonstration if due methods were thought on to examine or pursue their agreement or disagreement. **Where there is no property there is no injustice**, is a proposition as certain as any demonstration in Euclid: for the idea of property being a right to anything, and the idea to which the name injustice is given being thus established, and these names annexed to them, I can as certainly know this proposition to be true, as that a triangle has three angles equal to two right ones. **Again: No government allows absolute liberty; the idea of government being the establishment of society upon certain rules or laws which require conformity to them, and the idea of absolute liberty being certain of the truth of this proposition as of any in the mathematics.**”

Chapter IV: Of the Reality of Human Knowledge. Here, Locke begins to take up the subject matter of “natural law,” or the reality of things as they truly exist in nature. First, Locke proposes that “[i]f it be true all knowledge lies only in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas, the visions of an enthusiast, and the reasoning of a sober man, will be equally certain.” However, Locke insists on being sober—and not being an enthusiast, which is another word for “religious fanatic.” Locke insists upon intellectual integrity. “Our knowledge therefore,” Locke insists, “is real only so far as there is a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things.” “Whatever ideas we have, the agreement we find they have with others will still be knowledge. If those ideas be abstract, it will be general knowledge. But to make it real concerning substances, the ideas must be taken from the real existence of things.... For whatever have once had an union in nature, may be united again.” Hence, under Locke’s scheme, the duty to inquire into the true nature of things is essential to attaining true scientific or moral knowledge. To Locke, “**moral knowledge is as capable of real certainty as mathematics.**”

Chapter V: Of Truth In General. Locke now turns to the question of “truth.” “What is truth?” he asks. “What is truth? Was an inquiry many ages since, and it being that which all mankind either do, or pretend to search after, it cannot but be worth our while carefully to examine wherein it consists, and so acquaint ourselves with the nature of it as to observe how the mind distinguishes it from falsehood.” Locke covers the same subject matter is in Chapter IV, but here he adds that “truth of thought” must correspond to “truth of words,” again stressing the fact that definitions must be clearly

defined. Locke discusses “language” as mere “symbol” of reality, or natural objects existing in nature. “So that proposition consists in joining or separating signs, and truth consists in the putting together or separating those signs, according as the things which they stand for agree or disagree.” For this reason, Locke next asserts the proposition that “verbal truth” is not the same as “truth.” For Locke, “verbal truth” is the substance of sophistry, play-on-words, and deception. The tension between Socrates and the Sophists, and between Jesus of Nazareth and the Pharisees, was precisely because this difference between “verbal truth” and “truth.” Locke argues that “if truth be nothing but the joining and separating of words in propositions, as the ideas they stand for agree or disagree in men’s minds, the knowledge of truth is not so valuable a thing as it is taken to be, nor worth the pains and time men employ in the search of it; since by this account it amounts to no more than the conformity of words to the chimeras of men’s brains.” “Real truth,” concludes Locke, “is about ideas agreeing to things.” In other words, our ideas must correspond to nature and natural law, in order to constitute truth; since “that being *only verbal truth* wherein terms are joined according to the agreement or disagreement of the ideas they stand for, without regarding whether our ideas are such as really have, or are capable of having, an *existence in nature.*”

Chapter VI: Of Universal Propositions, Their Truth and Certainty. Here, Locke continues his same discourse, as in Chapter V. He again insists that “words” must reflect things as they exist. “Certainty of truth is when words are so put together in propositions as exactly to express the agreement or disagreement of the ideas they stand for, as really it is. Certainty of knowledge is to perceive the agreement or disagreement of ideas, as expressed in any proposition.”

Chapter IX: Of Our Threefold Knowledge of Existence. Here, Locke looks at “our knowledge of the existence of things, and how we come by it.” To summarize his point, Locke states “I say then, that we have the knowledge of our own existence by intuition; of the existence of God by demonstration; and of other things by sensation.”

Chapter X: Of Our Knowledge of The Existence of A God. Locke next turns to the existence of God. He insists that God has blessed mankind with the natural capabilities to know with “mathematical certainty” of God’s existence, stating, “having furnished us with those faculties our minds are endowed with, He hath not left Himself without witness; since we have sense, perception, and reason, and cannot want a clear proof of Him as long as we carry ourselves about 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. When I say we know, I mean there is such a knowledge within our reach which we cannot miss, if we will but apply our minds to that as we do to several other inquiries.”

First, Locke says that we should begin with ourselves and admit that we have an existence.

Second, Locke says that “bare nothing” cannot produce “any real thing.”

Third, Locke concludes that “[i]f therefore we know... 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.”

Fourth, Locke reasons that everything that was created has “its being from” that which created it. “All the powers it has, must be owing to and received from the same source.”

Fifth, the source of all created things is eternal,-- an “Eternal Being.

Sixth, that mankind, together with less rational creatures, finds in himself reason, perception, and knowledge; and so it must also follow that this reason, perception, and knowledge also came from this Eternal Being which created mankind. Hence, through “our own being” we have “an evident and incontestable proof of a Deity.”

Seventh, Locke next reasons that we must know that the Eternal Being has knowledge and perception, since “it being as impossible that things wholly void of knowledge, and operating blindly and without any perception, should produce a knowing being...” “For it is as repugnant to the idea of senseless matter that it should put into itself sense, perception, and knowledge, as it is repugnant to the idea of a triangle that it should put into itself greater angles than two right ones.” “For it is as impossible to conceive that ever bare incogitive matter should produce a thinking intelligent being, as that nothing should of itself produce matter.” “Is it possible to conceive it can add motion to itself, being purely matter, or produce anything? Matter, then, by its own strength, cannot produce in itself so much as motion: the motion it has must also be from eternity....”

Conclusion: “If, therefore, it be evident that something necessarily must exist from eternity, it is also as evident that something must necessarily be a cogitative being; for it is as impossible that incogitative matter should produce a cogitative being, as that nothing, or the negation of all being, should produce a positive being or matter....”

Chapter XI: Of Our Knowledge of The Existence of Other Things. Locke asserts here that our knowledge of other things comes through our five senses—taste, touch, sight, hearing, and sight. Thus, we must rely upon the integrity of our senses to fully ascertain the truth of other things.

Chapter XII: Of the Improvement of Our Knowledge. Locke warned against “deductive” reasoning. He believed that knowledge should be “improved,” and that inductive reasoning was the best method for improving knowledge. In other words, we must continuously observe and analyze things as they exist in nature, and we must continuously question propositions or maxims that serve as the foundations for deductive reasoning.

Chapter XIV: Of Judgment. Locke admitted that mankind is in a “twilight state,” since it does not have perfect knowledge. Therefore, mankind must rely upon good judgment, based upon the imperfect knowledge which it now has. The goal of good judgment is to ensure that “reality” is reflected in the judgment—according to Locke, this “is right judgment.” As discussed below, as a result of our imperfect knowledge, we must rely on “probabilities.”

Chapter XV: Of Probability. Continuing his discussion on “judgment,” Locke turns to “probability,” and defines it as “being that which makes us presume things to be true before we know them to be so.—Probability is likeliness to be true, the very notation of the word signifying such a proposition, for which there be arguments or proofs, to make it pass or be received for true.” “Probability then, being to supply the defect of our knowledge, and to guide us where that fails, is always conversant about propositions, whereof we have no certainty, but only some inducements to receive them for true. The grounds of it are, in short, these two following. First, the conformity of anything with our own knowledge, observation, and experience. Secondly, the testimony of others, vouching their observation and experience. In the testimony of others, is to be considered: (1) The number. (2) The integrity. (3) The skill of the witnesses. (4) The design of the author, where it is a testimony out of a book cited. (5) The consistency of the parts, and circumstances of the relation. (6)

Contrary testimonies.””In this, all the arguments pro and con ought to be examined before we come to a judgment.”

Chapter XVI: Of the Degrees of Assent. Locke insists here that before we agree to any proposition, we must analyze its veracity from the degree of its probability of being right. “The grounds of probability we have laid down in the foregoing chapter; as they are the foundations on which our assent is build, so are they also the measure whereby its several degrees are, or ought to be regulated....”

Chapter XVII: Of Reason. Here, Locke describes the mental processes used to ascertain knowledge and truth, as discussed in the previous chapters. Locke believed that human beings have a “faculty” within themselves that distinguishes them “from beasts, and wherein it is evident he much surpasses them.” “So that we may in reason consider these four degrees; the first and highest is the discovering and finding out of truths; the second, the regular and methodical disposition of them, and laying them in a clear and fit order, to make their connection and force be plainly and easily perceived; the third is the perceiving their connection; and the fourth, a making a right conclusion....”

Chapter XVIII: Of Faith and Reason, and Their Provinces. Here, Locke turns to the perennial question of “faith” and its relationship to “reason.” He continues here largely his discussion on “judgment” and “probabilities.” Locke thus begins this chapter, stating “[f]or till it be resolved, how far we are to be guided by reason, and how far by faith, we shall in vain dispute, and endeavor to convince one another in matters of religion.”

“Reason, therefore, here, as contradistinguished to faith, I take to be the discovery of the certainty or probability of such propositions or truths, which the mind arrives at by deduction made from such ideas, which it has got by the use of its natural faculties; viz., by sensation or reflection.

“Faith, on the other hand, is the assent to any proposition, not thus made out by the deductions of reason; but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God, in some extraordinary way of communication. This way of discovering truths to men are call revelation.”

Locke clearly stresses that important role of reason in analyzing matters of faith. First off, Locke believed that “revelation” and “reason” often overlap. “I say, that the same truths may be discovered, and conveyed down from revelation, which are discoverable to us by reason, and by those ideas we naturally may have. So God might, by revelation, discover the truth of any proposition in Euclid; as well as men, by the natural use of their faculties, come to make the discovery themselves. In all things of this kind, there is little need or use of revelation, God having furnished us with natural and surer means to arrive at the knowledge of them. For whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be certainer to us, than those which are conveyed to us by traditional revelation. For the knowledge we have, that this revelation came at first from God, can never be so sure, as the knowledge we have from the clear and distinct perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas; v.g., if it were revealed some ages since, that the three angles of a triangle were equal to two right ones, I might assent to the truth of the proposition, upon the credit of the tradition, that it was revealed; but that would never amount to so great a certainty, as the knowledge of it, upon the comparing and measuring my own ideas of two right angles, and the three angles of a triangle.”

Perhaps the most important rule which Locke laid down in this treatise, is that “revelation cannot be admitted against the clear evidence of reason.” “For faith can never convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge. Because though faith be founded on the testimony of God (who cannot lie) revealing any proposition to us; yet we cannot have an assurance of the truth of its being a divine revelation, greater than our own knowledge: since the whole strength of the certainty depends upon our knowledge that God revealed it, which in this case, where the proposition supposed revealed contradicts our knowledge or reason, will always have this objection hanging to it, viz., that we cannot tell how to conceive that to come from God, the bountiful Author of our being, which, if received for true, must overturn all the principles and foundations of knowledge he has given us....” In other words, Locke believed that the so-called “secular knowledge (e.g., the political sciences, physical sciences, STEM, etc.)” was not contradictory but complimentary to revelations, and vice versa.

In the final analysis, Locke believed that “reason” must be the final guide to judgment. “In all things therefore, where we have **clear evidence from our ideas**, and those principles of knowledge I have above mentioned, **reason is the proper judge**; and revelation, though it may in consenting with it confirm its dictates, yet cannot in such cases invalidate its decrees: nor can we be obliged, where we have the clear and evident sentence of reason, to quit it for the contrary opinion, under a pretence that it is matter of faith; which can have authority against the plain and clear dictates of reason.” “[R]evelation, where God has been pleased to give it, must carry it against the probable conjectures of reason.” “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.”

For Locke, “revelation” played a subordinate role to “reason,” in this sense: “[f]or where there principles of reason have not evidenced a proposition to be certainly true or false, there clear revelation, as another principle of truth, and ground of assent, may determine; and so it may be matter of faith, and be also above reason. Because reason, in that particular matter, being able to reach no higher than probability, faith gave the determination where reason come short; and revelation discovered on which side the truth lay.” Hence, Locke’s scheme of “reason-revelation” clearly mitigates against religious superstition and incorporates the advanced knowledge of learning and education.

Chapter XIX: Of Enthusiasm. Locke continues his discussion in the previous chapter. Here, he defines “enthusiasm” as religious fanaticism or religious uncertainty accredited to the “Spirit of God.” Again, Locke carefully defines “reason” and “revelation”: “Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal father of light, and foundation of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties: revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives, that they come from God.” Inclusion, however, Locke again asserts that “[r]eason must be our last judge and guide in everything. I do not mean that we must consult reason, and examine whether a proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it: but consult it we must, and by it examine, whether it be a revelation from God or no. And if reason finds it to be revealed from God, reason then declares for it, as much as for any other truth, and makes it one of her dictates.”

THE END OF TEXT SUMMARY

CONCLUSION

Jesus of Nazareth's teachings regarding "truth" and the "Spirit of Truth" are reflected in the John Locke's writings, particularly in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. For this reason, this paper analyzed John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, because it explains how Christians should approach matters of faith; and, second, it reveals how Christians should make rational judgments about matters that are unclear or that can only be determined by ascertaining their experiences and probabilities. Locke admonished Christians to have a deep respect for "truth." In fact, Locke used the word "love" to describe the actual nature of the desire for truth. "He that would seriously set upon the search of truth," Locke observed, "ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love for it. For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it."²³ Here, I think, Locke unwittingly describes the fundamental duties of Christians in general, as well the competencies for Christian lawyers and judges within the secular state: they should be men and women who love truth, and who will zealously search for truth.²⁴

THE END

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