

LOCKE AND THE BAPTISTS;  
PARALLELS IN ECCLESIOLOGY AND LIBERTY

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## LOCKE AND THE BAPTISTS; PARALLELS IN ECCLESIOLOGY AND LIBERTY

It has been noted recently by Conrad Henry Moehlman, in his article “The Baptists Revise John Locke,” that Baptists have been guilty of wrongly contributing to John Locke a quote that describes Baptists as the ‘first and only propounders of absolute liberty’.<sup>1</sup> The quote is originally cited by Underhill, who claimed that

Baptists became the first and only propounders of “absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty.” For this they suffered and died. They proclaimed it by their deeds, they propagated it in their writings. In almost every country of Europe, amid tempests of wrath, stirred up by their faith, and their manly adherence to truth, they were the indefatigable, consistent primal apostles of liberty in this latter age.<sup>2</sup>

Moehlman noted that Underhill was rightfully quoting Locke where he stated “absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty,” however Moehlman clarifies that Locke was hardly describing Baptists. Although Locke was simply describing the importance of liberty, and Underhill quoted him in such a manner as to give the illusion Locke described Baptists, it may be said that Underhill wasn’t exactly far off. Although Moehlman notes in his article that Locke didn’t hold Baptists in high regard, the quote does seem to rightly describe them. Perhaps Locke’s disdain is misplaced, and perhaps Underhill’s usage of Locke’s emphasis on liberty as a hallmark to Baptist distinctives ad history is fitting. This paper will examine the similarities between Locke and Baptists regarding the area of ecclesiology and liberty, as well as examine whether there exists any direct or indirect influence between the two. It will then conclude by

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<sup>1</sup> Moehlman, Conrad H. “The Baptists Revise John Locke.” In *The Journal of Religion*, 18, no. 2, April 1938: p. 174-82.

<sup>2</sup> Underhill, Edward. “Locke on Toleration” p. 31, 4<sup>th</sup> edition in *Struggles and Triumphs*.

affirming Underhill's suggestion that Baptists rightly portray the Lockean ideal of liberty in the domain of religious freedom by providing evidence of a shared parallel of ideas.

### **Locke's Basic Ideas**

Before examining details regarding Locke and Baptists on the issues of ecclesiology and liberty, it is profitable to examine the basics of Lockean thought. First among these ideas to be examined is Locke's perspective on the subject of human nature. As revealed in Genesis, man exists in relation to a creator, thus establishing that humans

are his property whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for our's.<sup>3</sup>

As his property, God asserts dominion over life and death. With this premise of relation established, Locke then asserts that man has a divine purpose hinted in the creation: to survive as individuals. With the Creator/creature relation established, and the divine purpose acknowledged, man contains natural rights of existence corresponding to his survivability (life, liberty, property and health). As such, in the state of nature, man lives pursuing this survivability. When another crosses the boundaries of this law, and threatens his natural rights, which so threaten his survivability, the state between these men changes to a state of war, whereas innocent life may be protected from the trespasser. In this state, the various individuals are responsible as both judge and executioner. However, sometimes men are apt to judge harshly, and punish unjustly, and as such it is in the interest of men to join into a social contract. As Curtis explains, "the social contract was made for safe and peaceful living, and secure enjoyment

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<sup>3</sup> Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, in *Works*, eleventh edition, 1812: II.6.

of property. It was a contract made among equals to create a society, and then between the society created and the ruler.”<sup>4</sup> As Nelson Brian notes, this created state consists of two separate stages.

The first stage is the social contract that forms society; the second stage is the political ‘contract’ that creates a common authority. The social contract, Locke argues, requires the unanimous consent of every party to the contract. The political ‘contract’ to form a government requires only a majority decision, and the subsequent actions of government are legitimate, says Locke, so long as they are based on the will of the majority.<sup>5</sup>

As such, the product of the social contract is a society living within a government, and "is not to be confused with society...[for government] exists merely as an agent and trustee of society, not as its overseer and master as Hobbes would have it.”<sup>6</sup>

With this treatment of the Second Treatise, several things stand out for the topic of this paper. First is that God is Creator over man, and as such claims property over his creation. Second is that man exists first in a state of nature, whose law is reason, and whose reason is fixed on the natural rights of man as they pertain to his survivability. Third is that man may be drawn into a contract with one another, whereas he submits certain liberties to preserve the whole. Fourth is that consent arises in Locke's theory as the basis of political power. Fifth is that this consent produces a government which accepts the given acts of execution and legislation in trade for security. Locke treats other subjects in his works, such as justification for rebellion, the issue of slavery, and the importance of property. However, for the moment these highlighted themes will suffice.

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<sup>4</sup> Curtis, Michael. *The Great Political Theories*. Volume 1. HarperCollins, New York, 1981: 360.

<sup>5</sup> Nelson, Brian. *Western Political Thought From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*. Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1996: 200

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 200

### Locke and Baptists on Ecclesiology

With Locke's ideas on the Social Contract roughly examined, the question to be asked is how do Lockean ideas on church and state relate to Baptist distinctives? To examine these potential parallels, two categories will be explored. The first of these categories will be Locke and Baptists on Ecclesiology. Specifically, Locke and Baptists seem to share similar views on what constitutes a church, what details entail membership, and what role covenanting/contracting have in the formation of churches.

The first of these potential parallels to be explored relates to how both Locke and Baptists define a church. As Mark Dever explains in *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*,

According to the New Testament, the church is primarily a body of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God's grace alone, for His glory alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone . . . [it is a] collection of people committed to Christ in a local area constitute a church.<sup>7</sup>

For Baptists, a church is centered on Christians who voluntarily come together to worship and work. This Baptist distinctive of congregationalism is noted in Locke as well, where he defines a church a "a *voluntary* society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls."<sup>8</sup> Both Baptists and Locke seem to place an emphasis in their definitions and distinctions on churches being institutions drawn together by the willful joining of free men.

Continuing the Baptist and Lockean emphasis of membership and association as voluntary, Locke excludes the idea that church membership may be attained by being 'born' into

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<sup>7</sup> Dever, Mark. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Crossway Books, 2004: p. 135

<sup>8</sup> Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works*, VI, 13.

a church. This position can be found in Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, where he states that "Nobody is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children."<sup>9</sup> For Locke, the importance is that faith and "inward sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance with God."<sup>10</sup> Both the ideas of voluntary association, and the evidence of inward faith and sincerity, seem to match up quite well with the Baptist distinctive of congregationalism and regenerative church membership. For both Locke and Baptists, becoming a member echoed the requirements associated with becoming a church: individuals of sincere faith must voluntarily come together to associate as a church. However what further details may be drawn towards this voluntary congregationalism?

Perhaps best known and earlier emphasized in Lockean political thought is the idea that society forms as the product of a social contract. Having desired to procure the safety of their natural rights, individuals move from the self-governance and insecurities of the State of Nature to a social contract consisting of the voluntary contracting. These individuals give up various rights such as executing and judging crimes committed against the Laws of Nature, in favor of a government who will act as a trustee of various powers. Locke explains that this commonwealth is "to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests [life, liberty, health, etc]."<sup>11</sup> In Locke's social contract we find a similarity with the Baptist notion of churches as covenantal. It has already been paralleled that both Locke and Baptists emphasize the elements of freedom and voluntarism in church ecclesiology, however

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 13

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 28

<sup>11</sup> Locke, John. *Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works*, eleventh edition, 1812: VI 10

Locke's Social Contract seems to provide an additional tool of analysis to answer the question 'What makes a church'? The answer is found echoed in his thesis of what makes a society and government? For Locke, a society is created the moment individuals give up their liberties by contracting amongst themselves for the given purpose of promoting and preserving their individual liberties. This is familiar to the Baptist notion of members covenanting, whereas a church is born when members gather and pledge a covenant between themselves and God. As society is born once individuals contract themselves, so is a church born the moment believers perform a spiritual equivalence in the form of social covenanting.

Furthermore, the two share the similarity of giving up rights to preserve and promote others. For Locke, these include the inalienable natural rights of life, liberty, and property. In addition, constituted individuals give up their right to be governed and disciplined by the contracted government. This is commonly detailed, as in the American experiment, in a form of a written Constitution, whereas both the boundaries and duties of various governmental branches are set. All this seems additionally similar to Baptist polity. When believers come together and covenant amongst themselves and God, a church is formed. Common to the practice of this social covenanting, members will most always proceed to the drafting of a church Constitution and Bylaws. Within this drafted ecclesiological document is set the various powers and jurisdictions of ministries and processes. The political constitution sets boundaries and powers as the byproduct of social contracting, and the Baptist covenantal constitution serve a paralleled ecclesiological function. Both involve in their primary step a covenanting and contracting, and both seem to codify the purpose and limits of the covenanted and constituted products.

In addition, the issue of Locke's Social Contract and Baptists Social Covenant share the fore-mentioned offering up of rights and submission to authority. For Locke, individuals give up

their legislative and executive rights found in the State of Nature and place them in the trustee of the government. As a product, they give legitimacy to be disciplined and directed by the constituted government in the interest of preserving the essential natural liberties. Baptist believers also voluntarily give up certain rights. Whereas Locke's socially contracted state places an authority in the form of a government, Baptist polity covenants members into a church where an authority over the member is also established. Although Baptists are adamantly democratic in their polity, covenanted individuals give up their rights to self-discipline and direction as well. For individuals who have entered into the church community, the church body is rightfully entrusted with the authority to spiritually discipline its members. Whereas Locke's Social Contract involves individuals giving up rights to secure ones considered greater (natural rights), individuals in Baptist churches give up their right of self-discipline in their interest of their spiritual health. For both Locke and Baptists, an important element of what constitutes a church and a government is that individuals procure the safety of greater rights (physical and spiritual liberty), by placing the powers of governing in a trustee (State and Church), and by submitting themselves to their authority.

Thus far, the elements of Lockean and Baptist ecclesiology have had some considerable similarities. To summarize these, it was noted that both share definitions of churches being *voluntary* communities of sincere believers. Besides similarities in definitions of what makes a church, and what makes its members, Locke and Baptists shared similarities in how these churches are formed. Here was founded the similarities between Locke's Social Contract and Baptists' Social Covenant. The details of this process were further established and linked by the shared elements rooting both processes. For both Locke and Baptists, individuals constituting and covenanting into governments and churches freely offer up certain governmental liberties to

procure the safety of others considered more important. The duties and domains are seen in the drafting of governmental and ecclesiological Constitutions. In addition, both Locke and Baptists justify within their contracts and covenants the legitimacy and authority of governments and churches to discipline their members. For these reasons of similarity in the process, form, and function of governments in Locke's political theory and Baptist polity, it is safe to include that there exists a level of similarity between the two in the domain of ecclesiology.

### **Locke and Baptists on Liberty**

Although the similarities noted between Locke and Baptists in the issue of ecclesiology are impressive, the two are most noticeably close on their emphasis of liberty and religious freedom. On the issue of religious liberty, several individuals influenced Locke on the matter, and we find both literary influences in the lives of Herbert of Cherbury and Erasmus, as well as in his life experiences. Locke's ideas of religious liberty and toleration arose in a time where he "no sooner perceived myself in the world but I found myself in a storm," regarding the 1688 chaos in England over Revolution, and the exilic period in Holland where Locke experienced the Calvinist state, the Remonstrant Arminians, and the influx of French protestant refugees. Concerning religious liberty, Locke wrote "neither pagan, nor mahometan, nor jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth, because of his religion. The gospel commands no such thing."<sup>12</sup> Here is seen hinted Locke's church and state division, as well as how the two intertwine (insinuated by the justification of religious liberty in the state on grounds

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* VI.52

found in the Gospel). As does the rejection of the innateness of idea, man's liberty and the need for religious toleration shapes Locke's views on Church and State.

On the issue of liberty, Baptists are well noted to consider it a chief concern. As George Truett explains in *Baptists and Religious Liberty*,

Baptists have one consistent record concerning liberty throughout all their long and eventful history. They have never been a party to oppression of conscience. They have forever been the unwavering champions of liberty, both religious and civil. Their contention now, is, and has been, and, please God, must ever be, that it is the natural and fundamental and indefeasible right of every human being to worship God or not, according to the dictates of his conscience, and, as long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others, he is to be held accountable alone to God for all religious beliefs and practices . . . It is the consistent and insistent contention of our Baptist people, always and everywhere, that religion must be forever voluntary and uncoerced, and that it is not the prerogative of any power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to compel men to conform to any religious creed or form of worship, or to pay taxes for the support of a religious organization to which they do not believe.<sup>13</sup>

Both Locke and Baptists clearly place a primal degree of importance on the issue of the liberty of men to practice their convictions. As expected, the emphasis of liberty finds its fruition in both of their ideas relating to the roles of Church and State. As Locke explains in his first *Letter Concerning Toleration*, a church is ““a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth. The boundaries on both sides are fixed and immovable”<sup>14</sup> This is quite similar to the Baptist understand, which Nigel Wright details in *Free Church, Free State*, where he states that the

Church and ‘state’ are radically different in that one is dependent upon spiritual persuasion and influence, the other upon its power to force and coerce. It is essential to maintain this distinction and to do so resolutely. Once the state clothes itself with religious and theological language it risks making itself an idol, a matter of ultimate significance to which obedience is due as if it were divine. . . .

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<sup>13</sup> Truett, George. “Baptists and Religious Liberty.”  
< [http://www.biblebelievers.com/truett\\_baptist\\_religious.html](http://www.biblebelievers.com/truett_baptist_religious.html)>

<sup>14</sup> Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works*, VI, pp. 13 21

Conversely, once the church takes to itself or becomes involved in the state's power to coerce it betrays its essential nature and mission.<sup>15</sup>

The limits and domains of both State and Church seem directly shared by both John Locke's political theory and the Baptist emphasis on the separation of Church and State.

In addition to similar convictions of the separation between Church and State, Locke shares several additional details with Baptists. First among these is a rejection of religious establishments. As noted in the American experience, Baptists have had a strong tradition rejecting the establishment of certain churches by governments. In his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke seemed to share these frustrations, claiming that religious establishments held various difficulties. One among these is an aptness for institutions to become corrupted by being state establishments. Locke points to the example of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. Of the establishment clergy he reminds his readers "how easily and smoothly the clergy changed their decrees, their articles of faith, their form of worship, every thing, according to the inclination of those kings and queens."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the weakness of establishment churches falling under the influence of the political powers, Locke seems to question the legitimacy of passing and enforcing laws of an ecclesiastical nature. Although Israel had several laws focused specifically on the issue of practice and worship, Locke reminds his readers "the laws established [in Israel] concerning the worship of One Invisible Deity were the civil laws of that people and a part of their political government, in which God Himself was the legislator."<sup>17</sup> Since no establishment church can

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<sup>15</sup> Wright, Nigel G. *Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision*. Authentic, 2006: p. xxii

<sup>16</sup> Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works*, VI, p. 27-8

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 43

claim God as the source of legislation, such a fusion seems unwarranted. Besides rejecting the legitimacy of passing laws of religious practice, Locke also rejects the legitimacy of enforcing such laws. This is found in the various letters written back and forth with Proast, who argued that the magistrate had a right to utilize force to conform religious practice.<sup>18</sup> Sell summarizes Locke's position on the issue, stating that "morally, then, Locke is anti-force in the matter of religious allegiance . . . he denies that the magistrate can know that his religion is the true one, for none of us can have such knowledge."<sup>19</sup> Rather, Locke prefers that religion consist "in the inward and full persuasion of the mind," and that utilizing force to conform religious practice or bring about conversion is futile, for "faith is not faith without believing."<sup>20</sup>

### **Direct Influence: Isaac Backus**

Having examined Locke's similarities with Baptists in the issues of ecclesiology and liberty, another question is left standing. Besides paralleled similarities in thought, has Locke had any direct influence on major Baptist figures? In an answer is found the Baptist Isaac Backus, whose influence on the Baptist distinctives of religious tolerance and liberty and quite notable. As Sell acknowledges, "towards the end of the eighteenth century Locke was still being invoked on the nature of the Church as a voluntary covenanted body is clear from the writings of the

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<sup>18</sup> Proast wrote *The Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration Briefly Consider'd and Answer'd* (1690). Locke responded with *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration*. Proast responded with *Third Letter Concerning Toleration* (1691). Locke responded with *Third Letter for Toleration* (1692). Proast responded with *A Second Letter to the Author of the Three Letters for Toleration* (1704), and Locke responded again with *Fourth Letter* (published after his death in 1706).

<sup>19</sup> Sell, Alan. *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1997: pp. 180-181

<sup>20</sup> Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works*, VI, p. 11

American Baptist Isaac Backus. He supports his view that the Church is a voluntary society of believers by quoting from Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*.<sup>21</sup>

Isaac Backus was born in Connecticut, in 1724, and was a conversion from the Great Awakening preaching of Eleazer Wheelock. After pastoring a church in Middleborough Massachusetts for about a decade, Backus later became pastor of Middleborough First Baptist Church.<sup>22</sup> According to William G. McLoughlin, Backus "was the most forceful and effective writer America produced on behalf of the pietistic or evangelical theory of separation of church and state."<sup>23</sup> Backus's main contributions to American thought and development consist of two ideas: that religion was between individuals and God, and that "the Baptist church, and the religious sphere generally, as outside the jurisdiction of civil magistracy."<sup>24</sup> Similar to Locke's voluntary church, Backus explained that "no person can be brought into [a church covenant] without his own consent," nor can the church covenant be used to "bind any person or community to act any thing contrary to the revealed word of God, nor ever exempt any from their obligation to act agreeably thereto with their hearts."<sup>25</sup>

In 1773, Backus presented *An Appeal to the Public*, in which we find the themes of charter and divine rights. Backus is a clear example of direct Calvinist influence, and we note

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<sup>21</sup> Sell, Alan. *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*: p. 178

<sup>22</sup> Sandoz, Ellis. *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*. Indianapolis: LibertyPress, 1991: 11.

<sup>23</sup> McLoughlin, William. *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism: Pamphlets, 1754-1789*. Cambridge, 1968: 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ellis Sandoz. *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*: 11.

<sup>25</sup> Backus, Isaac. *A History of New England*, Newton, Mass: Backus Historical Society, 2nd ed, 1871, II, 304

within his work a caution regarding the total depravity of man and Lockean natural rights.<sup>26</sup> Given his Baptist identity, there is much in the work regarding problems between the State and Church, specifically in the realm of religious freedom from established religion.<sup>27</sup> Such a respect of the two powers, within their spheres of authority, are noted where he states, "All acts of executive power in the civil state, are to be performed in the name of the king or state they belong to; while all our religious acts are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus; and so are to be performed heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men."<sup>28</sup>

Similar to a modern day lobbyist, Backus petitioned delegates of the First Continental Congress in 1774 on behalf of the Warren Association. At the time Baptists had to attain a license to preach, which lead to several receiving imprisonment in the colonies, which still consisted of established state churches. Along with Leland, Backus contributed heavily to the issue of religious liberty, and later served "as a delegate from Middleborough to the Massachusetts convention that ratified the federal Constitution in 1788."<sup>29</sup> Continuing his zeal for evangelism, Backus also actively participated in the Second Awakening along the frontier, and spent his final days promoting revival in New England.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 11. An example of the influence of total depravity in his sermon: "Yet all this did not remove the dreadful distemper from man's nature, for the great Ruler of the universe directly after the flood, gave this as one reason why he would not bring such another while the earth remains, namely, For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 11. On religious liberty: "Whereas in ecclesiastical affairs we are most solemnly warned not to be subject to ordinances, after the doctrines and commandments of men. Col. 2, 20, 22. And it is evident that he who is the only worthy object of worship, has always claimed it as his sole prerogative, to determine by express laws, what his worship shall be, who shall minister in it, and how they shall be supported."

<sup>28</sup> Ellis Sandoz, quoting Isaac Backus. "An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty." *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730-1805*: Vol. 1 Chapter: 11: Isaac Backus. Indianapolis: LibertyPress, 1991

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 11

### Parallel Influence: The American Experiment and Religious Liberty

Although a direct influence is found with Backus and his writings, it is interesting to note an additional parallel found within Locke. It has already been noted that Baptists and Locke share various similarities in their doctrines on ecclesiology and liberty, which was also found in the person of Backus, however they also seem a role in influencing the work of Jefferson. Locke's direct influence on Thomas Jefferson is noted and enormous. Jefferson considered him to be one of the "three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception."<sup>30</sup> Evidence of Locke's influence on Jefferson is further evident in his usage of Locke's inalienable writes, which Jefferson quotes in the Declaration as 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' Mitchell summarizes Locke's influence on Jefferson by stating that

Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution have deep roots in the writings of John Locke. Locke related natural rights to natural law. He also based the right of religious liberty on natural law. Consequently, if we are to gain a fuller understanding of what is meant by the First Amendment, we need to understand natural law as it is expressed by John Locke."<sup>31</sup>

Although Locke's influence on Jefferson is well noted in scholarship, little is made on the contributions of Baptists. Whereas Locke directly contributed to the American experiment of government through the writing and thought of Jefferson's Declaration and Constitution, Baptists have also contributed through Jefferson and the First Amendment. This is seen in the role Baptists played in petitioning in favor of an amendment to prevent the establishment of a

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<sup>30</sup> Jefferson, Thomas. *Thomas Jefferson to John Trumbull (1756-1843)*. Library of Congress, < <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm033.html> >. "Bacon, Locke and Newton, whose pictures I will trouble you to have copied for me: and as I consider them as the three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception, and as having laid the foundation of those superstructures which have been raised in the Physical & Moral sciences." Also note the blasphemous affection displaced by Jefferson's hand-drawing equating the three to a trinity. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm033.html>

<sup>31</sup> White, Thomas. *First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty*. Baker and Holman, Nashville, 2007: pp. 121-122

national church. The various Baptist ministers of Danbury wrote to Jefferson to complain about the established church in Connecticut. Out of the thirteen states, nine supported established churches with tax money. In addition, such churches discriminated against Baptists. An example of this were the 500+ Baptist preachers who were jailed in Virginia for “disturbing the peace”. In other words, they were preaching God’s Word without licenses from the state. In fine Baptist tradition, they responded with appeals towards religious liberty. John Leland is a figure worth pointing to. An important Baptist preacher and evangelist, Leland had initially planned to campaign against the ratification of the Constitution out of fear that the above-mentioned experiences would be expanded at a federal level. Given his influence, this spelled trouble for the ratification, since Baptists held significant political sway within Virginia, North Carolina, and other such states. Leland and those Baptists could hardly be blamed, given their earlier experiences at the state level. Due to the impact such opposition could have, James Madison met with Leland, and the two came to an agreement. Leland would remove his opposition in exchange for a protection as given in the First Amendment. The result produced an amendment preserving religious liberty, which Jefferson called “the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It has been fairly demonstrated that a healthy parallel exists between Locke and Baptists in the area of what defines and details a church, as well as the liberties and freedoms to accompany it. Having explored these similarities, and examined their shared rejections, Isaac

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<sup>32</sup> Carter, Stephen L. *The Culture of Disbelief*. Anchor Books, New York, 1993: p. 106. Quoting Jefferson's "Freedom of Religion at the University of Virginia"

Backus was presented as a Baptist who was directly influenced by the writings and thinking of Locke in matters of church ecclesiology and religious freedom. In addition, the similarities between Locke and Baptists were further evidenced in a paralleled similarity of influence upon the American Founders. Specifically in the role Locke played in directly influencing Jefferson, and the role the Danbury Baptists and Leland played in influencing Jefferson and Madison, it is noted that both Locke and Baptists seem to share some similarities destinations regarding their influence and emphasis. Surely Locke's writings on religious liberty influenced Jefferson, who considered Locke one of the greatest who ever lived. In addition, it was noted that the Danbury Baptists and Leland directly contributed to the Constitution's First Amendment and the American concept of religious freedom through their lobbying of Jefferson and Madison. This shared link in influence only furthers the evidence of positive corresponding similarities of thought between Baptists and Locke by providing not only the evidence of Baptists such as Backus who were directly influenced by Locke, but also providing evidence that the two shared areas of influence in similar topics and similar persons. Both, although through their different channels, paralleled the focus of religious liberty, which ultimately found a shared link in the person of Jefferson and the birth of America. For these various reasons, perhaps Locke would be wise to re-evaluate his attitude on Baptists, and perhaps Baptists would be wise to re-visit and re-examine the Lockean ideas that so closely mirror Baptist distinctives. Regardless, Underhill's quoting of Locke doesn't seem that far off. Perhaps with this evidence established, Locke may agree with Underhill that Baptists surely seem like the propounders of 'absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty.'

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