

Interpretation

A Journal of Political Philosophy

Volume 8/1

January, 1979

page

1	Leo Strauss	Preface to <i>Hobbes politische Wissenschaft</i>
5	Michael Platt	Falstaff in the Valley of the Shadow of Death
30	John F. Wilson	Reason and Obligation in <i>Leviathan</i>
58	Michael P. Zuckert	An Introduction to Locke's First Treatise
75	Abraham Rotstein	Lordship and Bondage in Luther and Marx
103	Thomas J. Scorza	Tragedy in the State of Nature: Melville's <i>Typee</i>



QUEENS COLLEGE PRESS

Interpretation

A Journal of Political Philosophy

Volume 8

Issue 1

Editor-in-Chief

Hilail Gildin

Editors

Seth G. Benardete - Hilail Gildin - Robert Horwitz - Ann McArdle
Howard B. White (1912-1974)

Consulting Editors

John Hallowell - Wilhelm Hennis - Erich Hula - Analdo Momigliano
Michael Oakeshott - Leo Strauss (1899-1973) - Kenneth W. Thompson

Assistant Editor

Marianne C. Grey

Editor, Queens College Press

Lee Cogan

Assistant Editor, Queens College Press

Anne M. Demerle

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in *Interpretation* are requested to follow the *MLA Style Sheet* and to send ribbon copies of their work.

All manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, *Interpretation*, Building G 101, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Copyright © 1979 Queens College Press

QUEENS COLLEGE PRESS, FLUSHING, N.Y. 11367

AN INTRODUCTION TO LOCKE'S FIRST TREATISE

MICHAEL P. ZUCKERT
Carleton College

I

An "Introduction to Locke's First Treatise" is needed, and perforce a somewhat sketchy one, rather than a paper on some more specialized topic within it, because that book is surely one of the least known of the books written by Locke or by an author of Locke's general caliber and standing in the world. With most topics, one must begin with a history of the scholarly and other attention paid one's subject; with *this* topic, however, one must begin almost with the history of its neglect. And it does have a substantial history of neglect. Although Locke on government proved to be a great favorite in America, no American edition of the *Second Treatise* contained the first until 1947. Locke's *Second Treatise* was translated into French by 1691, but as of 1963 the *First Treatise* had still not appeared in a French edition.

At least some of the reason for the great neglect of the *First Treatise*—and I have only presented here some of the merest indications of the magnitude of that neglect—some of the reason is relatively easy to discern and understand. The *First Treatise* is in form a refutation of the political writings, especially the *Patriarcha*, of Sir Robert Filmer. Now any book written so closely on another book as Locke's *First Treatise* is on Filmer's *Patriarcha*, is likely to be neglected; its neglect becomes assured when the book to which it is tied is as apparently uninteresting as the *Patriarcha*.

The great difficulty with this neglect, however, is that the *First* and *Second Treatises* are not two separate books of which we are able to read only the part we find "interesting." As Peter Laslett, the editor of the critical edition of the *Two Treatises*, puts it:

If the wording of Locke's *Preface* is considered carefully, it will be seen that he

This paper is a somewhat revised version of a public lecture delivered at Claremont Men's College, Fall 1976, under the auspices of Pi Sigma Alpha.

References to two of Locke's works will be left in the text, conforming to the following conventions. I Tr. 169 refers to the *First Treatise*, section 169. I ECHU iii 13 refers to Book I of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 3, section 13. The edition of these works I have used are: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government, a Critical Edition*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge 1967). John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. John Yolton (2 vols., London, 1961).

talks of the book as a whole. . . . It is a 'Discourse concerning government' with a beginning, a middle and an end, not the two disparate essays which recent commentators seem to have in mind. . . . Locke did not think of his volume originally as in two parts at all, any more than any work presented in two "books." . . . What Locke thought he was writing was a whole Discourse, set out in two books for his own literary purposes. The book was written as a whole.

Moreover, Laslett's own important findings about the composition of the *Two Treatises* seem to confirm the place of the *First Treatise*. The pre-Laslett "accepted view" was that Locke wrote the *Two Treatises* following, and in order to justify the Glorious Revolution, and that the chief philosophical opponent of the *Second Treatise* was Thomas Hobbes. Laslett, however, argues that Locke wrote not for the already consummated Glorious Revolution, but rather on behalf of the devoutly hoped for revolution to come, to be sponsored by his patron Shaftesbury, at the time of the Exclusion Crisis about a decade earlier. Laslett shows, moreover, that both treatises are much taken up with response to Filmer, that Filmer, not Hobbes, is the polemical target of the *Second Treatise* as well as the *First*. If this claim of Laslett's is correct, then it bespeaks the great importance of the *First Treatise*, for it is there that the confrontation between Locke and Filmer is most open and explicit. It is surely testimony to the *First Treatise's* astonishing power for remaining obscure that after all that, Laslett himself devoted only a paltry two pages of his long statement on the substance of Locke's political thought to the explication of the *First Treatise*. And, having previously edited Filmer's political writings, he did not have the excuse of most—of neither having read nor wanting to read Filmer.

II

Turning from some of the reasons for ceasing to neglect the *First Treatise* to the *First Treatise* itself, it would be good first to give some idea of the contents of the book by indicating its surface structure and the surface thrust of its argument. The *First Treatise's* eleven chapters plus a preface make up a work of three parts; there is, first, an introductory section, addressed to such issues as the reasons for the turn to Filmer, the kind of argument Locke is planning to present, and some preliminary definitions and classifications of issues. This introductory section includes the "Preface" and the first two chapters of the *First Treatise*.

The second section of the *First Treatise*, extending from chapters 3–7, takes up and criticizes Filmer's arguments for "Adam's title" or sovereignty. Filmer in his several books sought to establish two characteristic theses: one concerning the proper extent of political power, and the other, the true

source of political power. Filmer's position on these two matters can be derived from his response to Hobbes:

With no small content I read Mr. Hobbes' book *De Cive*, and his *Leviathan*, about the rights of sovereignty, which no man, that I know, hath so amply and judiciously handled: I consent with him about the rights of exercising government, but I cannot agree to his means of acquiring it. It may seem strange I should praise his buildings, and yet mislike his foundations; but so it is, his *Jus Naturae*, and his *Regnum Institutuum*, will not down with me: they appear full of contradiction and impossibilities; a few short notes about them, I here offer, wishing he would consider whether his building would not stand firmer upon the principles of *Regnum Patrimoniale* (as he calls it) both according to scripture and reason.

Filmer likes the building—absolute sovereignty—but not the foundation—the right of nature and consent. For Hobbes' foundation he proposes to substitute another: both scripture and reason teach that government is natural in the father and *a fortiori* in Adam, the first father, and his heirs.

The second section of the *First Treatise* takes up, one per chapter, what Locke identifies as Filmer's grounds for attributing political sovereignty to "our first father." That section in turn divides into two recognizable pieces, according to the *kind* of ground for Adam's sovereignty that is under investigation: There is a *Scriptural Subsection* (chs. 3–4–5), taking up three scripture texts Locke finds in Filmer purporting to support Adam's sovereignty. There is also a *Natural Subsection* (chs. 6–7), taking up what Locke calls "a supposition of natural right of Dominion over his children, by being their Father." (*I Tr.* 50) Locke's arguments in refutation of the claims raised on behalf of Adam are rather easily summarized. The first Filmerean scriptural argument Locke responds to (Ch. 3) is as follows: "A Natural Freedom of Mankind," says Filmer, "cannot be supposed without the denial of the Creation of Adam." (*I Tr.* 15). Locke's reply is the fairly sensible, "why not"? The lion, Locke points out, was as much created as Adam was, and it is difficult to see how subjection to the one would follow any the more or the less than to the other from the fact of their having been created.

The second Scriptural argument Locke looks into is one based on Gen. 1:28: "And God Blessed Them, and God said unto Them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the Earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the Earth." Locke's Ch. 4, takes up three questions: (a) whether "every living thing that moveth," over which dominion is given, includes human beings or not; (b) whether the donee is properly

understood to be Adam alone, or mankind in general; and (c) even if the donee were Adam alone, whether such private property in the things of the world as Adam might then have properly implies political power.

Among other proofs that "every living thing that moveth" does not include human beings, Locke brings forth the following delightful observation.

And if God made all mankind slaves to Adam and his Heirs, by giving Adam dominion over 'every living thing that moveth on the Earth,' as our [author] would have it, methinks Sir Robert should have carried his monarchical power one step higher, and satisfied the world that princes might eat their subjects too, since God gave as full power to Noah and his Heirs in Gen. 9:2, to "eat every living thing that moveth" as he did to Adam to have dominion over them, the Hebrew words in both places being the same. (*I Tr.* 27)

Locke's "proof" that Adam alone was not the addressee of the donation in Gen. 1:28 is even simpler: the text is not addressed to Adam alone, but to "them." The whole donation, Locke concludes,

'Tis nothing but the giving to Man, the whole Species of Man, as the chief inhabitant, who is the Image of his Maker, the Dominion over the other creatures. (*I. Tr.* 40)

Passing by some of the details of the second chapter of the *Scriptural Sub-section*, we may quickly summarize the last argument of the *Scriptural Sub-section*: Filmer, Locke says, bases his Adamic monarchy on the passage, Gen., 3:16, where God says to Eve, following her fall: "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Locke's first reply is the obverse of his reply to the Filmerean argument from the donation: where Filmer, in the former place wants to read a plural pronoun in the text as if it were a singular, he here tries to read a singular, as if it were a plural, as if this speech by God refers to anyone besides Eve herself. Moreover, Locke argues, this is not an authorization of Adam's monarchy at all, but rather,

foretells what should be the woman's lot, how by his Providence he would order it so, that she should be subject to her husband. as we see that generally the Laws of Mankind and customs of Nations have ordered it so. (*I Tr.* 47)

Locke concludes the *Scriptural sub-section* confident he has shown Filmer not to have the support in the Scriptures that he claimed to have. In the *Natural Sub-section*, Locke extends his critique in such a way as to

try to show that Filmer's position, moreover, is a decidedly non or anti-scriptural position. The core of the argument from fatherhood is identified by Locke as follows:

The Argument . . . to prove that Fathers, by begetting them, come by an absolute power over their children is this; that Fathers have a power over the lives of their children, because they give them life and being, which is the only proof it is capable of since there can be no reason, why naturally one man should have any claim or preference of right over that in another which was never his, which he bestowed not, but was received from the bounty of another. (*I Tr.* 52)

An adequate appreciation of the Biblical teaching of the Creating God is sufficient to refute this argument however. As Locke says,

They who say the *Father* gives life to his children are so dazzled with the thoughts of Monarchy, that they do not, as they ought, remember God, who is the author and giver of Life: "Tis in Him alone we live, move and have our Being. . ." Is there any one so bold, that dares thus far to arrogate to himself the incomprehensible works of the Almighty? Who alone did at first, and continues still to make a living Soul. He alone can breathe in the Breath of Life. (*I Tr.* 52-53)

So unscriptural is Filmer's position, that every time he cites the chief Biblical passage he believes supports his understanding of the fatherhood—"honor thy father"—he suppresses the full half of it that is much less supportive—"and thy mother."

The last section of the *First Treatise*, running from Chs. 8-11, treats the "conveyance" of or succession to the so-called power of Adam, Locke's point here being that Filmer speaks at least as unintelligibly on this subject as on the other, and at least as contrary to the lesson and experience conveyed in Scriptures. Locke makes two basic kinds of argument again, a natural and a scriptural. If (the "natural" argument goes) political power rests on the "fatherhood," then the only ones who may have it are fathers, and the only ones they may have it over are children. That means, of course, that the "fatherly power" can neither be inherited, given away, lost or whatever. It also means there are as many kings as fathers, and completely unsettles all political life. In the scriptural part of his argument, Locke tries to show that the patriarchal period of the Hebrews reveals no such pattern of heritable patriarchal political power as Filmer maintains it does.

III

This brief sketch of the structure and main line of argument of the

First Treatise should, perhaps, help make one thing clear, but also, perhaps make another thing far from clear. It should add to our general understanding of why the *First Treatise* has such a splendid history of neglect—there just seems so little of interest there, neither in what Locke wrote nor in what he wrote against. And, it must be added in all fairness, the structure and argument stand out nowhere near as lucidly as in the above presentation. I would myself disagree, even disagree strongly, but I can easily see why Laslett claims the *First Treatise* to be a “cumbersome and uninviting 200 unreadable pages.”

What is made less than perfectly clear is why Locke chose to devote a book to the refutation of Filmer and furthermore why he chose to make that refutation, to all appearances, an inseparable part of the presentation of his own political philosophy. The question of why Filmer? is a question to which Locke devotes a good deal of attention in the early parts of the *First Treatise*. That attention is not simply helpful, however. Locke quite explicitly addresses our question, when he says in the “Preface”:

I should not speak so plainly of a Gentleman, long since past answering had not the Pulpit, of late years, publicly owned his Doctrine, and made it the current Divinity of the Times. . . . For I should not have Writ against Sir Robert, or taken the pains to show his mistakes, inconsistencies, and want of (what he so much boasts of, and pretends wholly to build on) Scripture proofs, were there not men amongst us, who, by crying up his Books, and espousing his Doctrine, save me from the Reproach of Writing against a dead adversary.

Filmer is a live political force in Locke's day; thus the reason for the turn to Filmer seems to be quite practical and immediate. The difficulty with this conclusion is that Locke affirmed nearly the very opposite only a few lines above in the “Preface.”

The King, and Body of the Nation, have since [the Revolution] so thoroughly confuted his [Filmer's] hypothesis that, I suppose no Body hereafter will have either the confidence to appear against our common safety, and be again an advocate for slavery; or the weakness to be deceived with contradictions dressed up in popular stile and well-turned Periods.

Chapter I carries forward this curious ambiguity regarding Filmer and the status of his doctrine. On the one hand, Filmer's treatise is so out of the way that Locke was at first tempted to take it “for such an exercise of wit, as was his who writ the Encomium of Nero, rather than for a serious Discourse meant in earnest.” On the other hand, however, it is not so out of the way but that “in this last age a generation of men has sprung up amongst us” who support Filmer's doctrine, a doctrine which is now “in fashion

amongst us” and one which is not even original with Filmer, but which he only “carried farthest and is supposed to have brought . . . to perfection” (*I Tr. 1,3,5*). What to make of Locke’s vacillation is difficult to say.

Locke raises further problems a bit later for the suggestion that the main reason for the turn to Filmer is practical and immediate:

Sir Robert Filmer’s great position is that ‘Men are not naturally free.’ This is the Foundation on which his absolute Monarchy stands. . . . But if this Foundation fails, all his Fabric falls with it, and Governments must be left again to the old way of being made by contrivance and the consent of Men making use of their Reason to unite together into Society. (*I Tr. 6*)

Here is a claim Locke repeats in a somewhat different form near the beginning of the *Second Treatise*: The point of the claim in both places is that if Filmer is refuted, then the Lockean consent doctrine stands vindicated, as if Locke and Filmer were *the* only alternatives. Putting it that way makes the critique of Filmer of fundamental and theoretical significance—quite a different matter from our first impression.

Yet, putting it that way doesn’t altogether make sense either. For one, it takes a *very* large swallow—the kind that could make a summer—to see Filmer as *the* alternative to Locke or anything else. For another thing, it seems an almost absurd suggestion that Locke’s consent-based government and Filmer’s patriarchal government are the alternatives—surely Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli and Hegel to name a few non-obscure philosophers—fall into neither the one nor the other camp. Moreover, Locke’s claim is in form strange at best. If not Filmer, then Locke. The attempt to establish one theory merely by refuting another just has logical difficulties.

The strangeness of it all is multiplied when we observe Locke, in the very same section, mocking Filmer for doing what he (Locke) appears to be doing himself:

He [Filmer] comes to fall on Bellarmine and, by a Victory over him, Establishes his Fatherly authority beyond any question. Bellarmine being routed the day is clear got, and there is no need of any Forces: For having done that, I observe not that he states the Question or rallies up any arguments to make good his Opinion.

This passage suggests the following ratio:

Filmer: Locke:: Bellarmine: Filmer

Filmer’s discussion of Bellarmine supplies us with interesting suggestions for understanding the ratio Locke sets up. Filmer as opposed to

Locke, is quite explicit in elucidating why and how Bellarmine is *the* alternative, and therefore why the refutation of Bellarmine plays such a prominent part in his thought. In Bellarmine's "passages," according to Filmer, "are comprised the strength of all that ever I have read or heard produced for the natural liberty of the subject." More than that—"that argument which is used by Bellarmine . . . is the one and only argument I can find produced by any author for the proof of the natural liberty of the people." That Bellarmine rather than say Aristotle, Grotius, or Hobbes (to all of whom Filmer devoted short books) is *the* alternative to his teaching Filmer goes to some lengths to explain: Bellarmine's argument has "all the strength" not only because he presents the "one and only argument," but because his is the only argument which begins from what Filmer considers the indispensable beginning point. Bellarmine's argument begins, as none of Filmer's other opponents do, with the Scriptural establishment of political power. Only after that crucial foundation is laid does Bellarmine go on to affirm natural liberty. As Filmer puts Bellarmine's argument: "That God hath given or ordained power, is evident by Scripture: but God hath given it to no particular man, because by nature all men are equal; . . . therefore he hath given power to the people or multitude." Locke's mockery of Filmer for making so much of confuting Bellarmine makes sense if and only if the grounds on which Filmer believes the confrontation takes place are in fact not true, i.e., if the Scriptural ordination of government is not the proper and indispensable beginning point. If that beginning point in Scripture is rejected, then the whole issue between Filmer and Bellarmine appears to be nothing but dogmatic bickering, which is, quite literally, ridiculous. Such a dispute certainly could not be decisive in any sense.

If this line of thought is correct, it suggests that Locke's mockery of Filmer for "falling on Bellarmine" and his imitation of Filmer by insisting that he and Filmer are the alternatives can be explained in the same way. It suggests that the issue between Locke and Filmer must be the anterior one of whether this Scriptural beginning point is justifiable or not. The suggestion is that the issue between Locke and Filmer and therefore the reason for and interest in the examination of Filmer at all, is the Biblical understanding of politics. At its strongest, the suggestion is that Filmer is a surrogate for the Bible, that Locke uses Filmer to get at the Bible itself.

This, in turn, makes sense of a feature of Locke's argument on which many have commented, but which few, apparently, have been able to understand. It has been observed more than once that Locke failed to do complete justice to Filmer's argument in that he did not even consider substantial portions of it. One recent admirer of Filmer, W. H. Greenleaf, argues that the core of Filmer's position is not Scriptural but a "philosophic" doctrine, and that "no analysis which ignores this philosophic dimension

and concentrates only on the historical or scriptural or the legal can be adequate to him." Since Locke does ignore this part of Filmer, Greenleaf concludes that Locke's "taunts have no basis or rational grounds at all." He believes in fact that Locke engaged in a "*deliberately* misleading polemic." J. N. Figgis, in his *The Divine Right of Kings*, similarly argues that Filmer's was "the ablest justification of the extreme royalist doctrine" precisely because he was the first to realize that the strictly Scriptural approach "was not the best method of establishing his position." In Filmer, according to Figgis, "the textual method of argument falls quite into the background before the prominence given to the conception that monarchy is founded in nature. It is the merit of Filmer to have seen, that a natural system of politics was more likely to prove well-founded than a purely theological scheme." In the face of the facts that these claims point at, Locke does something that is downright curious. Throughout the entire *First Treatise*, Locke is quite insistent that Filmer "pretends wholly to build on Scripture proofs"—a claim he repeats at least five times in scattered places throughout the *First Treatise*. Locke so insists even after (shortly after) he introduces Filmer's argument for fatherhood, an argument which we have already seen Locke characterize as "a Supposition of a *natural* right of dominion." Insofar as Locke concentrates on the Scriptural and ignores the other dimensions of Filmer's argument, he does so intentionally. Locke's sole concentration on the Biblically-related themes of Filmer's theory, and even more his insistence that that is *all* there is in Filmer, can be understood as an expression of Locke's interest in Filmer as a way to take up the Scriptures.

IV

If Locke's interest in Filmer's "Scripture proofs" is for the sake of the Scriptural proofs themselves and not of Filmer, then we should not be surprised, when we find that the structure of the *First Treatise* has little to do with Filmer. The fact is that the arguments Locke examines and "refutes" in Chapters 3–7 on Adam's title are hardly Filmer's arguments at all. This whole part of the *First Treatise* and especially Chapters 3–5, is based on a severe misrepresentation of Filmer—both in general and in detail—by Locke, a misrepresentation which Locke later reveals he knows to have been a misrepresentation. (*Beginning of I Tr. VI*). In Chapter 2, Locke sets off on a search for Filmer's "argument"—or his "proofs and reasons"—a search which leads him to two conclusions: that *Patriarcha* contains no proofs, unless it be the "half-reason" of "Honor thy Father" and Bellarmine's "confession," and that so far as Filmer uses any argu-

ments at all, they are summarized in a passage from his "Observations Concerning the Origins of Government Upon Mr. Hobbs Leviathan," from which place Locke takes the sentence which ostensibly guides him for the major part of the rest of the *First Treatise*. He quotes Filmer as follows:

If God created only Adam, and of a piece of him made the Woman, and if by Generation from these two, as parts of them, all Mankind be propagated: If also God gave to Adam not only the dominion over the woman and the children that should issue from them, but also over the whole Earth to subdue it; and over all the Creatures on it, so that as long as Adam lived, no man could claim or enjoy anything but by donation, assignation, or permission from him, I wonder, etc. (*I Tr. 14*)

Locke comments upon and restates the Filmer as follows:

Here we have the sum of all his arguments for Adam's sovereignty, and against Natural Freedom which I find up and down in his other Treatises; and they are these following; [a] God's creation of Adam, [b] the dominion he gave him over Eve: [c] and the dominion he had as Father over his children, all which I shall particularly consider. (*I Tr. 14*)

To a considerable extent the program Locke announces here corresponds to what follows in the *First Treatise*. Chapter 3, on the Creation of Adam, corresponds to [a]; Ch. V, on the Subjection of Eve following the Fall, corresponds to [b]; Chapter 5, on the fatherly dominion, corresponds to [c]. But Chapter 4, "Adam's Title to Sovereignty by Donation" and Chapter 7, "Of Fatherhood and Property considered Together as Fountains of Sovereignty" certainly surprise the reader who takes Locke's list as the program for what follows. Interestingly, especially for Locke, the chapters omitted in his programmatic statement are those explicitly devoted to the claims about property. Moreover, the omission of those topics is even more surprising because the quotation from Filmer contained a prominent reference to the donation of the world to Adam as his private property.

That, however, is not the only, nor even the most significant deviation from the quoted Filmer in Locke's restatement. Rather than the three, or later the four or five divisions of Locke's versions, the original Filmerean statement has two divisions only, separated, logically enough, by a colon: (1) "If God created *only* Adam, and of a piece of him, made the woman, and if by Generation from these two, *as parts of them*, all mankind be propagated," and (2) "If also God gave to Adam . . . the Dominion . . . over the whole Earth to subdue it, and over all the Creatures on it." That is, the Filmerean argument for the sovereignty of Adam and against the

natural freedom of mankind (strictly speaking in Filmer's own context—against the Hobbesian right of nature, the right of everyone to everything)—the Filmerean argument rests on (1) the fact that Adam is the source of all who came after him, and (2) on the donation to Adam of the world. Locke not only omits the second from his restatement, but puts the first in such a way that the connection, so intimate and even clear in Filmer's statement, between the creation of *only* Adam and the dominion he had over Eve and over his children, is not merely obscured but severed and destroyed. It is in this severed form that Locke examines Adam's "titles" one by one and thus absolutely and necessarily misses the point of what Filmer actually argued.

We will not be able to do so here, but it is possible to show that within each of those chapters that follows, what Locke addresses as a Filmerean argument, is not a Filmerean argument at all. To take just one brief example, Chapter 5, on Adam's dominion over Eve, begins with the claim:

The next place of Scripture we find our A. builds his monarchy of Adam on is 3 Genesis 16. 'And thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and he shall rule over thee. Here we have (says he) the original grant of government. (*I Tr. 44*)

But the context in Filmer makes clear that the author who finds this "the original grant of government" is not Filmer but Phillip Hunton, the author whose position Filmer is attempting to refute in the book in which this passage occurs. Filmer makes his own position perfectly clear a few pages later in the book when he denies the view of some that government is only a post-lapsarian institution:

Adam was King from his creation: and in the state of innocency he had been governor of his children; for the integrity or excellency of the subjects doth not take away the order or eminency of the governor. *Eve was* subject to Adam before she sinned; the angels who are of a pure nature, are subject to God: which confutes their saying who in disgrace of civil government or power say it was brought in by sin.

Since Filmer does not himself make the argument that the curse on Eve is "the original grant of government" then Locke's whole refutation of it is beside the point of any critique of Filmer.

What Locke's Chapter 5 is not besides the point of, however, is Locke's examination of Scriptures, for it is in that context that this chapter, as well as the other chapters inspired by the distortions of Filmer, makes sense. The beginning of wisdom about the *First Treatise* is a distrust bordering on disregard of the surface structure and surface argument of the

First Treatise. That means, of course, that we are in the presence of a book of perhaps far more intrinsic interest and importance than we had previously realized.

To focus the issue even a bit more: Taking seriously at least one thing from the place in Filmer whence Locke supposedly draws his program, we might say that *the* issue of the *First Treatise* is the Hobbesian right of nature—the right of everyone to everything by nature—against the *Scriptural* understanding. It turns out that this is not quite accurate either, for Locke indicates along the way that the Scriptural understanding is a variant of a broader moral and intellectual orientation which Locke himself does not name, but which we might call the pre-modern consciousness. So, in the *First Treatise* it is the right of nature against the pre-modern consciousness—or rather, it is Locke's attempt to establish the most fundamental thing in his political philosophy, over and against the grounds of opposition to it in all strands of pre-modern thought and life.

V

In this “introduction to the *First Treatise*” it is only possible to give a sketch of Locke's teaching on the Scriptures, and it is necessary to be more than a little assertive even in that abbreviated presentation. The first topic that arises is Locke's general view of the kind of thing Scripture is. Locke's “official” teaching—as contained in scattered places through both *Treatises* and concentrated in a few chapters towards the end of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*—is a variant of the position classically associated with Thomas Aquinas. Reason and revelation, Locke's official theory holds, are both legitimate ways to truth, and both having their origin in God, they cannot contradict each other. The true use and function of Scripture is not to correct or even guide reason, but to supply knowledge beyond what reason can supply. (esp. IV *ECHU* XVIII) The classical instance of knowledge which revelation, but not reason can so supply, is, according to Locke, knowledge of the immortality of the soul. Even when revelation, or alleged revelation provides knowledge beyond the ken of reason, there is a role for reason: it is to establish whether the revelation in question is genuinely a revelation or not. How, exactly, it is to do that, Locke does not say.

This “official theory of revelation” has many difficulties, but I can here only indicate what I think the major one to be: In order to verify any alleged revelation as a real revelation, reason must have rational knowledge of the existence of a revealing God. That knowledge would be an indispensable and minimum prerequisite to reason's verifying any revelation as authentic. But it is Locke's view that reason is not in possession of such

rational knowledge of the existence of a revealing God, and it is the burden of Locke's chapter on the existence of God in the *Essay* to show this. The rational proof, or rather argument for the existence of God which Locke seems to find strongest contains the following crucial step: There must exist an "eternal cogitative being for it is as impossible to conceive that ever bare incogitative matter should produce a thinking intelligent being, as that nothing of itself should produce matter." (IV *ECHU* X 10). That which cannot be conceived, cannot be. But a major strand of Locke's thought is the rejection of this mode of argumentation. As he says in his chapter on the existence of God: "it is an overvaluing ourselves to reduce all to the narrow measure of our capacities, and to conclude all things impossible to be done whose manner of doing is limited to what we can conceive of it. This is to make our comprehension infinite." (IV *ECHU* X 19). It not only makes our comprehension infinite: it is taking "the idea of anything in our mind" to prove "the existence of that thing"; that is, it commits the fundamental error that the "new way of ideas" opposes in that it takes our conceptions as the measure of things. (IV *ECHU* XI 1) Since Locke lacks rational knowledge of a revealing God, Locke knows of no authentic revelation, including of course the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The first answer, then, to our question of "what kind of thing Scripture is?"—the first answer is that it is surely not the kind of thing the believing Christians of Locke's day took it to be.

Locke, then, seems to share the views of such contemporaries of his as Spinoza and Hobbes. And, although the Biblical text as text is hardly a theme of his as it is of theirs, yet he does in various places in the *Two Treatises* indicate his agreement with them on such matters as the composite, edited character of the texts, and the large gap in time between the texts and the events the texts relate. Such textual criticism is not, I repeat, a major theme of the *Treatises* but it is there in its own quiet way.

More prominent in the *First Treatise* is Locke's attempt to develop what we might call a theory of revelation. Revelation, according to Locke, is not a divine, but a human thing. In common with other intellectual structures, it is a certain kind of human construct or interpretation, or better yet a way of experiencing human existence. It is surely not, we have seen, a true way,—but it is one that has great dignity, sublimity, subtlety, and strength. The Bible in fact depicts the fundamentals of the human experience far better and to a far higher degree than any other pre-modern awareness—but it interprets or expresses them wrongly. It interprets them wrongly, or experiences existence incorrectly because it interprets them "naively," that is pre-critically, or without benefit of the Cartesian-Lockean "new way of ideas." The fundamental error of pre-Cartesian thought is its failure to understand that what we know, what we have, are words and

ideas rather than immediate awareness of things. The Cartesian insight, which Locke follows scrupulously, is into the extremely problematical character of the connection between words, ideas and things. The upshot of that insight are scientific method and epistemology, ways of replacing naive natural constructs with self-conscious and rational constructs. Locke approaches the Scriptural "constructs" with exactly the same epistemological tools as he does any kind of construct—he "reduces" these to the basic experience, or experiences, data, on which they are based and "rectifies" them so far as they go beyond what epistemology warrants.

The Scriptural understanding is unique and ultimately "truer" or more valuable than other pre-critical modes of awareness because it, as opposed to those others, understands and has assimilated human freedom. Again, it is Locke's view that the Bible misunderstands freedom in quite important ways, but it alone sees man's differentia in terms of freedom, an insight which Locke believes to be correct. In fact, it is out of their awareness of human freedom, Locke suggests, that the Hebrews construct their marvelous notion of the freely creating God; and it is out of their "awareness" of the freely creating God that the Hebrews came to express their fundamental awareness of the world as revelation, rather than as poetry, myth or philosophy. The free God, who is the source and ground of reality, is an *active* and *revealing* God.

There is a natural connection between the themes of the theory of revelation in general, and the specific Scriptural notions Locke explicates. With this topic we also move closer to the strictly political side of Locke's teaching in the *First Treatise*. Locke's mode of explication of Scriptures, as has already been suggested, can hardly be called "theology." It is rather an attempt to identify the fundamentals of the Biblical view in terms of the basic experiences on which those rest and to which they point. In the *First Treatise* Locke identifies three such fundamentals: creation, donation, and fall, of which the most important is creation. Let me describe briefly the first two of these Biblical doctrines as Locke brings them to light; present, again briefly, Locke's "reduction" of each; and conclude with a somewhat general discussion of the nature of the core disagreement between Locke and the Scriptures.

According to the Biblical doctrine of creation, man lives in a world created by an intelligent and benevolent God. That has at least two implications: the created world is, in some significant sense an order, embodying the intelligence of its Maker; secondly, everything in the world is creature, i.e., subordinate to the maker. The way in which the created beings express their creatureliness is through obedience to the creator. In the case of most of the created beings, that obedience takes the form of following the course, or the ways, the creating God set for them. One of the beings, man, is a

partial exception to this, however. Rather than being created with fixed ways, man is created “after the image” of the free, creating God. But, it must be added hastily, man is, for all that, still a creature, and as such his proper stance is still obedience. The difference between man and the other beings is that man is to obey freely, out of his own self-determination to obey. Biblical man though free, can affirm his freedom only so far as to obey. Man’s freedom cannot fully come into its own therefore. One easy indication of the difference between Locke and the Bible appears at this point: Whereas the Biblical God enjoins on man freedom to obey, the Lockean substitute for God—the “wise and god-like prince”—ordains simply “laws of liberty” (*II Tr.* 42). So long as man understands himself as creature, however, he will not ordain such “laws of liberty.”

The Scriptural doctrine of donation follows easily from the doctrine of creation. It also is two-sided. According to the doctrine of donation, man possesses the world as donee, and as warden. The world is indeed man’s world, made fit for him, supporting him, given over to him. Man is at home in the world. On the other hand, however, Biblical man’s possession of the world, Locke emphasizes, is not a real ownership; it is indeed, a “narrow and scanty thing.” Man is far more in the position of the shepherd tending the flocks of another, for the world is God’s and man’s title to it is by no means one of right, but only one of gift and of sufferance by the creating God (who is, by the way, the exemplar *par excellence* of the one who owns what he makes, of the labor theory of property). Man’s proper stance toward the world is one of restraint, gratitude, and trust. A Psalm that Locke likes to quote captures the double sense of the donation theme: (Ps. 8)

What is man that thou art mindful of him?
 Thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels,
 Thou madest him to have Dominion over the works of *Thy* hands
 Thou hast put all things under his feet,
 all sheep and oxen and the Beasts of the Field
 and the fowls of the air, and Fish of the Sea, and
 Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the Sea.

Again, the distance between Locke and the Biblical understanding shows up easily and clearly here: “the great art of government” which the wise and god-like prince is to possess, aims at “the increase of lands and the right imploying of them,” or more generally, aims at “increase.” In contrast to that, the Hebrews had a system of property laws, including the Jubilee Laws, aimed at restraining the forces that lead to “increase” in the name of the donation of the world to the children of man. Only if man under-

stands his title to the world in a way different from the Bible can he exploit that title to the full. Just as the Bible understands man to be free, but free in such a way that he cannot come fully into his freedom, so it understands man to be an owner but in such a way as not to possess clear title. Locke's intention is to emancipate man from the restraints on his freedom and on his ability to appropriate the world for his own.

To elucidate either Locke's account or critique of these Biblical doctrines adequately is beyond what I can do in this introduction. But some indications can be supplied. One might say that the thing common to both "doctrines" is their expression of the view that man lives in a provided world, a world with providence, that man's existence is endowed from outside himself. This is the fundamental belief of the pre-critical consciousness, and the Biblical doctrines of the creation and the donation are the particular way the people who know of freedom and thus of the creating God express that view of the provided world. That pre-critical man experiences the world as a provided world—and posits a structure to account for the providedness—is, according to Locke, eminently natural. For the world does present itself to man as provided. It does so at least in two senses—the physical and the mental. In the *Two Treatises* the emphasis is on the physical. The world does present itself as a place fit for man, supportive of man—although a place only more or less fit or supportive, it is true. There are, Locke points out, both cattle, parts of nature which serve man and are useful to him, and lions, parts of nature which are hostile and dangerous to him. The theme of the mental providedness of the world is more one for the third book of Locke's *Essay*, the analysis of language. True to Locke's epistemological orientation, the consciousness of the world as provided for man's mind is probably the more important of the two. Man believes the world is "provided" (and thus in some form of provider—God or gods, or nature) because it is a world he seems to have an ingress to, a natural grasp of, through his intellect. The world is a provided world, because man grasps it as an organized and given structure of meaning, the source of which meaning seems to be out in the world or in nature. Language plays a crucial role in fostering this awareness, for language, as an inter-subjective and relatively stable mode of organizing man's ideational life, leads men to believe that their ideas are "objective," i.e., reflect the world as it is, as an intelligible and therefore fundamentally anthropomorphic cosmos.

Locke's response to both aspects of providedness is essentially the same: Nature supplies only the almost worthless materials; everything of real value is either the product of chance or man's own effort to make value. Not God or nature provides, but culture. The real foundation is not the given or the provided, but rather need. The fundamental fact is human need, or human mortality. Even accepting the world as a provided world.

Locke argues, shows that providedness in the service of, or subordinate to, man's needfulness. If men were not needy, i.e., ultimately, if man were not mortal, men would not need a provided world. Put somewhat differently: A truly provided life for man would be an immortal life, lived in immediate and infallible intellection. Only if man were God would there be a God.

In the last analysis to the "natural reasons" for man's positing the provided world and its provider is added another reason: Out of their desire for preservation men desire and thus posit a world conducive to that preservation, a world in which they have a place.

Locke's own teaching intends to reverse this almost altogether. So long as men fail to take their bearings by their need, so long as men fail to find their title to their freedom and the world in themselves, they will live in a less than provided world, for providedness is no gift but the result of human labor, broadly conceived.