English Deism and Natural Law: The Case of Matthew Tindal

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to explore the problem of the nature of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century movement known as English deism. To do so, it takes the case of one of the English deists, Matthew Tindal. Following a detailed examination of a variety of primary and secondary sources, the study draws the following conclusions: that Tindal was not a political nor a social radical but rather a supporter of the post-Glorius Revolution political establishment; that he was not part of a movement of covert atheists but that he did launch a veiled attack on Christianity; that in his chief work, Christianity As Old As the Creation, he uses natural law as one of the cornerstones of his critique of Christianity and hence that the tradition of natural law should be considered as a factor in the intellectual origins of English deism. This study also examines the relation of John Locke to both this movement and Tindal in particular.

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DEDICATION

To my parents

ABBREVIATIONS

BB — Biographia Britannica, 7 vols. (London, 1747-1766; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969-1973).

COC — Matthew Tindal, Christianity As Old As the Creation; or, the Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature (London, 1730; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1978).

DNB — Dictionary of National Biography, 22 vols., eds. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (London, 1917; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

EEB — Early English Books, 1641-1700: A Microfilm Collection of Selected Works from Donald Wing's Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641-1700 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1960-).

EC — The Eighteenth Century: A Microfilm Collection Based on the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1984-).

EHU — John Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

EOSP — Matthew Tindal, An Essay concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the Duty of Subjects in All Revolutions, with Some Considerations Touching the Present Juncture of Affairs (London, 1694; EEB, Reel 337, No. 6, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1974).

EPM — Matthew Tindal, An Essay concerning the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion. With Some Reasons in Particular for the Dissenters Not Being Obliged to Take the Sacramental Test but in Their Own Churches; and for a General Naturalization. Together with a Postscript in Answer to the Letter to a Convocation-Man (London, 1697; EEB, Reel 518, No. 9, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1976).

LWP Hugo Grotius, The Law of War and Peace, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1925).

RC John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, The Works of John Locke, 10 vols. (London, 1823; reprint, Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1963), vol. 7, pp. 1-158.

TT John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW OF ENGLISH DEISM

In his article "Socinians, John Toland and the Anglican Rationalists", Gerald Reedy writes: "Since deism is such a various entity -- if it is one entity at all -- I will take only one deist work, Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious (1696), and relate it to the theological matrix of the 1690s."[1] Herein lies one of the chief difficulties in addressing the subject of English deism. How can one write about a movement that is so diverse that it appears to defy definition?[2] Any attempt at forming a general statement regarding the nature of English deism is easily thwarted by pointing to an exception to almost every proposed generalization. A review of the historiography of English deism reveals disagreements about its origin, its definition, the content of its beliefs and its goals.

Traditionally, the deist controversy is said to have begun with John Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious (1696) and to have more or less ended by the mid-eighteenth century with Conyers Middleton's Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers of the Christian Church (1748).[3] It can be argued,

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[1]Gerard Reedy, "Socinians, John Toland, and the Anglican Rationalists," Harvard Theological Review, vol. 70 (1977), p. 286.

[2]One can say the same thing about other movements such as the Enlightenment; see Roy Porter, The Enlightenment (London: Macmillan & Co., 1990), pp. 1-11, 51-60.

[3]Peter Gay, Deism: An Anthology (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968), p. 9.

however, that deism was one part of a larger movement taking place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This phenomenon was the tendency to rationalize religion. A review of the history of Western religion reveals that there has always been a strain within it which accentuated the function of the intellect. In the early modern period, however, it appears that this strain became dominant within Anglicanism.[4] To situate deism within the larger context in which it arose, it is useful to account for this tendency towards the rationalization of religion, a tendency which was the product of factors both external and internal to religion.

The scientific and philosophical revolutions of the seventeenth century were two interrelated movements that appear to have influenced the rationalization of religion. In these movements, traditional sources of authority came under attack by such men as Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, Isaac Newton and John Locke. An opponent of Aristotle, Bacon offered the "new" method of experiment and induction, believing this method would produce useful knowledge on which all could agree. Galileo used the experimental method but, in addition, he employed

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[4]G.R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1660-1700 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 12, 225-26; and Mark Pattison, "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750," Essays by the Late Mark Pattison Sometime Rector of Lincoln College, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), vol. 2, pp. 108-15.

mathematics to argue against Ptolemy's geocentric conception of the universe and the Aristotelian physics which supported it. In its place, he provided the foundations for the physics required by Copernicus' heliocentric system. Descartes also rejected traditional forms of legitimation in both the scientific and philosophical realms. Like Galileo, Descartes employed mathematics -- in particular geometry and algebra -- but in contrast to both Galileo and Bacon, he favoured the deductive method of rationalism over the experimental method. Descartes' rationalism emphasized that an idea must be understood clearly and distinctly for it to be true. Newton provided evidence of the ability of the human mind to grasp the structure of nature with his startling scientific discoveries, in particular, of the law of universal gravitation. His fellow countryman Locke also contributed to the attack on conventional beliefs by denying the existence of innate ideas and arguing for empiricism -- that all of our ideas come from experience. While acknowledging that the veracity of some things is only probable, like Bacon and Descartes Locke did believe that in some cases, the human mind could establish definitive truths. In sum, these revolutions devalued traditional authorities and raised the distinctively human faculty of reason to the status of the sole judge of truth in the scientific and philosophical worlds.[5]

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[5]Gay, Deism, pp. 21-26; Paul Hazard, The European Mind: The

There are a number of other developments that have been identified as prompting a rationalization of religion, only two of which we will mention here.[6] One of these relates to the results of travel and discovery. Religious thinkers had to account for the existence of a large population, for example in China, who had never been exposed to Christianity. Combined with the astronomical and geological discoveries of the "new science", this increased European contact with other cultures called into question traditional religious beliefs such as the Mosaic cosmogony.[7] Another influence external to Protestantism in England were the

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Critical Years, 1680-1715, trans. J. Lewis May (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 145-291, 348-65; Ernest Campbell Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason: A Study in the History of Thought (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), pp. 28-45; and Adam Storey Farrar, A Critical History of Free Thought in reference to the Christian Religion (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1883), pp. 116-18.

[6]This list of external factors is not exhaustive. In addition, it should be noted that since deism is part of the trend towards the rationalization of religion, it is difficult to determine whether a factor as well as promoting the overall trend towards rationalization, specifically gave rise to deism. Keeping this in mind, it is worth pointing out that John Orr argues for, among other factors in the specific development of English deism, the influence of the gnostics such as Marcion, and early anti-Christian writings such as those of Celsus; see his English Deism: Its Roots and Its Fruits (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1934), pp. 29-50.

[7]John Redwood, Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), pp. 116-33; and Sir Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1902; reprint, New York: Peter Smith, 1949), vol. 1, pp. 81-85. On travel and discovery resulting in a crisis about the proof of God from universal consent, see also Alan Kors, Atheism in France, 1650-1729. Volume 1: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 135-77.

religious wars in Europe, especially the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Waged by secular rulers in the name of religion, the result of these wars was horrific bloodshed and, consequently, its strong association with religious fanaticism and intolerance.[8]

Turning to the factors internal to religion in England which promoted its rationalization, of primary importance is that the age preceding the flourishing of English deism was one of intense partisanship in religion, a chaotic period described as one of enthusiasm, fanaticism, excess, extravagance, dogmatism and intolerance. Where were Protestants to turn? Prior to the Reformation, Christian beliefs had depended on the supremacy of the Church. With the Reformation, this authority was repudiated by the Protestants who turned, instead, to the Bible. However, the Bible was subject to many interpretations and Protestantism itself became divided and devolved into the religious chaos of the Puritan era. Restoration Anglicans reacted in two ways. The Laudians attempted to restore order by recreating the authority of the Church through the institution of a national church. This undertaking failed. Liberal

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[8]For a specific example, see Barbara Shapiro, John Wilkins 1614-1672: An Intellectual Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). Shapiro (pp. 21-24) argues that Wilkins' first-hand experience of the Thirty Years War while in the service of Charles Louis, Elector Palatine, "would have provided stark confirmation for his already partially formed views on the destructive tendencies of religious fanaticism" (p. 23).

Anglicans chose the path of moderation. This was carried out in two ways. One was to rationalize religion by defining the essential doctrines of Christianity on which all Christians regardless of sect could agree. The other was to tolerate (within limits) a diversity of beliefs on non-essential matters. In their attempt to define what doctrines were essential, liberal Anglicans turned to the faculty of reason. The Cambridge Platonists hoped that on the authority of reason a solution to religious division could be found. They were followed by the Latitudinarians, who inherited the appeal to reason and used it against what they saw as the irrational enthusiasm of radical Puritanism, such as the Quakers' belief that whatever one does or says is the result of divine inspiration; the unreasonable superstitions and corruptions of Roman Catholicism; and against reason's most notorious proponents, the freethinkers.[9]

Indeed, it has been argued that deism arose out of Latitudinarianism. The most influential expositor of this thesis is Leslie Stephen. He asserts that all the deists needed to do to accomplish their task was to take the Latitudinarians' arguments against Roman Catholicism and turn them against all revelation. In particular, Stephen

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[9]Cragg, Puritanism to the Age of Reason, pp. 1-12, 37-86; Pattison, "Tendencies of Religious Thought," pp. 78-81; Mossner, Bishop Butler, pp. 15-23; and Stephen, History of English Thought, pp. 74-77.

points to the Latitudinarian Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, suggesting that his arguments against transubstantiation, for example, were used by others against miracles. Stephen writes: "The Protestant writers against Rome were forging the weapons which were soon to be used against themselves."[10] Many historians have since followed Stephen's thesis calling deism a "logical offshoot" of Latitudinarianism and writing that "it [deism] can be regarded as coming from within English Protestantism."[11] In short, these historians view the Latitudinarians as Christianized deists, the only difference being that while positing a natural religion based on reason like the deists, the Latitudinarians did allow some small room for revelation.

Peter Gay accepts certain affinities between deism and liberal Anglicanism but holds that while for modern observers there seems to be only a narrow gap between the two that is easily bridged by one small step, for contemporary Christians this gulf was, as Gay writes, "impassable". To contemporaries, the difference between accepting and rejecting revelation and a Christian God was like the difference between night and day.[12] Since the

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[10]Stephen, History of English Thought, pp. 77-79.

[11]Mossner, Bishop Butler, p. 125; and James O'Higgins, "Hume and the Deists: A Contrast in Religious Approaches," Journal of Theological Studies, vol. 23 (1971), p. 481.

[12]Gay, Deism, pp. 11-12.

freethinkers rejected revelation, the Latitudinarians were forced to use reason against them because it was the only basis on which the Anglicans could hope to persuade their opponents of the validity of their position. However, analyses of the thought of Latitudinarians such as Tillotson reveal an image which contrasts with that of Christianized deism. As was mentioned, the Anglican rationalists left some small room for revelation. The grounds for this room reveal fundamental differences between them and the deists: according to the Latitudinarians, natural religion founded on reason was not sufficient for salvation, hence the need for revelation. Furthermore, they maintained that reason was not the absolute criterion by which to interpret Scripture. In their view, where Scripture was mysterious (that is, above reason),[13] it was still to be believed. The validity of revelation, the existence of mysteries, the denial of both the certainty of rational knowledge and of the sufficiency of natural religion, the belief that man is inherently sinful and can only aspire to live a moral life

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[13]Locke defines "above reason" as one of three distinctions: "1. *According to Reason* are such Propositions, whose Truth we can discover, by examining and tracing those *Ideas* we have from *Sensation* and *Reflexion*; and by natural deduction, find to be true, or probable. 2. *Above Reason* are such Propositions, whose Truth or Probability we cannot by Reason derive from those Principles. 3. *Contrary to Reason* are such Propositions, as are inconsistent with, or irreconcilable to our clear and distinct *Ideas*" (EHU, IV. xvii. 23).

through God's grace -- all these were held by the Latitudinarians but were anathema to the deist.[14]

In opposition to the "Anglican-to-deist" model, Reedy traces the origins of deism not to Anglican rationalism but to Socinianism. In particular, he points to the Socinians' emphasis on reason to discover religious truth, their denial of mystery in Christian theology, their approach to reading Scripture influenced by the critical historical method of Richard Simon, and their interpretation of Scripture as figurative where it is mysterious or contradicts reason.[15] Robert Sullivan combines both theses, viewing Toland's deism as developing out of a blend of Socinian and Latitudinarian arguments.[16] But Reedy, who is using Toland as a unique representative of deism to argue against the "Anglican-to-deist" theory, acknowledges that it would also be incorrect simply to call Toland's work Socinian, because it was

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[14]Roger L. Emerson, "Latitudinarianism and the English Deists," Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment: Essays Honouring Alfred Owen Aldridge, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1987), pp. 33-43; and Reedy, "Socinians," pp. 288, 298-303. See also Gerard Reedy, The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Phillip Harth, Swift and Anglican Rationalism: The Religious Background of *A Tale of a Tub* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); W.M. Spellman, The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993); and Irène Simon, Three Restoration Divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson. Selected Sermons, 2 vols. (Paris: Société d'Edition <<Les Belles Lettres>>, 1967-1976).

[15]Reedy, "Socinians," pp. 289-95.

[16]Robert E. Sullivan, John Toland and the Deist Controversy: A Study in Adaptions (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 139, 174, 274-75.

original in its application of Locke's epistemology to religious knowledge.[17]

So what is deism, if it does not follow logically from Anglicanism, Socinianism or a combination of the two? As Sullivan indicates, "deism" is an elusive term. The first known use of the word "déiste" was in 1564 by the Calvinist reformer, Pierre Viret, in his apologetic work, the Instruction Chrétienne. In this text, he identifies the Christian apologist's opponents, one group of whom he calls "déistes". Viret appears to employ the term to denote anti-Christian unbelievers. Many scholars, beginning with Pierre Bayle, have followed this definition. Accordingly, early deism became associated with the type of deism represented by Voltaire in the eighteenth century. It has been argued, however, that in view of the evidence that deism was employed to refer to anti-trinitarianism, Viret may have been utilizing the polemical technique of portraying these heretics as irreligious.[18] As evidence of the uncertainty about the popular use of the term, some scholars see contemporaries using "deism" as a synonym for anti-trinitarianism and others as a synonym for atheism.[19] Still

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[17]Reedy, "Socinians," p. 296.

[18]C.J. Betts, Early Deism in France: From the So-Called 'Déistes' of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's 'Lettres Philosophiques' (1734) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984), pp. 6-15.

[19]Günter Gawlick, "Hume and the Deists: A Reconsideration," David Hume: Bicentenary Papers, ed. G.P. Morice (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

others argue that deism was always distinguished from atheism, and some suggest that it was also used loosely to identify anyone with heterodox views.[20] Sullivan, who examined the works of anti-deists, identified eleven different characterizations of deism.[21] Apparently, even the deists' opponents could not agree on the definition of their enemies.[22]

Another approach to defining deism would be to ask what the English deists themselves meant by the term. In fact, many so-called deists did not identify themselves as such, including Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who has been cast in the role of "the father of English deism,"[23] and the most renowned of the English deists, John Toland. Of those traditionally called "English deists" -- Herbert of Cherbury, Charles Blount, Toland, Thomas Woolston, Anthony Collins, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Matthew Tindal, Bernard Mandeville, Thomas Chubb, Thomas Morgan, Peter Annet and Lord Bolingbroke -- only Blount, Chubb, Tindal and

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University Press, 1977), p. 130; and Stephen, History of English Thought, p. 91.

[20]Roland N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 52; and Sullivan, John Toland, p. 206.

[21]Sullivan, John Toland, pp. 206-11.

[22]This parallels what Michael Hunter has to say about the term "atheism" during this period; see chapter three below.

[23]Betts, Early Deism in France, p. 27.

Morgan used the term to refer to themselves. Both Tindal and Morgan, however, called themselves "Christian Deists". If deism is anti-Christian, this would appear to be a contradiction in terms.[24]

Historians have fared no better than contemporaries at defining deism. Some have tried organizing the deists into various groupings. In his History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Leslie Stephen posited a separation of deism into constructive and critical branches. According to Stephen, the critical deists led by Collins attacked Christianity, while the constructive deists, primarily Toland and Tindal, attempted to substitute for Christianity what they called "natural religion", namely a set of metaphysically demonstrable abstract truths.[25] While some historians have chosen to follow Stephen's lead, others have rejected his distinction as artificial. Peter Gay writes that every deist was critical and constructive. They either reasoned from their criticism of Christianity to propose an alternative natural religion or from their desire for an alternative natural religion to a critique of Christianity.[26] Alfred Owen Aldridge suggests dividing

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[24]Gawlick, "Hume," pp. 132, 138.

[25]Stephen, History of English Thought, pp. 169-72.

[26]Norman L. Torrey calls the distinction "arbitrary" but nevertheless, employs it, maintaining that it is "convenient"; see his Voltaire and the English Deists (Oxford: Marston Press, 1963), p. 1. Gay completely reject its usefulness; see his Deism, pp. 12-13.

deism into scientific and humanistic, "the former, which derives from the scientific method and discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton, professes to discover God through the signs of order and contrivance in the physical universe; the latter, which derives from Shaftesbury's moral-philosophical speculating, professes to discover God through the moral nature of man."[27] Mossner borrows Stephen's terms, but employs them differently. Taking Locke and his epistemology as a dividing line, he labels deism before Locke (Herbert of Cherbury, Blount) as "constructive" and deism after Locke (Toland, Collins, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Tindal) as "critical".[28]

Historians often give differing accounts of the content of a deist's belief. At the outset, it is important to point out that the English deists were not deists in the modern philosophical sense of the word. Philosophical deism refers to a belief in a "clockmaker" God who created the world, set it working according to fixed laws and then withdrew from any further involvement in it. Arthur Winnett writes that Toland, Tindal, Chubb and Morgan did not conceive of God as a philosophical deist would. In their

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[27]Alfred Owen Aldridge, "Shaftesbury and the Deist Manifesto," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 41 (1951), p. 298.

[28]Mossner, Bishop Butler, pp. 46-78.

view, God remained concerned with the world and, in particular, with how men conducted themselves in it.[29]

A survey of the scholarly literature reveals that the conventional definition of a deist's beliefs is that s/he rejects all revelation and holds the sufficiency of natural religion based on reason. Günter Gawlick, however, contradicts this standard definition of deism by arguing that neither rationalism nor the rejection of revelation were necessary conditions for deism. He writes that Herbert did not reject revelation and that he and Trenchard founded religion on other bases: natural instinct, and ignorance and fear, respectively.[30] Gawlick holds out the possibility that what the deists held in common were not their beliefs, but their goals. He defines this commonality as being "the aim of making a clean sweep of superstition and priestcraft, intolerance and religious persecution, by placing morality on a footing independent of revelation."[31]

It is indeed the deists' goals that are at the centre of the most comprehensive interpretations of deism. Frank Manuel casts the deists in the role of defenders of religion

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[29]Arthur R. Winnett, "Were the Deists 'Deists'?," Church Quarterly Review, vol. 161 (1960), pp. 70-77; and Cragg, Puritanism to the Age of Reason, p. 141 n. 2.

[30]Cf. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill, ed. C.B. MacPherson (London, 1651; reprint, Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 168-78.

[31]Gawlick, "Hume," pp. 132-33.

against the atheistic argument that it was not necessary to man. Furthermore, he interprets them as not only religious (rather than secular), but Christian as well. Writing that "most English Deists were also Christians," he concurs with some of the English deists who saw themselves as setting out to restore Christianity to its uncorrupted original state. According to Manuel, for the deists true religion consisted of belief in a rational Creator and in Christ's gospel of love. For instance, he writes about Tindal: "For his followers Christ's message did not vary in its essence from the natural knowledge of God with which Adam had been endowed; it was a republication of the truth, not a new discovery; it was the most perfect of the versions, not an entirely novel revelation to mankind."[32] Manuel is not alone in accepting the deists' professions of belief in Christianity at face value. Toland, for example, stated that he wrote Christianity Not Mysterious with the intention of defending orthodoxy against deists and atheists. G.R. Cragg takes him at his word, interpreting Toland as part of a lay movement that had "an earnest desire to cleanse Christianity and restore it to its primitive simplicity."[33]

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[32]Frank E. Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 63. For another religious interpretation of Tindal, see Günter Gawlick, Introduction to Christianity As Old As the Creation, by Matthew Tindal (London, 1730; reprint, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag Gunther Holzboog, 1967), pp. 5-38.

[33]Cragg, Puritanism to the Age of Reason, p. 147.

One of the most recent interpretations of deism also emphasizes the religious motive of the deists. J.A.I. Champion depicts the deists as attempting to remodel a religion corrupted by priestcraft. Accordingly, the chief characteristic of the deists was their anti-clericalism. These deists were also "republican" -- defined more broadly as being against arbitrary political power rather than in the narrow sense of opposing monarchy -- focusing their attack on the independent political power of the established church. Champion argues that these freethinkers, inspired by James Harrington, wished to establish, in place of this corrupt religion, a civil religion which would inculcate virtue in the people. He claims that this goal was religious in character; however, it appears very similar to Machiavelli's view of religion. For Machiavelli, religion was merely a convenient fiction necessary to maintaining a stable political and social order. Champion himself states that the radicals went beyond the supposition of a God-given natural religion common to all peoples -- a position which I would agree is religious -- to argue that all religion was man-made; it was generated by human societies for their own purposes. If this is true, it seems questionable to describe these radicals as "profoundly religious".[34]

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[34]J.A.I. Champion, The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660-1730 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 23. Regarding anticlericalism and civil religion, see pp. 170-95; and regarding his assertion that the deists are religious but believe all religion to be man-made, see pp. 234-36.

C.J. Betts also supports a religious interpretation of early deism, pointing out that while John Leland cast Herbert in the role of the father of deism, at the time he was regarded as contributing a rational defence of Christianity that may have helped promote peace among warring religious sects. Betts writes that it was not until John Leland wrote his A View of the Principal Deistical Writers (1754) that the modern assumption that deism was a secular movement critical of Christianity became established.[35]

This secular interpretation of English deism was taken up by Peter Gay and incorporated into his representation of the Enlightenment as an anti-Christian movement.[36] David Berman also regards the deists' aims as secular, suggesting that Blount, Toland, Tindal and Collins intended to propagate atheistic beliefs but that they were forced to disguise them because of the repercussions of overtly stating such views. He suggests that in writing his Christianity Not Mysterious, Toland, for example, did not really believe that a non-mysterious Christianity was the true religion. Berman argues that Toland engaged in

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[35]Betts, Early Deism in France, pp. 27, 253, 266.

[36]See Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. Volume 1: The Rise of Modern Paganism (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966). Sheridan Gilley attacks Gay's secular interpretation of the Enlightenment in "Christianity and Enlightenment: An Historical Survey," History of European Ideas, vol. 1 (1981), pp. 106-7.

"theological lying" through techniques that while protecting him from the authorities, communicated his views to those already in the know, and insinuated them into the thoughts of the orthodox.[37]

Margaret Jacob provides another reading of the freethinkers. Like most scholars she concentrates on Toland, pointing to the influence of the Hermetic tradition, revived in England during the Commonwealth period and transmitted to Toland principally through the works of Giordano Bruno. Toland formulated a pantheistic and materialistic religion, in which "matter is the source of life, change, and even order, and therefore, that in effect, God and nature are one."[38] Jacob argues that this alternative religion was spread through the international clandestine organization of Freemasonry. This anti-

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[37]David Berman, "Deism, Immortality, and the Art of Theological Lying," Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment: Essays Honouring Alfred Owen Aldridge, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1987), pp. 61-78; David Berman, A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell (London: Routledge, 1988); and David Berman, "Disclaimers As Offence Mechanisms in Charles Blount and John Toland," Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, eds. Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 255-72.

[38]Margaret C. Jacob, "Newtonianism and the Origins of the Enlightenment: A Reassessment," Eighteenth Century Studies, vol. 11 (1977), p. 18. The original statement of her argument is to be found in Margaret C. Jacob, "John Toland and the Newtonian Ideology," Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institutes, vol. 32 (1969), pp. 307-31. It is reworked and expanded in Margaret C. Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976); Jacob, "Newtonianism," pp. 1-25; and Margaret C. Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981).

Christian group also had a political dimension. They were "radical republicans" -- anti-monarchical, pro-democratic and socially egalitarian -- who sought to undermine the traditional political and social order. G.C. Gibbs, however, provides a devastating critique of Jacob's thesis, concluding that "the case for regarding them [Toland's circle] as a Masonic coterie of political, religious and social radicals, deeply indebted to the philosophical and political heresies nurtured in England, not only ha[s] not been proved, it scarcely exists."[39] Champion suggests her reading of the radicals as liberal democrats goes against the sources.[40]

So what were the English deists all about? Were they Berman's covert atheists disguising their views to avoid punishment but in fact propagating a secular outlook? Or were they Champion's deeply religious men, reformers in the tradition of Luther? Or were they Machiavellians who did not believe in the truth of religion but believed it was

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[39]G.C. Gibbs, "Review of M. Jacob's Radical Enlightenment," British Journal for the History of Science, vol. 17 (1984), pp. 67-79.

[40]Champion, Pillars of Priestcraft, p. 15. This is not to say he believes deism lacks a political element; see above. That deism had a political element is evident in one of the earliest works on the subject: William Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England (1696) (London, 1696; reprint, Augustan Reprint Society, no. 261, Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1990). As James Force writes in the Introduction (p. iii), Stephens' essay "shows that any question of religious ideology in this era, such as that of the nature of deism, is inseparable from the basic political issue of Whig and Tory party strife."

necessary to inculcate virtue in the people through the notions of sacred rewards and punishments? Or will a reading of the primary sources reveal a new interpretation that is at odds with the present historiography? One thing is certain. At the moment, there is little agreement in the literature on the nature of English deism.

Given the magnitude of the writings by the English deists, it will be necessary to circumscribe our reading of the available primary sources. This can be achieved by restricting our study to one of the leading English deists, Matthew Tindal. Tindal has been called by various scholars "The Great Apostle of Deism" and "the most learned of the British deists, as well as the most significant historically"; furthermore, it has been said that he "probably best represented the deistic movement."[41] In his account of English deism, A.S. Farrar calls Tindal's Christianity As Old As the Creation "the most important work that deism had yet produced."[42] Others have called it "the Deistic Bible," "the high-water mark of English deism" and

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[41]Lucius Noack, Die Freidenker in der Religion, oder die Repräsenten der religiösen Aufklärung in England, Frankreich un Deutschland, 3 vols. (Bern: Jent u. Reinert, 1853-1855), vol. 1, p. 272, quoted in Orr, English Deism, p. 140; Ernest Campbell Mossner, "Deism," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 4 vols., ed. Paul Edwards (New York, 1967; reprint, New York: Macmillan Co. & Free Press, 1972), vol. 1, p. 329; and Orr, English Deism, p. 140.

[42]Farrar, Critical History of Free Thought, p. 138. For the full titles of Tindal's works see the bibliography.

"the culminating point of the whole deist controversy."[43] Despite all these accolades, Tindal has remained relatively neglected in the shadows, while his colleague, John Toland, has captured the spotlight as the central focus of the literature on English deism.[44] This thesis will attempt to rectify this shortcoming in the literature. In the next chapter, we will provide the background to a more extensive analysis of Tindal's views on religion. To begin, we will summarize what little is known of Tindal's family, education, life at Oxford and other professional involvements. We will then explore in detail Tindal's social circle. In particular, we will examine one of the predominant characterizations of the political views of this group. Finally, we will investigate whether this characterization does indeed apply to Tindal by looking at those of his works which shed light on the question of his politics. In chapter three, we will investigate another problem, that of hermeneutics. Should we take Tindal's words at face value or are we justified in looking for

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[43]Noack, Die Freidenker, p. 272 and G.V. Lechler, Geschichte Des Englischen Deismus (Stuttgart u. Tuebingen: J.G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1841), p. 327, quoted in Orr, English Deism, p. 140; Torrey, Voltaire and the English Deists, p. 109; and Stephen, History of English Thought, p. 134.

[44]While Tindal has yet to be the subject of a full-length work, two books have been written on Toland: Sullivan's John Toland and Stephen H. Daniel, John Toland: His Methods, Manners, and Mind (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984). Toland was also the focus of Jacob's Radical Enlightenment.

hidden messages within his texts? If we are, how should he be read -- as Berman's atheist or is there another interpretation that is more suitable? In chapter four, we will examine an element in the origins of English deism that has been almost completely neglected, that of natural law. In particular, I will argue that Tindal uses natural law as one of the cornerstones of his attack on Christianity and that, accordingly, the tradition of natural law should be considered as an important factor in the intellectual origins of English deism. The final chapter will revisit the work of the previous four in an attempt to draw some conclusions from this study.

CHAPTER 2

MATTHEW TINDAL: THE MAN AND HIS POLITICS

Most of the information on Tindal's life comes from three biographies: one written by Edmund Curll, another by an anonymous fellow of All Souls College, and a third by Lord Egmont.[1] From all accounts, Matthew Tindal (sometimes misspelt Tindall or Tyndal) was born in 1657, most likely on April 10, and baptised at Bere-Ferris, Devonshire, on May 12 of that year.[2] He is said to have grown old and rich, dying as a result of gallbladder stones on August 16, 1733 at the age of seventy-six in Coldbath Fields and buried, as he requested, at Clerkenwell Church near the remains of Dr. Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury.[3] His mother was Anna

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[1]Other biographical sources are: BB, vol. 6, "Tindal," pp. 3960-65; DNB, vol. 19, "Tindal, Matthew," pp. 883-85; Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford to Which Are Added the Fasti or Annals of the Said University, 5 vols. (London, 1813-1820; reprint, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1966), vol. 4, p. 584; and Thomas Hearne, Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne, 11 vols., eds. C.E. Doble, D.W. Rannie and H.E. Salter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885-1921), vol. 1, pp. 193, 237, 240, 260; vol. 2, p. 72; and vol. 11, pp. 244, 249. I have also drawn on the biographical chapter on Tindal in Stephen Lalor, "Matthew Tindal and the Eighteenth Century Assault on Religion," Trinity College, Dublin, Master in Letters thesis, 1979, pp. 1-25.

[2]There are some discrepancies concerning his date of birth; see Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," pp. 1-2. Edmund Curll, for example, has 1656; see his Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Matthew Tindall, L.L.D. (London, 1733), p. 9.

[3]The report that he was rich comes from [Anonymous], The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal, L.L.D. Late Fellow of All Souls College in Oxford (London, 1735), p. 12. Regarding his request to be buried near Burnet, according to T.E.S. Clarke and

Hulse, daughter of Matthew Hulse of Efford, Devonshire, who held an estate of £ 1000 per year. His father was a clergyman, John Tindal, appointed rector of Bere-Ferris by the University of Cambridge under the Commonwealth at a salary of £ 300.[4] He had one sibling, a younger brother, John.

Tindal began his education in the country. In 1673 he entered Lincoln College, Oxford, where he was tutored by the High Churchman and later Non Juror, George Hickes, whom he would eventually dispute with over such works as Tindal's

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H.C. Foxcroft: "That he [Burnet] condemned Tindal's work [The Rights] is absolutely certain. But in the purely political sphere he found it difficult to traverse arguments which were the logical outcome of his own." See their A Life of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), p. 422. For his part, Tindal's The Rights praises Burnet's views. It seems reasonable to conclude that Tindal did hold Burnet in high regard, hence, his request to be buried next to him.

[4]It is interesting to note that Toland was apparently fathered by a Roman Catholic priest and that Pierre Bayle was the son of a Huguenot minister. This suggests the question of whether the fact that Tindal's father was a man of the cloth had any bearing on the development of his views about religion, in particular, his anti-clericalism. Caroline Robbins writes that Tindal, himself, was a clergyman; see her The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 88. Hearne writes of Tindal: "He was a Clergy Man's Son, & liv'd upon a Clergyman's Bread (viz. Archbp. Chichley's)"; see his Remarks, vol. 1, p. 193. But Lalor has found no evidence of his ordination and notes that in Reasons for the Repeal of That Part of the Statutes of Colleges in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge Which Require the Taking of Orders under a Penalty (London, n.d.), Tindal implied that the requirement for fellows to be ordained could be dispensed with at times; see Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 165 n. 5. That this requirement could be dispensed with is confirmed in G.V. Bennett, "University, Society and Church: 1688-1714," The History of the University of Oxford. Volume 5: The Eighteenth Century, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 390-92.

The Rights of the Christian Church. He moved to Exeter College where he graduated with his Bachelor of Arts on October 17, 1676.[5] He was elected to a law fellowship (restricted to sons of gentlemen by both parents) at All Souls College, Oxford, in 1678 where he remained until his death. He completed his Bachelor of Civil Law on December 17, 1679 and his Doctor of Civil Law on July 17, 1685.

Around that time, Oxford's fellows became the target of a group of "Roman emissaries" sent by King James II to convert them to Roman Catholicism. Tindal was one of those converted around 1685 by one Father Baptist, explaining that he was convinced by the Catholics that if the High Church principles in which he was educated were true there was no justification for the Anglican schism. Curll reported him to have entered King James' service, and Stephen Lalor speculates he may have served in a company of scholars from All Souls, led by Leopold Finch, against James Scott, Duke of Monmouth.[6] His opponents suggested his conversion was inspired by political opportunism rather than sincere religious conviction and that he hoped James would appoint him Warden of All Souls, a position for which he

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[5]Walter Moyle, commonly linked with such men as Toland and Tindal, was also educated at Exeter College, Oxford, though it is not known if Tindal made contact with Moyle or any other eventual freethinkers at Exeter or in the other colleges.

[6]Curll, Memoirs, p. 10; and Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 2.

unsuccessfully competed in 1686.[7] On Tindal's account, he soon became aware of the folly of Roman Catholicism in discussions in the London coffeehouses and returned to the Church of England.[8] Again, his opponents questioned his motives, reporting that he reconverted after James had left the throne.[9] Tindal, however, claimed he publicly renounced Roman Catholicism near the end of 1687 and took the sacrament in the chapel at All Souls at the next available opportunity on April 15, 1688, when James still reigned.[10] After his reconversion Tindal, who was now closer to the Whig/Low Church position, found himself out of step with the dominant Tory/High Church temper at Oxford.[11]

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[7] Conduct of Matthew Tindal, pp. 15-17; and Hearne, Remarks, vol. 1, p. 198.

[8] Curll (Memoirs, p. 9) states that this is an account written in Tindal's own handwriting given to him by Tindal's surgeon, Dr. Small, who was present at his death. Again, noting similarities with other freethinkers, it is worth pointing out that Bayle, Toland and Edward Gibbon also underwent conversions. Bayle and Gibbon converted from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism and back again. Toland was born a Roman Catholic and converted to Protestantism in his early teens.

[9] Conduct of Matthew Tindal, p. 19; Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, p. 584; and Hearne, Remarks, vol. 1, p. 193.

[10] This is what Tindal said via Small in Curll (Memoirs, p. 10). Some scholars appear to have believed him; see David Berman, "Tindal, Matthew," The Encyclopedia of Unbelief, 2 vols., ed. Gordon Stein (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1985), vol. 2, p. 666; and Gawlick, "Introduction," p. 8.

[11] In fact, Toland was expelled from Oxford in 1695 by the vice-chancellor, presumably for his radical views. It is worth noting, however, that he had three patrons there: White Kennett, John Aubrey and an unidentified fellow of All Souls (Sullivan, John Toland, p. 5).

Little is known about Tindal's Oxford life.[12] Of the information we do have, the prevailing representation was that it was immoral.[13] Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish the truth of such an accusation. It is important to remember that immorality and irreligion were believed to be closely associated at this time. Thus, if someone was irreligious it followed that s/he acted immorally, while if someone acted immorally, it followed that s/he had irreligious views. Accordingly, a common strategy was to paint an opponent as immoral and, consequently, cast disrepute upon her/his opinions. This is evident in the work of Tindal's anonymous biographer who wrote

> if from one of known Immorality, the Good and Religious will have no regard to his Railings. The very knowing such a Writer will go a great Way towards the answering his Arguments of this kind.[14]

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[12]Hearne writes that he spent little time there (Remarks, vol. 11, p. 244). Lalor ("Matthew Tindal," p. summary), however, notes "his life was largely spent in Oxford as a Fellow of All-Souls with trips to London."

[13]For a poetic representation of this, see Abel Evans, The Apparitions: A Poem (Oxford, 1710; EC, Reel 1063, No. 2, Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1986) in which Tindal is visited by the devil who enlists his help.

[14]Conduct of Matthew Tindal, p. 9. Cf. the case of Daniel Scargill who was expelled from Cambridge University for the expression of Hobbist views. The case made against him often points to his immoral activities; see Samuel I. Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 50-52; and James L. Axtell, "The Mechanics of Opposition: Restoration Cambridge v. Daniel Scargill," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, vol. 38 (1965), pp. 102-11.

The most detailed account of Tindal's immoral practices, in particular, of sexual licentiousness and gluttony, can be found in the work of his anonymous biographer. These charges were repeated by Thomas Hearne, a Non Juror, who did however, admit that Tindal had one virtue; he was abstemious in drink.[15] Nevertheless, because the sources of all these accusations are Tindal's opponents, it is difficult to judge their veracity. Lalor's examination of the evidence prompts him to conclude that "the outcome of this must be to cast some degree of doubt on the reality of the gross immoralities he is reputed to have committed."[16] However, one of Tindal's fellow English deists, Anthony Collins, was quoted as saying "my friend Tyndal [sic] is a rogue and a disgrace to us, for he is not honest or virtuous."[17] Coming from a fellow freethinker, this would appear to lend credibility to the charges, but there exists two problems with this evidence. For one, it is a second-hand account and, for another, Collins appears to be using this comparison to enhance the image of himself as a man of high morals. This is evident in Egmont's manuscript where he

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[15] Conduct of Matthew Tindal; regarding gluttony, see pp. 10-13; and regarding sexual licentiousness, see pp. 58-62. Such stories include two attempts, one successful and one failed, to persuade his mistresses to charge another man with fathering his child (pp. 60-1). Hearne follows these accusations in Remarks, vol. 1, pp. 193, 237.

[16] Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," pp. 15-16.

[17] Egmont (London, British Library, MSS Add. 47119) quoted in Berman, "Tindal," p. 667.

quotes Collins rebuking not only Tindal but all other unbelievers. Egmont writes: "For said he [Collins] I perceive myself the only Man who beleving nothing yet act morally honest, whilst all my friends are by their scandalous lives a reproach to unbelief."[18] Thus, it is difficult to know to what degree we can believe the characterization of Tindal's life as immoral. In any event, we should not follow Tindal's contemporaries in their supposition that to prove an individual immoral necessarily invalidates her/his views on religion.

In addition to his duties at Oxford, Tindal had a civil law practice in London. We know that on November 7, 1685, a certificate was signed for his admission to the Court of Arches and he was admitted as an advocate at the Doctors' Commons -- the society for civil law advocates -- on November 13, 1685. He was Deputy Judge Advocate of their Majesties' Fleet from May 30, 1689 to November 8, 1689.[19] We can infer that he had made a name for himself in law by 1693, when along with "some of the most eminent persons both in Church and State,"[20] he sat on a commission regarding the case of Count Paleoti, an Italian nobleman, who had killed

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[18]Egmont (London, British Library, MSS Add. 47119), quoted in Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 24.

[19]Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 3; and Sir William Holdsworth, A History of English Law, 16 vols. (London: Methuen & Co., 1903-1966), vol. 4, 3rd ed., pp. 235-37.

[20]BB, p. 3960.

one of his Italian servants, and who argued that the English courts did not have the authority to try him for murder. He sat frequently as a judge in the Court of Delegates, which heard appeals from the ecclesiastical courts and the Court of Admiralty.[21] In addition, he advised ministers on matters of international law. Tindal was also consulted regarding the matter of whether a group commissioned by James II (after his abdication) to attack English vessels could be tried as pirates. He gave his legal opinion in 1693, arguing in the affirmative and this led to his pamphlet on the law of nations to be discussed below.[22] He received a pension of £ 200 a year from the crown, apparently for his service in this and other matters.[23] He also wrote a number of other works, mostly pamphlets, on a variety of political and religious topics.[24] His two most famous were full-length texts, The Rights of the Christian Church (1706), which elicited 24 major replies, and Christianity As Old As the Creation (1730), which received over 100.[25] In The Rights, he attacked the clerical powers

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[21]Holdsworth, History of English Law, vol. 1, 7th ed., pp. 603-5.

[22]Lalor ("Matthew Tindal," p. 3) tells us that "on 26th February 1694, nine of the prisoners were condemned to be drawn, hanged and quartered for piracy, of whom at least four were subsequently executed."

[23]DNB, p. 884. Lalor ("Matthew Tindal," pp. 21, 157 n. 97) refers to three other accounts of why Tindal received this pension.

[24]See the bibliography.

[25]The Rights and A Defence of the Rights of the Christian Church, against a Late Visitation Sermon, Intitled, the Rights of the Clergy in

claimed by the High Church, and asserted the rights of the laity to liberty of conscience and worship. In Christianity As Old As the Creation (to be examined in more detail in chapters three and four below), he argued for the sufficiency of natural religion on the basis of human reason and attacked revealed religion in general, and Christianity in particular.[26]

Turning to the matter of Tindal's social milieu, establishing his circle of associates is doubly important, first for revealing with whom Tindal had contact and, secondly, because it relates to the characterization of his political views. Tindal appeared to move in a few social circles. First, there was Oxford. Though, on the whole, he was seen as the enemy there, his anonymous biographer reports that Tindal made four converts: Sedgwick Harrison, Doctor of Civil Law and Professor of History; an unnamed barrister at law, probably William Blencow; another unnamed man "of the long Robe"; and finally, a young nobleman. In

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the Christian Church Asserted; Preach'd at Newport Pagnel in the County of Bucks, by W. Wotton. B.D. and Made Publick at the Command and Desire of the Bishop of Lincoln, and the Clergy of the Deanerys of Buckingham and Newport were burnt along with Sacheverell's High Church sermon on March 25, 1710 by order of the House of Commons. For reaction to The Rights such as Samuel Hilliard's attempt to have a bookseller prosecuted for selling it, see Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," pp. 6-7.

[26]He had written a second volume which was reported to have been destroyed by Bishop Edmund Gibson, but the accuracy of this suppression theory has since been called into question; see David Berman and Stephen Lalor, "The Suppression of *Christianity As Old As the Creation* Vol. II," Notes and Queries, vol. 229 (1984), pp. 3-6.

addition, he did have an amanuensis for The Rights, one John Silk, but he was not a convert.[27] Hearne mentions Mr. Ayliffe of New College as a "crony" of Tindal's and Curll refers to a "Mr. *Small*, Dr. *Tindall*'s Surgeon, and most dear and intimate Friend."[28] Moreover, we know that Tindal had correspondence with Locke, and Lalor concludes that he "was close enough to him [Locke]" to solicit his help on behalf of a Mr. Lloid who wanted to set up a school.[29] Lalor also sees in Tindal's continued freedom after writing such controversial works as The Rights, the "real, if covert, support of very powerful friends."[30]

As well, there is a reference in William Whiston's memoirs to frequent meetings during 1711 at the home of Lady Caverly and Sir John Hubern in Soho Square. Lady Caverly, who was a staunch Christian, invited such men as Whiston, Samuel Clarke and Dr. Bradford while Sir John Hubern, who was a sceptic, hosted such freethinkers as Anthony Collins

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[27] Conduct of Matthew Tindal, pp. 13-14, 27-30. Silke also gives a negative characterization of Tindal's erudition saying "his whole Stock of Learning was no more than the Gleanings of a few modern Books, and a great many Pamphlets" (Conduct of Matthew Tindal, p. 14). It is Lalor ("Matthew Tindal," p. 22) who speculates about the identity of Blencow.

[28] Hearne, Remarks, vol. 1, p. 240; and Curll, Memoirs, p. 9.

[29] Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 24. G.V. Bennett also writes that Tindal was a friend of Locke; see his "Against the Tide: Oxford under William III," The History of the University of Oxford. Volume 5: The Eighteenth Century, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 47-48.

[30] Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 8.

and Tindal. According to Whiston, they engaged in spirited but friendly debate.[31] Tindal's contact with Clarke is certainly significant, as the last chapter of his Christianity As Old As the Creation (taking up nearly one quarter of the book) was written in response to Clarke's A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation. As well, Tindal's connection with Collins should be noted as it was alleged by Hearne that Collins helped Tindal write many of his works, including Christianity As Old As the Creation.[32]

Probably, the most important social setting in which Tindal can be placed has already been mentioned with reference to his reconversion to Anglicanism -- the coffeehouse and its close relations such as the tavern. Coffeehouses were a popular venue for the discussion of political and religious matters usually deemed too controversial to be raised at the dinner table. In them were to be found men of different classes, professions, trades, parties and, of course, opinions. As such, the

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[31]William Whiston, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mr. William Whiston. Containing Memoirs of Several of His Friends Also, 2 vols. (London: Whiston & Bishop, 1749-1750), vol. 1, p. 158. Dr. Samuel Bradford (1652-1731) delivered the Boyle Lectures in 1699 -- eight sermons on "The Credibility of the Christian Revelation, from Its Intrinsick Evidence".

[32]Hearne, Remarks, vol. 11, p. 244. In addition, this evidence contradicts Ernest Mossner's statement that the major English deists did not even know one another (Bishop Butler, p. 45); see further below.

coffeehouse earned the title of "the most democratic institution of [the] age."[33] Indeed, the rise of clubs in the coffeehouses reflected the changing political times -- the movement away from a small court-centred government to a larger participatory body, most notably, Parliament.[34] This larger, more inclusive group needed a place to meet, to discuss and establish political platforms. The coffeehouse provided this. The connection between politics and the coffeehouses is further reflected in the fact that in 1675 there was an act to close temporarily the coffeehouses of London because of their anti-government associations.[35]

One coffeehouse with which Tindal's name has been associated is that of the Grecian on Devereux Court in the Strand.[36] His anonymous biographer places him there.[37] However, most of the information surrounding Tindal's involvement in the coffeehouse gatherings is to be found in

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[33]Robert J. Allen, The Clubs of Augustan London (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 14.

[34]Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). For a discussion of the specific British case, see pp. 57-67. For the role of coffeehouses in the transformation of the public sphere, see pp. 31-38.

[35]Allen, Clubs, pp. 13-15; and Daniel, John Toland, pp. 141-48.

[36]For a brief history of the Grecian, see Bryant Lillywhite, London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), pp. 243-45.

[37]Conduct of Matthew Tindal, p. 8.

the context of studies of his more celebrated and investigated contemporary, John Toland. Margaret Jacob has placed Toland along with Tindal in a political club at the Grecian. She suggests that the group was known as the "college" and that Tindal, Toland, Collins and John Trenchard made up its "intellectual heart" and were its leading philosophical spokesmen. Other members of the college that she names are John Methuen, Edward Clarke, John Freke, Sir Robert Molesworth, William Simpson, Thomas Rawlins, William Stephens, John Darby and James Roberts. As evidence, she offers the statement by Methuen who in 1701

> sent his 'humble service to Mr Toland and Dr Tindall [the deist, Matthew].' He added, 'I hope that the same college of politicians will be every night with us.'[38]

According to Jacob, this college was made up of "radical republican" Whigs who in their "disillusionment with the outcome of the Revolution of 1688-89" mounted a "struggle against the form of constitutional monarchy established by the Revolution Settlement." While on another occasion, she writes that "the radicals basically approved of the Revolution of 1688-89 and its constitutional settlement," she immediately qualifies this saying, "although always believing that it had not gone far enough in the direction of parliamentary rule." The radicals

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[38]Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, MS E 82, Methuen to Simpson, 6 December 1701, quoted in Jacob, Radical Enlightenment, p. 152.

"opposed the excessive power of kings, courts and ruling oligarchies." She identifies their enemy as post-Revolution "court Whiggery" -- naming, as her only specific example, the governing Whig oligarchy of the 1720s led by Robert Walpole. Jacob suggests the radicals disagreed vehemently with it on such issues as the necessity of a standing army.[39]

According to Jacob, hand in hand with this political radicalism went a belief in pantheism (as defined in chapter one above). Pantheism, she also states, was rooted in the desire for political reform and social change, "tended inevitably in a socially levelling direction," undermined the theoretical supports for established churches, and promoted "equality" of prince and people, even of men and women.[40]

Finally, Jacob also connects Toland to an international network of contacts, particularly French Protestant refugees in Holland, with whom he formed a Masonic society.[41] Although she does not mention Tindal's name in this context,

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[39]Jacob, Radical Enlightenment, pp. 20, 58, 99, 65, 95, 127-31.

[40]Jacob, Radical Enlightenment, pp. 65, 22, 230. This religion which worships nature is to be distinguished from natural religion. Though it is natural religion that is commonly identified with the English deists, Jacob associates it with the group she calls the "Newtonians". They supported the establishment, and thus opposed the radicals' goals.

[41]Jacob, Radical Enlightenment, pp. 142-81.

presumably he was in some way linked to this organization as well.

While Mossner has asserted that the major English deists did not know one another,[42] most of the more recent research shows that Tindal was associated with many of the men named by Jacob. Robert Sullivan places him at the Grecian and suggests that Toland, Tindal and Collins all knew each other. Moreover, he asserts that Tindal was not only acquainted with Toland but had frequent contact with him. Tindal inquired in a letter to Locke about how Toland was faring after his debacle in Ireland that saw his Christianity Not Mysterious condemned and burned by the Irish Commons.[43] In The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman, Caroline Robbins places Tindal along with Toland under the heading of "Robert Molesworth and His Friends, 1693-1727", naming Molesworth, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Toland, William Molyneux, Henry Maxwell, Moyle, Trenchard and Andrew Fletcher as being part of an important intellectual and political coterie. She remarks that at the time of Godolphin's death, Tindal went to stay at Molesworth's Yorkshire estate for two months, presumably to comfort his

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[42]Mossner, Bishop Butler, p. 45.

[43]Sullivan, John Toland, pp. 7, 14-15, 74, 232. Sullivan (pp. 6-7) also places Tindal in a circle he calls the "London Socinians" grouping him with Thomas Firmin and Stephen Nye.

friend. Like Jacob, she has Tindal and Toland as regulars at the Grecian.[44]

However, while we may agree that Tindal was a regular at the Grecian along with Toland and others, this does not mean we must necessarily accept Jacob's characterization of this group's political views and activities. Jacob's interpretation has been heavily criticized, and the criticisms are clearly important since they bear on our understanding of Tindal's politics. As mentioned in chapter one above, G.C. Gibbs questioned the evidential basis for many of Jacob's statements about Toland. If Gibbs is correct, then we must also be sceptical of Jacob's characterization of individuals such as Tindal. Other

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[44]Robbins, Commonwealthman, pp. 5, 87-133. Sidney Godolphin, earl of Godolphin (1645-1712) was a politician who served under Charles II, James II and Anne. In the latter phase of his career he became more closely identified with Whig policies. A.B. Worden offers a variation on the social circle described above, locating Tindal not in the Grecian club but at the Black Boy Tavern. First, Worden separates the radicals into two groups. The "aristocratic" or "Roman" Whigs included Robert Molesworth, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, John Trenchard and Walter Moyle. They met at the Grecian club and espoused a Harringtonian republicanism. The other group, "the Calves-Head Republicans", which included Slingsby Bethel, Edward and John Phillips, Isaac Littlebury, James Tyrell, Roger Coke, David Jones, John Tutchin, Tindal, Samuel Johnson, William Stephens and John Toland met at the Black Boy Tavern and "merely flirted with the [Harringtonian] tradition." The Calves-Head Republicans "appeared to view the settlement of 1689 with grave distrust" while the Roman Whigs accepted it though they were concerned about its abuses. Worden appears to be following contemporary accounts of the Calves-Head club. See A.B. Worden, Introduction to A Voyce From the Watch Tower: Part Five: 1660-1662, by Edmund Ludlow, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 21 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), pp. 19-22, 38-42. Other scholars have questioned whether such a club ever existed and was instead the invention of political opponents seeking to tar their enemies; see Sullivan, John Toland, p. 15; Allen, Clubs, pp. 56-69; and Daniel, John Toland, p. 213.

scholars also question Jacob's "republican" interpretation of these men. Roger Emerson suggests that the republic they most approved of was that of William, Anne and George I.[45] J.A.I. Champion, following J.G.A. Pocock's assertion that republicanism was not a programme but a language, states that it was not opposed to monarchy, but only to its abuse as in absolute, arbitrary governments.[46] Referring to Robbins' analysis, Emerson also questions Jacob's characterization of these men as social radicals.[47] As Robbins writes "the Real Whig [Molesworth and company] was not egalitarian although he might emphasize to an embarrassing degree the equality of man before God, or in a state of nature."[48]

In addition to these problems with Jacob's theory, there is other evidence more specific to Tindal that indicates that her interpretation cannot be applied to him.[49] Most notably, we have the testimony of his political

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[45]Emerson, "Latitudinarianism," p. 44.

[46]Champion, Pillars of Priestcraft, p. 171.

[47]Emerson, "Latitudinarianism," pp. 43-44.

[48]Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 16. Tindal does do this as we shall see in his pamphlet on natural law to be discussed in chapter four.

[49]Further proof includes the fact that Tindal shows no evidence of pantheism; rather, he is a proponent of natural religion. Since she has linked pantheism with the radicals' politics, this also calls into question her political interpretation. Tindal's espousal of natural religion would seem to make him more of a Newtonian than a radical.

publications.[50] Tindal's writings reveal him to be a Whig, but far from being a "radical" as Jacob would have it. Tindal's publication career began with a tract entitled An Essay concerning the Laws of Nations (1694). The Lords of the Admiralty had commanded Dr. Oldys, Advocate of the Admiralty, to prosecute as pirates the men commissioned by James II to attack English shipping, but Oldys refused and was removed from his office.[51] Tindal took up the government position. In this work, he opposed Oldys' arguments and defended his verdict that the men could be tried as pirates.

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[50]Tindal's publisher when it was stated in the books or pamphlets was either Richard Baldwin or Andrew Bell. In his work on the laws of nations, the title page reads printed by J.D. for Andrew Bell. This J.D. is probably John Darby, sr. Worden, "Introduction," (pp. 18-28, 37-38, 41, 54) explains that Baldwin, whose publishing was taken over by his wife Anne after his death in 1698; Darby, sr. who began to share his business with his son Darby, jr. in the later 1690s (he took over after his father died in 1704); and Bell, who married Darby sr.'s daughter Elizabeth, were all Whig publishers who often collaborated on projects and advertised and sold each other's works. Baldwin and Darby clearly had a Whig history. Baldwin published Tindal's essay on natural law. Darby, sr. printed Tindal's piece on the law of nations for Bell and published Toland's The Militia Reformed (1698). Darby and Baldwin joined together to publish Toland's editions of Sidney, Ludlow, Milton, Nevile and Harrington. Darby, jr. published Shaftesbury's Characteristicks (1711) and a posthumous edition of Moyle's Works (1726). Bell printed Shaftesbury's An Inquiry concerning Virtue (1699) and this was sold by the Darbys. This evidence provides proof of another link between Tindal and other freethinkers, in this case, through their publishers. For more on the Baldwins, see Leona Rostenberg, "English 'Rights & Liberties': Richard & Anne Baldwin, Whig Patriot Publishers," Literary, Political, Scientific, Religious & Legal Publishing, Printing & Bookselling in England, 1551-1700: Twelve Studies, 2 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1965), vol. 2, pp. 369-416.

[51]Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 3; and DNB, p. 884.

This tract was followed by An Essay concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers (1694). In this work, to be examined in more detail in chapter four below, Tindal writes in support of William, praising the present establishment and attacking its opponents -- the Non Jurors. He in no way indicates dissatisfaction with the Revolution nor the settlement, nor does he express any desire for further reform.

A group of pamphlets Tindal wrote between 1715 and 1727 also support the government. After the death of Queen Anne, her ministry came under attack in Hereditary Right of the Crown of England Asserted. Tindal responded with Justice Done to the Late Ministry (1715). In 1716, he wrote a vindication of the Septennial Act, again "in defence of the Ministry then in being."[52] As we have seen, Jacob has noted that the radicals opposed Walpole. In fact, on the whole Tindal supported him -- he attacked him once in The Defection Consider'd (1717) but it was for resigning and thereby splitting the party. When Walpole returned to government, Tindal renewed his praise for him in a number of works. When attacked by Trenchard and Gordon in Cato's Letters, Tindal defended Walpole in three pamphlets.[53] In

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[52] BB, p. 3962.

[53] The Judgement of Dr. Prideaux in Condemning the Murder of Julius Caesar, by the Conspirators, As a Most Villainous Act, Maintained, and the Sophistry of the London Journal of December 2nd and 9th Exposed, with Some Political Remarks on the Roman Government (London, 1721); A Defence of Our Present Happy Establishment; and the Administration

one of these, An Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection, Tindal wrote in support of standing armies. This clearly contradicts Jacob's characterization of the radicals as vehemently opposed to them. Finally, Tindal's praise of Walpole culminated in his Corah and Moses (1727) "where he gives the highest encomiums to the same Gentleman, under the character of Moses."[54]

It should be noted that Jacob does provide a means of explaining away contradictions to her view, writing that these men were

> also occasionally 'down and out'. In consequence of these sometimes conflicting needs and interests they took employment and favours from various Whig ministers.[55]

However, Tindal does not appear to be in this situation: with his fellowship at Oxford, he would have had a level of independence unavailable to others such as Toland.[56]

Vindicated; from the Falsehood and Malice of the Several Late Treasonable Libels, viz. Cato's Letters in the London Journal. And the Historical Account of the Advantages of the Hanover Succession, &c. (London, 1722); and An Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection: As Also into the Necessity of Some Standing Forces; the Power of Judges and Juries, in relation to Libels; and the Justice of the Additional Tax of One Hundred Thousand Pounds on the Papists and Popish Recusants. With Remarks on the Discourse of Standing Armies, and other Papers of Cato the Journalist (London, 1723).

[54] BB, pp. 3962-63; and DNB, p. 884.

[55] Jacob, Radical Enlightenment, p. 99.

[56] That being said, as mentioned earlier, Tindal did receive a pension from the crown. This may be construed as evidence that he was indeed a hack writer of pamphlets for the government. In any event, besides the Third Earl of Sunderland (Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 21), the only minister with whom Tindal appeared to have had relations was Walpole. Possibly, Walpole saw the relationship as one of patron and

Tindal's repeated support of the government, in particular, of Walpole and of the necessity of standing armies, all indicate that he was not the man characterized by Jacob as a "radical Whig" in Toland's company of men. His politics were Whig but he did not subscribe to this "radical" political view. He did, however, author some of the most controversial religious writings of his time. Now that we have sorted out his politics, it is to these religious writings and another characterization of Tindal, this time as an atheist, that we now turn.

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client, but Tindal appears to have perceived it as a friendship; see BB, pp. 3962-63. Ultimately, without further evidence, it is difficult to state categorically whether Tindal's views are his own, the government's or indeed, both.

CHAPTER 3

TINDAL: COVERT ATHEIST?

One of the first problems we face in confronting Tindal's religious works is the problem of hermeneutics. David Berman, one of the more recent scholars to look at Tindal, follows some of Tindal's contemporary opponents in labelling him an "atheist". Berman suggests that in his texts, Tindal was covertly preaching atheistic views under the cover of deism.[1] To support his claim, Berman offers evidence both internal to Tindal's works and external to them.

Berman's external proof of Tindal's atheism consists of two sources, the anonymous author of The Religious, Rational and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal (1735) and Lord Egmont's diary for November 1735.[2] According to them, Tindal intimated an atheistic position through the following argument (recounted by his anonymous biographer):

> There can't be two Infinites. Which, in a certain Sense that will soon be explained, is readily granted. And having laid down this as an indisputable Maxim, he [Tindal] went on to observe, that the Notion which we had of God was,

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[1] Berman, "Deism," pp. 61-78. Berman also makes a similar case for three other English deists: Charles Blount, Anthony Collins and John Toland.

[2] One other piece of external evidence regarding Tindal's atheism that Berman does not mention is Lord Egmont's statement that one Dr. Dodd (probably the Dr. Pierce Dodd who attended Tindal in his last days) told him that Tindal "owned himself to be a speculative Atheist" (Historical Manuscripts Commission Seventh Report, (London, 1879), p. 244 (a), (Egmont MSS), quoted in Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 19).

> that he was an Infinite Being; and that if any such Being were supposed, it must follow, that there must be Infinite Space for him to be or subsist in; and then it must follow, that there were two Infinites, which, he said, was a Contradiction. In this silly sophistical manner did this vain Man endeavour to argue the Almighty out of his Existence.[3]

Berman suggests that Tindal is proposing a "garbled" version of Spinoza's pantheistic monism. The Spinozistic argument posits that there can be only one perfect, necessary being because the existence of two would mean that they would cancel out each other's perfection and necessity. Therefore the one perfect, necessary being comprises everything within itself including space.[4]

However, as Berman himself notes, the reasoning ascribed to Tindal by his biographer and Egmont does not appear in his works. If we look at Christianity As Old As the Creation, we find Tindal, in the context of arguing that there is a God and that He[5] has given people the principle of acting for their common good as a rule to live by, making reference to the one self-existent being: "Is not the

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[3] Conduct of Matthew Tindal, p. 25.

[4] Berman, "Tindal," pp. 667-68.

[5] In his texts, Tindal, when referring to God as "he" or "him", uses a lower-case "h". A look at other writers of the period, however, reveals that this does not have any particular significance. For example, Samuel Clarke, also refers to God with a lowercase "h". See Samuel Clarke, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion (London, 1705 and 1706; reprint, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag Gunther Holzboog, 1964).

Foundation of all Religion, the believing there's only one self-existent Being, to whom all others owe their Being, and their Continuance in Being?"[6] Christian advocates of natural religion, such as Samuel Clarke, would no doubt have agreed. This conception does not imply atheism and Tindal does not go on to develop it into an atheistic argument. Accordingly, without further proof, the external evidence of Tindal's atheism is inconclusive.[7]

Berman also offers internal evidence of Tindal's atheism. According to Berman, the accepted characterization of a deist is one who denies the authority of revelation and instead elevates the rule of reason. In The Nation Vindicated, Tindal, following Locke, denies the validity of the rational arguments for the immortality of the soul and instead offers up the support of the authority of revelation. If one accepts that a deist is defined as above, then Tindal is acting contrary to what one would expect. To explain this contradiction, Berman concludes that Tindal is lying about his position on immortality. Instead, Berman infers that he is a mortalist. According to Berman, as a deist, Tindal does not believe in the authority

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[6] COC, p. 278.

[7] Prior to his assertion that Tindal was an atheist in his 1987 article, "Deism," Berman himself came to this conclusion in an earlier work. He writes: "However, without additional evidence, it is difficult to decide whether Tindal accepted this atheistic line of argument"; see Berman, "Tindal," p. 668.

of revelation; hence his pronouncements to that effect are lip-service to the orthodox view. Moreover, in demonstrating that there are no rational proofs for immortality, Tindal is, in effect, undermining support for this conviction. Berman suggests that if he is lying about his position on immortality, he may also be lying about his belief in the existence of God. In any event, he goes on to argue that atheism follows from the disbelief in immortality.[8]

In assessing Berman's interpretation of Tindal's writings, we need to explore two significant problems: first, the strategy of "reading between the lines" and, secondly, the recovery of the contemporary meaning of "atheism". The first difficulty involves ascertaining whether it is justifiable to read between the lines of Tindal's work; that is, should we look for hidden messages within his texts? This will entail examining the arguments for and against reading between the lines and how they apply to Tindal, as well as suggesting criteria for determining whether such a method is appropriate. If it is established that there are adequate grounds for such a reading of Tindal, the next task is to discern whether he should be read as an atheist as Berman suggests, or whether there is a more suitable alternative reading. Since the starting point

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[8]Berman, "Deism," pp. 61-78.

for Berman's specific argument is the fact that Tindal was called an atheist by some of his contemporaries, this will involve examining the meaning of the label "atheist" in the period. Then Berman's atheism-follows-mortalism argument will be scrutinized. Tindal's most significant publication, Christianity As Old As the Creation, will be examined for evidence of atheism and, finally, two alternative readings of his work, one as Socinian, and the other as not atheistic but as critical of Christianity, will be considered.

The first difficulty that Berman's interpretation raises is the issue of how to read the texts. Is it justifiable to read between the lines? There are a number of considerations that favour such a reading. For one, there existed in England and on the continent severe limitations on the freedom of expression that modern, Western historians take for granted -- a difference that may have caused these historians to overlook the possibility of reading texts from the period in this way. The expression of heterodox views could have serious consequences during this time. As a result, writers had to develop techniques to communicate their beliefs and yet avoid prosecution for their opinions.[9] In England, such prosecution could occur

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[9]Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), pp. 31-32; David Wootton, "Lucien Febvre and the Problem of Unbelief in the Early Modern Period," Journal of Modern History, vol. 60 (1988), p. 712; and David Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, eds. Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 18.

on the basis of a common law ruling of 1676, and according to the 1698 An Act for the More Effectual Suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness. The common law ruling determined that, since Christianity was an essential part of English law, individuals could be prosecuted for speaking or writing against Christianity on the basis that they would be, in effect, attacking the law of England. The 1698 law made it an offense to "deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or [to] assert or maintain that there are more Gods than one, or [to] deny the Christian Religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of Divine Authority."[10] The danger was not theoretical as some have suggested.[11] It was real. In the seventeenth century Hobbes, who was accused of atheism, feared for his life. In the next century, two of Tindal's fellow deists were imprisoned: Thomas Woolston in 1729 and Peter Annet as late as 1762. The former died in jail. In Scotland, Thomas Aikenhead was executed in 1697 for the

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[10] An Act for the More Effectual Suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness (1698) reprinted in Robert E. Florida, "British Law and Socinianism in the 17th and 18th Centuries," Socinianism and Its Role in the Cultures of the XVIth to XVIIIth Centuries, ed. Lech Szczucki (Warsaw: Lodz, 1983), p. 209. Prosecution could also be conducted in the ecclesiastical courts; however, their powers were quite limited in this period; see Frederick Seaton Siebert, Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776: The Rise and Decline of Government Controls (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952), p. 232.

[11] G.E. Aylmer, "Unbelief in Seventeenth-Century England," Puritans and Revolutionaries, eds. Donald Pennigton and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 22. Pattison ("Tendencies of Religious Thought," p. 101) also plays down the threat of being punished for one's

expression of heretical views.[12] Based on this evidence, one can conclude that this threat would have been a relevant concern to Tindal. Indeed one of his own works, A Letter to a Member of Parliament (1698), contains a plea for freedom of expression.

An additional justification for reading between the lines is that writers may have wished to conceal certain beliefs from some people while revealing them to others according to the "two-fold philosophy" or "double-truth doctrine". There appear to be two characterizations of this idea that are pertinent to the period. The first posits that there are a minority, the philosophers, who are capable of enlightenment, while the majority are not. In conjunction with this is the conviction that religion is necessary to maintaining order among the people. Without religion, it was believed, anarchy would ensue. Social stability was preserved, in particular, through the Christian doctrine of the promise of eternal reward in heaven for virtuous behaviour and eternal punishment in hell for immoral conduct. Indeed, many freethinkers themselves believed religion was a socio-political necessity and, thus, felt obligated to conceal their true opinions under a mask

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religious views. Florida ("British Law and Socinianism," p. 205) says the act was very effective, indicating the threat was substantive.

[12]See Michael Hunter, "'Aikenhead the Atheist': The Context and Consequences of Articulate Irreligion in the Late Seventeenth Century," Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, eds. Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 221-54.

of conformity. According to this view, then, it was necessary when writing a text to give it an exoteric meaning that conformed to the popular beliefs of the people, and an esoteric meaning, that was exclusively for the contemplation of the select few.[13]

Another interpretation of the two-fold philosophy suggests that it was the result of a deliberate, rather than a necessary, division based on natural differences among men. This view postulates that the truth of natural religion was kept from the people by power-hungry politicians and priests. By veiling natural religion in a cloud of mysterious doctrines, they were able to gain a hold over the people. An assault on these mysteries was, then, an incursion on the power of the clergy and political leaders. Therefore, authors had to write exoterically with professions of belief in the orthodox position while esoterically attacking this view and unveiling the truths of natural religion to the people.[14]

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[13]Berman's emphasis on insinuation conflicts with his acceptance of this characterization of the double-truth doctrine. He posits a threefold objective for the users of the exoteric/esoteric model of expression: protection from the authorities, communication to those already in the know and insinuation -- unconsciously placing questions and doubts in the minds of believers. The conflict occurs because this extends the target audience outside the minority, the philosophers, in an attempt to influence a larger segment of society. Though Berman has not addressed this difficulty, one could argue that it is insinuation to a group that while outside the minority of philosophers is still a minority within society; they have the capacity to be enlightened whereas the rest of the people do not.

[14]Manuel, Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods, pp. 65-69; Strauss, Persecution, pp. 33-34; David Wootton, "Unbelief in Early Modern Europe," History Workshop Journal, no. 20 (1985), pp. 87-88;

The first view is at odds with Tindal's conviction stated repeatedly throughout his works and central to his argument, that all men[15] have the same capacity to discover truths through the use of human reason. Unlike Toland for example,[16] Tindal does not assert a natural two-tier division among men. He writes in Christianity As Old As the Creation:

> AND certainly, nothing can be a greater Libel on the True Religion; than to suppose it does not contain such internal Marks, as will, even to the meanest Capacity, distinguish it from all false Religions; so as that a Man, tho' unable to read in his Mother-Tongue, may, without pinning his Faith on any Sett of Priests, know what God requires of him.[17]

It is evident that Tindal believes that the truth can be attained by all men, literate or not. The second characterization is much more in keeping with Tindal's declaration that priests and politicians, particularly the former, have concealed the truths of natural religion from the majority by wrapping them in cloaks of unnecessary mystery. Tindal writes:

Wootton, "Lucien Febvre," p. 712; and Perez Zagorin, Ways of Lying (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 321-23.

[15]In reconstructing Tindal's arguments, we will follow his use of "man", "men" and the corresponding pronouns so as to accurately represent his views. However, this is done with the recognition that this language is indeed sexist. It should also be noted that Tindal does not state explicitly that women are excluded.

[16]Sullivan, John Toland, pp. 17-18.

[17]COC, p. 295.

> In short, True Religion can't but be plain, simple, and natural, as design'd for all Mankind, adapted to every Capacity, and suited to every Condition and Circumstance of Life; and if it be render'd otherwise, is it not owing to those, who have made it their Business to puzzle Mankind, and render plain Things obscure; in Order to get the Consciences, and consequently, the Properties of the People at their Disposal; and to be in a Manner ador'd, notwithstanding the grossest Immoralities, as the sole Dispensers of such Things, as no Ways relate to the Good of the Community, and to destroy all that will not comply with their pernicious Designs, as Enemies of God, and his Holy Church?[18]

Tindal's offensive against such priestly notions as believing in things above reason can be viewed then as part of an attempt to break down the constructed power of the clergy.

Other grounds for favouring reading between the lines of the texts of freethinkers such as Tindal include the fact that these writers were often accused by their contemporary opponents of expressing subversive opinions in a surreptitious manner.[19] One of the ways in which this was

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[18] COC, pp. 241-42. For similar statements, compare John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in The English Libertarian Heritage: From the Writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in "The Independent Whig" and "Cato's Letters", ed. David L. Jacobson (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), pp. 3-4, 11, 26, 166-69.

[19] Other techniques for writing between the lines include: the "bouncing compliment" -- beginning with a pious affirmation of the orthodox view and then undermining it; the "disclaimer" -- denying openly what one is in fact implying; "displacement" -- substituting one opponent for another (i.e. Roman Catholicism for Anglicanism); confining key statements to the first, last and penultimate paragraphs; bringing forth strong freethinking arguments and countering them with weak orthodox responses; speaking through another voice (similar to the use of the dialogue form) such as the persona of a commentator or translator; and writing parallel histories -- histories of other historical times and places but with the intent of criticizing contemporary Christianity; see Berman, "Deism," pp. 64-65, 73; Berman,

achieved which is relevant to Tindal's case was the use of the dialogue form. This method was often employed by authors to put forward controversial views because they could simply disown the positions their characters expressed as being those of the characters rather than their own. Indeed, Tindal used the dialogue form in Christianity As Old As the Creation. If one might reject the accusations of Tindal's contemporaries that he put forward subversive views in a deceptive manner on the basis that one cannot trust what an anti-irreligious writer might say about an opponent, proof can also be found in some of the writings of freethinkers themselves.

Probably the most forthright statement of this practice occurs in John Toland's "Clidophorus; or Of the Esoteric and Exoteric Philosophy", the second of four essays in Tetradymus (1720). Here Toland presents a mixture of both characterizations of the two-fold philosophy, writing that in ancient times politicians and pagan priests created and administered religions as a means of gaining power over the people. The truth, however, was known to a small group of philosophers, but they had to conceal it from the people,

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"Disclaimers as Offence Mechanisms," pp. 260, 264-65; David Berman, "Censorship and the Displacement of Irreligion," Journal of the History of Philosophy, vol. 27 (1989), pp. 601-4; David Berman, "Deliberate Parapraxes," International Review of Psycho-Analysis, vol. 15 (1988), pp. 381-84; Strauss, Persecution, p. 14; Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 40-42; and Zagorin, Ways of Lying, pp. 305-7. Christian writers who accused their opponents of such practices include Leonard Lessius, François Garasse and George Berkeley; see Zagorin, Ways of Lying, pp. 306, 329.

who, being incapable of enlightenment, would surely rise up against them for their beliefs. As a consequence, philosophers were forced to write exoterically and esoterically, the first representing the popular beliefs among the people and the second encoding secret truths only available to the privileged few. Toland writes:

> I have more than once hinted, that the External and Internal Doctrine, are as much now in use as ever; tho the distinction is not so openly and professedly approved, as among the Ancients. This puts me in mind of what I was told by a near relation to the old Lord Shaftesbury. The latter conferring one day with Major Wildman [the former Leveller] about the many sects of Religion in the world, they came to this conclusion at last; that notwithstanding those infinite divisions caused by the interest of the Priests and the ignorance of the People, All Wise Men Are of the Same Religion; whereupon a Lady in the room, who seemed to mind her needle more than their Discourse, demanded with some concern what that Religion was? to whom the Lord Shaftesbury strait replied, Madam, wise men never tell. And indeed, considering how dangerous it is made to tell the truth, tis difficult to know when any man declares his real sentiments of things.[20]

It is important to note two remarks in particular in this passage. The first, "I have more than once hinted, that the External and Internal Doctrine, are as much now in use as ever," points to the continuance of the two-fold philosophy during Toland's and, thus, Tindal's time. The second, "and indeed, considering how dangerous it is made to tell the

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[20]John Toland, Tetradymus (London, 1720), quoted in Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 40-41.

truth," provides evidence of the existence of limitations on the freedom of expression of these writers.[21]

There are also arguments against reading between the lines. It is possible, for instance, for authors to be unintentionally inconsistent in their thoughts.[22] Another problem with reading between the lines is the fear that such a hermeneutical approach would justify "arbitrary and

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[21]Toland also comments that when individuals espouse the popular belief one can not be sure they are expressing what they truly believe, but when they dissent from the popular view, it is likely they are articulating their true convictions; see Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 39-41. For a fuller analysis of Toland's essay, see also Berman, "Deism," pp. 62-64; and Zagorin, Ways of Lying, pp. 294-96.

[22]David Wootton, Paolo Sarpi: Between Renaissance and Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 3; and Wootton, "Lucien Febvre," p. 710. Sullivan (John Toland, p. 221) suggests that Tindal demonstrates such an inconsistency in his works with respect to Lockean epistemology. Sullivan points specifically to Tindal's use of "self-evident propositions which men can know through intuition," which he views as non-Lockean. In fact, Tindal is following Locke. For Locke on intuition, see his EHU, IV. ii. 1-15, IV. vii. 19, IV. ix. 1-3, IV. xvii. 14-17, IV. xviii. 5. For Locke on self-evident ideas, see EHU, IV. vii. 1-7, IV. xviii. 5, IV. xviii. 10, and, in particular, IV. iii. 18, where he writes: "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 our selves, 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 Mathematicks, the measures of right and wrong might be made out, to any one that will apply himself with the same Indifferency and Attention to the one, as he does to the other of these Sciences." On the whole, the secondary literature follows Sullivan in characterizing Locke as solely an empiricist. For one of the latest examples of this see J.B. Schneewind, "Locke's Moral Philosophy," The Cambridge Companion to Locke, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 199-225. For an exception to the dominant view, see John Yolton, "Locke on the Law of Nature," Philosophical Review, vol. 67 (1958), pp. 477-98.

fanciful interpretations" of a thinker.[23] Indeed, the problem of evidence looms large. In addition to being oblivious to the context of persecution, the standards of modern historical scholarship tend to preclude reading between the lines. The modern rule requires documentary proof as the basis for conclusions. Thus, scholars tend to take a freethinker's profession of faith in Christianity or religion at face value. However, if writers are intending to protect themselves from persecution, they will make such professions while still only providing subtle clues to the content of their esoteric doctrine. This is necessary because the more they are direct, the greater they are at risk of being persecuted. However, the more oblique the writers are in the interests of their personal safety, the easier it is for historians to dismiss an interpretation based on reading between the lines.[24]

Out of these difficulties arises the need to establish some criteria that should be met before accepting an interpretation based on reading between the lines. Leo Strauss has put forth two such prerequisites: that the works were written in an era in which the expression of such views would lead to persecution; and that the writers while

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[23]Wootton, "Lucien Febvre," p. 700; and Strauss, Persecution, p. 27.

[24]Strauss, Persecution, pp. 26-27; Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 18-19; and Berman, "Deism," p. 74.

perfectly knowledgeable of the orthodox view, contradict one or some of the necessary assumptions on which it is based and/or one or some of its necessary conclusions that they have affirmed elsewhere.[25] In Tindal's case the first condition is met in that Tindal was liable for persecution for the expression of heretical opinions. With respect to the second criterion, Berman has argued that Tindal covertly denies immortalism which he maintains elsewhere and which Berman suggests is an indispensable belief to Christianity. Whether this argument is valid will be examined; however, an alternative case which satisfies this second requirement will be offered. If it is accepted, Tindal fulfils both criteria.

More recently, David Wootton has suggested a detailed model consisting of six criteria which, if met, would make the perfect case for reading between the lines.[26] The first requirement is that the authors have written texts in which orthodox opinions appear to be in contradiction with unorthodox views. As will become evident, this is the case with Tindal's Christianity As Old As the Creation. In addition, the books were read by some of the authors' contemporaries as being irreligious. As we shall see, the reaction to Tindal demonstrates that he was read in this

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[25]Strauss, Persecution, p. 30.

[26]Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 36-37.

manner. Thirdly, the authors, in their works or elsewhere, pointed to an interest in writing between the lines such as Toland did in "Clidophorus". In Christianity As Old As the Creation, Tindal has "A" (who appears to represent himself) saying, "I think it my Duty never to disown my religious Sentiments."[27] However, in a discussion of ancient philosophers such as Cicero, he writes: "Perhaps, he suppos'd it not prudent, without some such softening Expressions, so plainly to attack the reigning Superstition," suggesting that Cicero practiced such techniques. Further on in this passage, he talks about Cicero writing "when 'tis not safe to talk otherwise" and "under these Disadvantages," indicating the threat of punishment for certain views.[28] Nevertheless, while he may have been implying that he was practicing similar techniques through his discussion of Cicero, there is no conclusive proof for this interpretation. An ideal case would also include statements by authors which appear to have been written in order to substantiate suspicions about their literary practices or personal beliefs. Tindal fulfils this condition by indicating that he may be taken as a "freethinker" or "deist" and giving favourable reviews of both of these positions.[29] Evidence from contemporary

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[27] COC, p. 5.

[28] COC, pp. 396-97.

[29] COC, pp. 178, 362-71.

sources that the writers were thought to be irreligious or that at a minimum, they were documented as moving within irreligious social circles would also help justify such an interpretation. The reaction to his work indicates that Tindal was believed by some of his contemporaries to be irreligious and, in chapter two above, his movement in irreligious social circles, namely the company of Toland and Collins, has been established. Finally, a perfect case would include proof in the form of manuscripts in which the authors held views which they felt were too extreme to publish. There is some evidence of further writings of Tindal in addition to his published works and two letters to John Locke.[30] It has been suggested that he had written a second volume of his Christianity As Old As the Creation and a tract denying the eternity of hell-torments.[31] However, there is no indication that these works were more radical than those he published.

In Tindal's case, then, four out of six criteria are fulfilled. While this is not an ideal basis for concluding that Tindal could be read between the lines, on balance it does suggest that there are sufficient grounds for such a

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[30]Matthew Tindal to John Locke, 10 January 1697, The Correspondence of John Locke, 8 vols., ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976-1989), vol. 5, pp. 749-50; and Matthew Tindal to John Locke, 28 September 1701, Correspondence, vol. 7, p. 445.

[31]See chapter two above and Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," p. 11.

reading.[32] I would submit, however, that this does not mean we must consequently accept Berman's interpretation of Tindal as an atheist in the modern sense of one who disbelieves in the existence of God. Berman's interpretation will be dealt with in two ways. His specific atheism-follows-mortalism argument will be examined, but first the foundation of his argument, that Tindal was accused of atheism by his opponents, will be addressed.[33]

A review of the reaction to Tindal's work reveals that on some occasions the charge of atheism was indeed made against him.[34] To account for this, we need to define what

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[32]The case has also been made for a "reading between the lines" of Thomas Hobbes, Henry Stubbe, Anthony Collins, Paolo Sarpi, Tommaso Campanella, Giambattista Vico and Pierre Bayle. It is also worth noting that two of early modern England's greatest thinkers have also been shown to have dissembled with respect to their religious beliefs. John Locke lied when he denied any knowledge of Socinian texts and Isaac Newton publicly conformed to the Church of England, but privately believed in the Arian heresy; see Berman, History of Atheism, pp. 64-65, 70-71; Wootton, Paolo Sarpi; Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 35-41; and Zagorin, Ways of Lying, pp. 311-29.

[33]Berman, "Tindal," p. 667.

[34]Simon Browne, A Defence of the Religion of Nature, and the Christian Revelation, against the Defective Account of the One, and the Exception against the Other, in a Book, Entitled, Christianity As Old As the Creation (London, 1730; EC, Reel 2528, No. 2, Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1988), pp. 45, 404; William Law, The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated. In Answer to a Book, Entitled, Christianity As Old As the Creation, The Works of the Reverend William Law, M.A. Sometime Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 9 vols. (London: G. Moreton, 1892), vol. 2, pp. 66, 103-6; Philip Skelton, Ophiomaches: or, Deism Revealed, 2 vols. (London, 1749; EC, Reel 2242, No. 1, Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1988), vol. 1, p. 169, vol. 2, p. 345; W. Williams, Some Thoughts on Christianity As Old As the Creation. In a Letter to a Member of Parliament (London, 1734; EC, Reel 2672, No. 6, Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1989), pp. 64-69; and Conduct of Matthew Tindal, pp. 20-27.

Tindal's contemporaries meant by this term. Most of the literature on the problem of the meaning of atheism has been written with respect to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was at the close of this period that Tindal began writing. In an effort to chart the changing meanings of the term, scholars have tended to mark a division around the 1680s. It is suggested that about this time the term "atheism" tended to be used more exclusively in its modern sense.[35] Of course, the meaning of the term did not change overnight; it was still in transition. As such, it will be argued that the earlier usages of the term were still current in Tindal's era.

As mentioned, Berman takes the meaning of atheism to be its modern one: the disbelief in the existence of God.[36] This interpretation, however, is problematic on two counts. First, aside from Berman, most scholars agree that there were few if any atheists in the modern sense of the word during this age; the first person in England to publicly deny the existence of God was an anonymous author in 1782.[37] In addition, the evidence indicates that the term "atheist" was used very loosely in this period; indeed, it did not necessarily mean that the person believed in the non-

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[35]Aylmer, "Unbelief," p. 46; Wootton, "Unbelief," pp. 91-92; and Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," p. 26.

[36]Berman, "Deism," pp. 76-77.

[37]Zagorin, Ways of Lying, pp. 291-93.

existence of God. Thus, the name was tossed about by partisans against one another, Protestants calling Roman Catholics and each other "atheist".[38] Tindal himself, notes for example, in New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian (1709) that a High Churchman had called the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson an "atheist", indicating it was still being used in this way in his time.[39]

One reaction to this broad use of the term "atheist" has been to dismiss it as empty, not representative of a real phenomenon, in short, meaningless. This view was first articulated by Lucien Febvre and has been re-cast in different moulds by Alan Kors and Margaret Jacob.[40] This interpretation, however, also presents some difficulties. It fails to explain why there was a sudden explosion of new terms in the sixteenth century to describe the irreligious such as "atheist", "deist", "Epicurean", "a-Christist", "Lucianist", "libertine", and in the late seventeenth century such as "materialist", "freethinker" and

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[38]Michael Hunter, "The Problem of 'Atheism' in Early Modern England," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, vol. 35 (1985), pp. 138-39.

[39]Matthew Tindal, New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian. Utrum Horum Never a Barrel the Better Herring (London, 1709), p. 14.

[40]See Lucien Febvre, The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Kors, Atheism in France; and Jacob, Radical Enlightenment.

"pantheist".[41] In addition, while the term was used broadly, there is evidence of it also being used in the more narrow sense of irreligion.[42]

One response to these problems is David Wootton's argument that in the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth centuries, "atheist" meant either someone who did not believe in God or someone who held beliefs which made God's existence irrelevant. This would include, for example, denying reward and punishment in an afterlife for actions taken in this life. Thus, an atheist could believe (and often did believe) in a god. This explanation, then, accounts for uses of the term relating to those who denied God's providence outright, those who held beliefs that suggested they did, and those who acted in such a manner that led one to conclude that they did. The latter would include, for example, those who behaved immorally or who pursued pleasure and power.[43] This double definition is evident in Tindal's An Essay concerning the Power of the Magistrate (1697) where he describes "those who deny the

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[41]Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," p. 25.

[42]Hunter, "Problem of `Atheism'," pp. 139-40.

[43]Wootton, Paolo Sarpi, p. 5; Wootton, "Unbelief," p. 86; and Wootton, "New Histories of Atheism," pp. 25-26. Michael Hunter employs a similar definition writing that "atheists were seen as people who denied the existence of God, either directly or by implication." See his "Science and Heterodoxy: An Early Modern Problem Reconsidered," Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution, eds. D.C. Lindberg and R.S. Westman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 441.

Existence of a God, or that he concerns himself with Humane Affairs" as holding "Atheistical Principles."[44]

Another interpretation which does consider the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries also rejects the argument that the term "atheism" was devoid of meaning. While acknowledging that the term was used loosely to mean "godless", and thus, was directed at a range of people, Michael Hunter emphasizes that the term was also employed in a more narrow sense to refer to those who did not believe in the existence of God or those who held beliefs that intimated this such as a denial of God's providence. Thus, contemporaries distinguished between the broad and narrow definitions. Important to this interpretation is what Hunter calls the profile of a "stock" atheist as one who denies the immortality of the soul, repudiates the existence of an absolute morality, is sceptical of the authority of the Bible, favours natural over supernatural explanations for phenomena, is worldly, acts immorally, holds a Machiavellian view of religion as something invented by political leaders to maintain social order, has shallow learning, is a scoffer, witty, sarcastic, arrogant and iconoclastic. Two important beliefs help to explain the reaction to atheism. Firstly, there existed a tendency in this period to see atheism as a progressive phenomenon; that

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[44] EPM, p. 6.

is, that a person would gradually become more and more irreligious. Thus, holding one of these atheistic views was seen as a first step to full-blown atheism. Closely related to this was a propensity to attribute to mild cases of atheism, an extreme picture of atheism. Thus often the full set of characteristics of the picture of the "stock" atheist was read into what was in reality a much milder case. This interpretation, then, argues that while the threat of atheism was indeed exaggerated and unfounded, it was also meaningful. It indicated a concern within society about tendencies towards atheism rather than atheism itself. Examples of these tendencies include: the secularization of thought evident in a growing emphasis on reason and natural causes; and the apparent rejection of traditional social mores and promotion of immorality by the gentlemanly culture of the day. This interpretation concludes that atheism was not widespread in its extreme form but that there did exist various scattered instances of atheistic behaviour.[45] Tindal did exhibit some of these characteristics, such as scepticism about the Bible (to be discussed below), the preference for natural over supernatural explanations for phenomena,[46] and the alleged displays of immoral behaviour already discussed in chapter two. Owing to the belief in

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[45]Hunter, "Problem of `Atheism'," pp. 135-57; and Hunter, "Science and Heterodoxy," pp. 437-60.

[46]COC, p. 337.

progression towards atheism and the difficulty in distinguishing between mild and extreme cases of atheism, we can understand why Tindal would have been called an atheist, without his actually being an atheist in the modern sense of one who denies the existence of God. This view then helps to counteract Berman's argument for a full-fledged movement of covert atheism in which Tindal could be situated.

Next, we need to look at Berman's contention that atheism follows from mortalism. Berman writes:

> According to rationalist theologians such as [Samuel] Clarke, immortality and a future life ineluctably follow from (1) God's justice and providence and (2) the fact that the just and unjust do not always get their proper rewards in this world. If one accepts (2) and mortalism, then it will be difficult to resist the conclusion that God cannot be just or providential; yet these were regarded as necessary features of the Christian God. Once mortalism is accepted, atheism seems to follow.[47]

In The Nation Vindicated, Tindal argues that the immortality of the soul could not be proven by rational arguments and instead, one had to accept its truth on the basis of revelation. It is important to note that a believer such as John Locke had arrived at the same conclusion as Tindal.[48] Berman attempts to obviate this objection by reasoning that in the case of Locke, external evidence of his belief in

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[47] Berman, "Deism," p. 77.

[48] John Locke, Second Reply to Stillingfleet, Works, 3 vols. (London, 1722), vol. 1, p. 571, quoted in Berman, "Deism," p. 71; and EHU, IV. iii. 6.

Christianity gives credibility to his professions of faith in Scripture. With Tindal however, Berman argues that as a deist, his affirmations of belief in the Bible must necessarily be insincere and that there is no external proof to counteract such an interpretation.[49]

In reality, Berman has failed to grasp the subtleties of the issue of "mortalism" in this period and has fallen into the trap of viewing deviancy from the orthodox view as a stop on the road to unbelief. According to the orthodox position, upon the death of the body, the immortal soul maintained consciousness in heaven or hell and awaited the Last Day. The orthodox opposed the mortalists who can be divided into three groups: those who asserted that upon death the soul is annihilated along with the body (annihilationists); those who posited that the soul dies with the body and is resurrected to immortality at the General Resurrection (thnetopsychists); and those who thought that at death, the immortal soul "sleeps" in the grave to be awaken at the General Resurrection when the body is resurrected (psychopannychists). Though the thnetopsychists believed that the soul is ultimately immortal and the psychopannychists held that the soul is always immortal, but unconscious for a period, these two groups along with the annihilationists were attacked by the

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[49]Berman, "Deism," pp. 70-72.

orthodox and labelled "mortalist". Norman Burns documents the historical existence of mortalism among Christians: Familists, millenarians, Socinians, Anabaptists, Ranters, Adventists, Muggletonians and General Baptists. The evidence indicates that Locke himself was a psychopannychist. These groups based their ideas on the Bible and used them to support such beliefs as the conviction that the resurrection was central to the Christian faith and that Christ's millennial reign on earth was imminent.[50] Clearly then, one could be a mortalist without being an atheist.[51]

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[50]Norman T. Burns, Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 9, 13-14, 40, 147.

[51]Was Tindal a mortalist? A contemporary, Philip Skelton, argues that he was; see Skelton, Ophiomaches, vol. 1, pp. 167-71. If we turn to COC, Tindal has "A" asserting that a deist would agree with Clarke's depiction of the deist's creed which includes belief in a "future State of Rewards and Punishments in a Life to come" (p. 365). However, as we have seen, one can believe in an afterlife and be a mortalist as defined by Burns. Nonetheless, we do have a clue as to Tindal's view. He follows a common Christian mortalist belief by intimating a denial of "the absolute eternity of hell torments". This was the doctrine that the damned would suffer eternally for the sins they had committed. Tindal calls into question this conviction in two contexts. The first is in a discussion of priestcraft. He writes: "And imposing on them, by the Terrors of temporal and eternal Punishment, such needless Speculations and useless Observances" (COC, p. 107). Indeed, this was a common critique of the orthodox position by Christian mortalists who saw it as the basis for such Roman Catholic doctrines as purgatory and the invocation of saints (Burns, Christian Mortalism, p. 19). This tenet was also opposed because it contradicted the idea of a good, just and merciful God; see D.P. Walker, The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 42-45. Was God so cruel as to exact infinite punishment for finite sins? Tindal appears to agree with this criticism, arguing "that all Punishment must bear an exact Proportion to the Offence it is design'd to amend" (COC, p. 42). Many non-orthodox Christians, including Locke, rejected this doctrine; see RC, p. 6. In sum, we do not have conclusive proof that Tindal was a mortalist, but

We have accounted for Tindal being called an atheist by his contemporaries, and we have also refuted Berman's atheism-follows-mortalism argument. Let us now turn to examine Tindal's chief religious work, Christianity As Old As the Creation for any indications of atheism. The first significant reference to atheism is in the context of a discussion of superstitious religious beliefs. Tindal argues that bigots -- by which he means persons who because of their convictions harm their fellow Christians -- are worse than atheists. He refers to Plutarch as arguing that "Atheism, tho' an Opinion false, and even stupid, yet is far less hurtful to Men than Superstition." He also cites Bacon directly: "'Atheism leaves a Man to Sense, to Philosophy, to natural Pity, to Laws, to Reputation; all which may be Guides to an outward moral Virtue, tho' Religion were not: But Superstition dismounts all these.'" Again, he turns to Bacon, who states that in contrast to superstitious periods, "'the Times inclining to Atheism (as the Time of *Augustus Caesar*) were civil Times.'"[52] In this excerpt, he appears to suggest that an atheist may be moral and hence that, contrary to conventional belief, atheism is not detrimental to the social order. Is Tindal hinting at a pro-atheist position? If he is, he does not seize the opportunities

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his denial of the absolute eternity of hell torments indicates that he, like Locke, was probably a mortalist in the sense of being a thnetopsychist or a psychopannychist.

[52] COC, pp. 99-100.

that are available to support such a view. For example, in one passage, he writes, "he [God] either must be perfectly good, or not be at all."[53] He could have implied that there indeed was no God at all by demonstrating that God was not perfectly good. But he does not do this. Later in the work, he states: "To weaken the Force of Demonstration, is to strike at all Religion, and even the Being of God."[54] However, Tindal promotes rather than weakens this force; his whole argument is based on his belief that through unaided reason man can demonstrate the existence of God and the moral law. In reality, he appears to be responding to scepticism rather than championing it.

Moreover, Tindal's argument, discussed earlier, that "the True Religion" enables man to "know what God requires of him" presupposes the existence of God because the assumption is that God wants humankind to understand its moral obligations. In sum, Tindal's chief religious work also leads us to the conclusion that he is not an atheist in the modern sense of the word.

What are the alternatives when it comes to reading Tindal? At first glance, it appears that a case may be made that Tindal was a Socinian.[55] He shared with Socinians

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[53] COC, p. 78.

[54] COC, p. 184.

[55] It is interesting to note that All Souls, Tindal's college, had a collection of Socinian works around the middle of the seventeenth century, "a fact in itself of considerable interest, for no other

beliefs such as the rejection of the absolute eternity of hell torments, the denial of the atonement (that is, the substitutionary satisfaction of Christ for the sins of humankind),[56] toleration and possibly mortalism. It has been suggested that Tindal was connected with an English variant of Socinianism in the 1690s.[57] Indeed, in this decade Tindal did author two anti-Trinitarian publications and is said to have funded another.[58] However, while having a rationalist tendency, Socinians also believed in the

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college in Oxford at that time possessed so many heretical books. It is doubtful whether even the Bodleian had so many"; see H. John McLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 125. For a list of these books, see McLachlan, Socinianism, pp. 144-45.

[56] COC, pp. 418-19.

[57] Sullivan, John Toland, pp. 6-7.

[58] The two works are: A Letter to the Reverend the Clergy of Both Universities, concerning the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed. With Reflections on All the Late Hypotheses, Particularly Dr. W's, Dr. S--th's; the Trinity Placed in Its Due Light; the 28 Propositions; the Calm Discourse of a Trinity in the Godhead, and the Defence of Dr. Sherlock's Notions. With a Short Discourse concerning Mysteries (London, 1694; EEB, Reel 518, No. 10, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1976) and The Reflections on the XXVIII Propositions Touching the Doctrine of the Trinity, in a Letter to the Clergy, &c. Maintain'd, against the Third Defence of the Said Propositions (London, 1695; EEB, Reel 518, No. 11, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1976). The work he was said to have funded was Samuel Crellius' The Beginning of the Gospel of John Restored from Ecclesiastical Antiquity, and Illustrated from the Same Source, by a New Method (1726); see Robert Wallace, Antitrinitarian Biography: or Sketches of the Lives and Writings of Distinguished Antitrinitarians; Exhibiting a View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship in the Principal Nations of Europe, from the Reformation to the Close of the Seventeenth Century: To Which Is Prefixed a History of Unitarianism in England during the Same Period, 3 vols. (London: E.T. Whitfield, 1850), vol. 1, p. 487.

authority of divine revelation.[59] As will become evident, in attacking the Scriptures, Tindal clearly went beyond the boundaries of this heretical movement.

Instead, a more convincing alternative is that Tindal is not an atheist but is critical of Christianity. I would propose that when we read Tindal, we find him ostensibly arguing that Christianity as a revealed religion is in accord with natural religion. But, a closer reading of the text discloses that Tindal is suggesting that this is not true. This interpretation limits Tindal's writing between the lines to an attack on revealed religion, and in particular, Christianity.

Tindal opens Christianity As Old As the Creation with orthodox statements about hoping "greatly to advance the Honour of *External* Revelation; by shewing the perfect Agreement between *That*, and *Internal* Revelation" and "on *Natural* Religion; which, as I take it, differs not from *Reveal'd*, but in the Manner of its being communicated: The One being the Internal, as the Other the External Revelation of the same Unchangeable Will of a Being, who is alike at all Times infinitely Wise and Good."[60] It was common for those in the Latitudinarian tradition such as Clarke to use natural religion to bolster revealed religion. However, as

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[59]Robert E. Florida, "Voltaire and the Socinians," Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, vol. 122 (1974), pp. 35-45.

[60]COC, pp. 8, 3.

will become evident, Tindal proceeds to launch an assault on external revelation.

The possibility of Christianity not being the true religion is hinted at when Tindal states:

> Nay, even those very Men, who most ridicule the Doctrine of Sincerity, never fail on other Occasions to assert, that Infidelity is owing to the Want of a sincere Examination; and that whoever impartially considers Christianity, must be convinc'd of its Truth. And I might add, That cou'd we suppose, a sincere Examination wou'd not always produce this Effect, yet must it always make Men acceptable to God; since that is all God can require; all that it is in their Power to do for the Discovery of his Will.[61]

Evidently, a sincere examination might discredit Christianity rather than confirm it. He also offers the possibility that revealed religion may not be in accord with natural religion. He observes: "Tho, if Natural and Reveal'd Religion can differ, it must be a greater Crime to revile a Religion, that is eternal, universal, and unchangeable; than a Religion that is not so."[62] This prospect is confirmed when Tindal, after reciting various favourable characterizations of Christianity, proclaims: "Does not every One see, that if the Religion of Nature had been put instead of Christianity, these Descriptions wou'd have exactly agreed with it?"[63] Evidently, Christianity and

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[61] COC, pp. 2-3.

[62] COC, p. 377.

[63] COC, p. 34.

natural religion are not identical. Tindal surreptitiously identifies himself as an opponent of Christianity when he remarks on the slaughter of the Canaanites by the Jews. He declares: "This, You know, has given great Advantage to the Enemies of our Religion, who represent the whole Proceeding, as an unparallell'd Piece of Injustice and Cruelty."[64] In fact, that is how Tindal portrayed this incident just a few pages earlier.[65] These examples demonstrate how under the veil of orthodox pronouncements, Tindal indicates he is attacking Christianity.

The thrust of his argument is against both the Old and New Testaments, with his attack moving on a number of fronts. For one, he strikes at the external proofs of the true religion, such as "*uninterrupted Traditions, incontested Miracles, Confession of Adversaries, Number of Proselytes, Agreement among themselves*,"[66] in particular opposing the Christian argument that the Biblical miracles prove that Scripture is God's divine revelation. The characters of the deliverers of the revelation, the prophets and the apostles, are also thrown into disrepute. Arguing that they were capable of making mistakes and even lying, Tindal concludes that their words should not be blindly

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[64] COC, p. 272.

[65] COC, p. 264.

[66] COC, p. 234.

accepted.[67] He also contends that during the conveyance of the revelation, the transmitters altered the Bible to support their own views.[68] His argument that the integrity of the Bible was violated through the ages is extended to include the Bible's translators.[69] Furthermore, he suggests that as "the Probability of Facts depending on human Testimony, must gradually lessen in Proportion to the Distance of the Time when they were done," eventually the Bible will have no authority at all.[70]

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[67] COC, pp. 245, 262.

[68] COC, pp. 158-59.

[69] COC, p. 290.

[70] COC, p. 185. For this argument, Tindal refers to John Craige's Principia Mathematica Theologiae Christiana, p. 23. Richard Nash interprets Tindal as rejecting Craige's argument; see his John Craige's *Mathematical Principles of Christian Theology* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 4. However, it is not clear how he arrived at that conclusion. The passage in question is as follows: "Nay, the very Nature of Probability is such, that were it [a Revelation] only left to Time itself, even that wou'd wear it quite out; at least if it be true what *Mathematicians* pretend to demonstrate, *viz*. That the Probability of Facts depending on human Testimony, must gradually lessen in Proportion to the Distance of the Time when they were done. And we have a Reverend Divine, who has publish'd, as he thinks, a Demonstration of This, with Relation to the Facts recorded in Scripture; and has gone so far, as to fix the precise Time, when all Probability of the Truth of the History of Christ, will be entirely spent, and exhausted" (COC, p. 185). Given the overall thrust of Tindal's work, it would appear that he has raised this argument as one more weapon in his attack on revealed religion. It should also be noted that the context for Craige's calculation was as follows. From Luke 18:8, he determined that the Second Coming of Christ would not occur until the probability of Christ's history would have almost disappeared. He then calculated that the probability of Christ's written history would disappear 3150 years after his birth. Therefore, "For Christ to come, 1454 years must first elapse...Whence it is clear how seriously mistaken are all those who establish the advent of Christ so near to our own times" (John Craige, Mathematical Principles of

The attack on revelation continues when Tindal claims that the Bible imparts to people erroneous conceptions of God, for example as "not only falsifying his Word but his Oaths."[71] As we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, Tindal extends his critique to the Bible's problematic use of figurative language, such as parables, allegories and metaphors, and its improper moral teachings.

Tindal's relentless attack on Christianity is brought to a close with a reference to the beginning of the work where "B" said:

> This seems to my *bewilder'd* Reason to imply, that there was from the Beginning but One True Religion, which all Men might know was their Duty to embrace; and if This is true, I can't well conceive, how this Character can consist with *Christianity*; without allowing it at the same Time, to be *as old as the Creation*. And yet notwithstanding all these seeming Difficulties, I am confident the Christian Religion is the Only True Religion; but since these Difficulties are of your raising, I may, in Justice, expect that You shou'd solve 'em.[72]

"A" remarks:

> Yet You were at a Loss, how to make out Christianity to be this perfect, this original Religion; how far I have gone in removing this Difficulty, You best know.[73]

Christian Theology, trans. Richard Nash in Nash, John Craige's *Mathematical Principles of Christian Theology*, pp. 68-71).

[71] COC, p. 251. See also pp. 255, 257, 266.

[72] COC, pp. 7-8.

[73] COC, p. 432.

Tindal's comments indicate that he may not have removed these difficulties but rather shown that Christianity is not the true religion. Our analysis suggests that this is what he has done.

This interpretation of Tindal is also borne out in contemporary reactions to his work. John Leland, who wrote a comprehensive work on deism as well as a specific refutation of Tindal's Christianity As Old As the Creation observed:

> One would have been apt to expect from the title of this book, that he should have set himself to prove, that the gospel is perfectly agreeable to the law of nature; that it hath set the great principles of natural religion in the clearest light, and that it was designed to publish and confirm it anew, after it had been very much obscured and defaced through the corruption of mankind...But whosoever closely and impartially examineth his book, will find that all this plausible appearance, and pretended regard to Christianity, is only intended as a cover to his real design, which was to set aside all revealed religion, and entirely to destroy the authority of the Scriptures...That such external revelation is absolutely needless and useless...that reason and external revelation are inconsistent...And that therefore the best thing that can be done for them [mankind] is to engage them to throw off all regard to revelation, and *to adhere to the pure simple dictates of the light of nature*.[74]

Evidently, Leland saw that under the cover of professed pious intentions, Tindal struck at the Bible and, thus, Christianity. In the next chapter, we turn to an analysis

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[74]John Leland, A View of the Principal Deistical Writers, 3 vols. (London, 1755-1757; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 114-15.

of an important aspect of his attack: his use of natural law.

CHAPTER 4

NATURAL LAW: THE NEGLECTED CONNECTION

In chapter one, we saw that the predominant explanation of the origin of English deism was that it was part of a larger phenomenon, namely the tendency to rationalize religion; a tendency which emerged as a product of two interrelated movements, the scientific and philosophical revolutions, and as a reaction to the intense religious partisanship of the preceding age. The last fifteen years have seen varying accounts of the intellectual origins of deism. Margaret Jacob focuses on the influence of the Hermetic tradition, rekindled in England during the Commonwealth period, and conveyed to John Toland primarily through the writings of Giordano Bruno. Robert Sullivan brings together two earlier themes in the historiography, perceiving as he does Toland's deism arising out of a fusion of Latitudinarian and Socinian arguments. Finally, in one of the most recent studies of English deism, J.A.I. Champion turns to Harringtonian republicanism as the source of the movement's key features: anti-clericalism, and a desire to establish a civil religion.

One factor that has been almost completely overlooked in the historiography is that of natural law.[1] The term

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[1]While the concept of natural law is occasionally mentioned in explanations of the content of a deist's beliefs, I have found only one scholar, Ernest Mossner, who refers to it with respect to deism's

"natural law" refers to the belief that there exists in nature, a body of universal, unchangeable and binding principles by which the legitimacy of human beings' moral beliefs, political institutions and laws are to be judged. While sharing this idea in common, natural law theories do vary somewhat. For example, with respect to how individuals know the content of the natural law, one conviction is that they have innate knowledge of these principles while another suggests that they can discover these laws by using the distinctively human faculty of reason. Typically, these theories postulate that the laws of nature are knowable by anyone.

Before writing any of his religious works, Tindal wrote a pamphlet on natural law entitled An Essay concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the Duty of Subjects in All Revolutions, with Some Considerations Touching the Present Juncture of Affairs (hereafter referred to as Essay). It is interesting to note that, although his most important work, Christianity As Old As the Creation, is concerned with religion, many of the themes in the earlier Essay resurface in Christianity As Old As the Creation. Furthermore, these natural law themes form the basis for many of Tindal's criticisms of revealed religion. I will argue that Tindal employs natural law as one of the cornerstones for his attack on Christianity and,

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beginnings, but even then he gives it only momentary consideration; see his Bishop Butler, pp. 23-26.

consequently, that the natural law tradition should be considered as a factor in the intellectual origins of English deism.

To begin, we will examine that tradition, emphasizing in particular two contexts: the refutation -- led by Hugo Grotius -- of moral scepticism, and John Locke's response to Sir Robert Filmer's patriarchalist political theory. We will then proceed to a detailed analysis of Tindal's own natural law work, the Essay. Following this, we will demonstrate that many of the natural law arguments found in the Essay form the basis for Tindal's attacks on various aspects of the Christian religion in Christianity As Old As the Creation. Given the powerful influence of Locke (which will be established in this chapter), it will be worthwhile to integrate into this discussion a comparison of Locke's and Tindal's views on these elements of Christianity. We will then situate Tindal in the broader context of the refutation of moral scepticism, closing with a comment on the relationship between natural law and English deism.

Natural law has a rich tradition.[2] Though the first comprehensive statement of a theory of natural law appears

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[2]This brief history of the natural law tradition is taken principally from Paul E. Sigmund, Natural Law in Political Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1971). In this condensed account, I have attempted to sketch out the main developments in the tradition while highlighting, in particular, those relevant to Tindal. Other texts worth consulting include those of Heinrich Rommen (in particular part one) and A.P. d'Entrèves (in particular chapters two, three and four); see Heinrich A. Rommen, The Natural Law: A Study in Legal and Social History and Philosophy, trans. Thomas R. Hanley (London: B. Herter Book Co., 1947); and A.P. d'Entrèves, Natural Law: An Introduction to Legal Philosophy, 2nd ed. (London: Hutchinson

in the works of Cicero, its roots are traced back as far as Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, the Sophists and even the pre-Socratics. While debate exists as to what extent these early philosophers actually formulated a natural law theory, Plato did conceive of a natural justice independent of human convention and, thus, as a standard against which human ideas of justice were to be compared. For his part, Aristotle wrote:

> By general laws I mean those based upon nature. In fact, there is a general idea of just and unjust in accordance with nature, as all men in a manner divine, even if there is neither communication nor agreement between them.[3]

While they may not have been part of a natural law theory themselves, these conceptions of justice and law laid the groundwork for later natural law theory.

Stoicism (which was the chief influence on Cicero), conceived of nature, in both a material and moral sense, as

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University Library, 1970). More recent work in the history of natural law has been undertaken by Richard Tuck, Stephen Buckle and Knud Haakonssen. See Richard Tuck, "Grotius, Carneades and Hobbes," Grotiana, n.s., vol. 4 (1983), pp. 43-62; Richard Tuck, "The 'Modern' Theory of Natural Law," The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 99-122; Richard Tuck, Philosophy and Government 1572-1651 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Stephen Buckle, Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Knud Haakonssen, "Hugo Grotius and the History of Political Thought," Political Theory, vol. 13 (1985), pp. 239-65; and Knud Haakonssen, Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[3]Aristotle, The "Art" of Rhetoric, trans. John Henry Freese (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), Book I, No. 1373b, quoted in Sigmund, Natural Law, p. 18.

ordered by logos or reason. Cicero went on to formulate the doctrine as such:

> There is a true law, right reason in accord with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting....It is wrong to abrogate this law and it cannot be annulled....There is one law, eternal and unchangeable, binding at all times upon all peoples; and there will be, as it were, one common master and ruler of men, God, who is the author of this law, its interpreter and its sponsor.[4]

While Cicero does not indicate explicitly the content of natural law, from his writings, it appears to include the belief that all humans by virtue of their faculty of reason are equal in their capacity for moral action though not in a political nor a social sense. In Cicero's writings, the content of natural law also seems to consist of the obligations to respect the life and property of others, and to contribute to society.

Pagan natural law theory was appropriated by Christianity. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul writes: "For when the gentiles which have not the Law [of Moses], do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts."[5] The implication of this passage is that the content of natural law is equivalent to the Law of Moses. This association between

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[4]Cicero, Book III, chapter 22 of The Commonwealth, quoted in Sigmund, Natural Law, p. 22.

[5]Paul, Romans 2:14-15, quoted in Sigmund, Natural Law, p. 27.

natural law and the Bible endured such that in the twelfth century, the monk Gratian wrote that "natural law is what is contained in the Old and New Testaments, which commands every man to do unto another what he would have done unto himself and forbids him to do unto another what he would not have done unto himself."[6] Some commentators have interpreted Gratian to mean that the content of natural law is equivalent to all the laws in the Bible while others have argued for a more narrow definition; that natural law consists of the Golden Rule as found in Scripture.

While earlier Christian writers tended to conflate natural and divine law, St. Thomas Aquinas distinguished the one from the other. Humans could know the natural law through their reason, but reason only gave them partial knowledge of God's eternal law. The divine law directly revealed to humans through the Bible confirmed the natural law and added knowledge which human reason alone could not attain. For Aquinas, the first precept of natural law is "that good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided."[7] The rest of the content of natural law follows from this precept. While Aquinas does not spell out in detail what these precepts are, he explains how they can be derived. He reasons that the precepts of natural law as

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[6] Corpus Juris Canonici (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1879), quoted and translated by Sigmund in his, Natural Law, p. 48.

[7] St. Thomas Aquinas, The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. English Dominicans (London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1915), Pt. I-II, qu. 94, a. 2, quoted in Sigmund, Natural Law, p. 53.

something to be done or avoided must consist of whatever humankind's practical reason naturally apprehends to be good or evil. Arguing that good has the nature of an end and evil the opposite, he concludes that all those things to which humans are naturally inclined are naturally apprehended by reason as being good and their opposites as evil. Therefore, the order of the precepts of natural law follows the order of natural inclinations: the inclinations of all living things, the inclination of animals, and the inclinations of humans. For example, he writes that living things are inclined to preserve themselves; that animals are inclined to have and raise offspring; and that humans are inclined to live in society and to worship God. Thus, it would appear that for Aquinas, the content of natural law consists of such duties as the obligation to preserve oneself, the obligation to preserve humankind by having and raising children, the obligation to be sociable in the sense of living in society and the obligation to worship God.

Not long after Aquinas, William of Ockham opposed a long-standing belief in natural law theory, up to this point, that the content of natural law could be established independently of God. Prior to Ockham, most theorists had argued that good and evil were inherent in the order of the universe. Accordingly, God could not will an evil thing to be good. Ockham, however, countered that this restricted God's power and that instead, good and evil depended on the will of God; that is, that something was good not because it

was inherently good but because God willed it so. As such, God, if He so wished, could make seemingly sinful acts such as adultery right instead of wrong. Despite his belief, Ockham was able to hold a natural law theory by positing that while God was capable of changing what was good and evil at any moment, he did not choose to do so. As such, there existed in practice a fixed set of precepts which made up the content of natural law.

One of the significant principles of natural law put forward by Ockham was the principle that the community's consent was required to establish legitimate government over them. Following Ockham, Francisco Suarez argued that legitimate government required consent, stating that as humans were naturally free, no one person had authority over another.

Richard Hooker also suggested that it is necessary that those who are to be governed give their consent. In his writings, this requirement for consent appeared to be founded on the natural equality of humans. Like many of his predecessors, most of what Hooker identifies as the content of natural law can be found in Scripture. The first two principles of natural law he names explicitly as Christ's two commandments to love God and love our neighbour. The rest of its content, he writes, can be derived from these two principles.

The seventeenth century saw important new developments in natural law.[8] One of the contexts for these new developments was the revival of moral scepticism. According to this view, there is no universal right and wrong; rather, man calls that "good" which is in his own interest and that "evil" which opposes it. The French sceptics Pierre Charron and Michel de Montaigne revived this argument with new evidence: the recent discoveries of new cultures revealed the simultaneous existence of societies with differing moral beliefs.

Clearly, moral scepticism was in marked opposition to the tradition of natural law. The man who chose to respond to this attack was the multi-talented Hugo Grotius. In his great work, De Iure Belli ac Pacis, Grotius situates himself in the context we have been discussing by naming Carneades (214-129 B.C.), head of the sceptical Academy in Greece, as his opponent and as the representative of scepticism.[9] Grotius' response to scepticism involved accepting the sceptical principle that man acts in his own interest.[10] By

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[8]The following is based on Tuck, "Grotius"; Tuck, "Theory of Natural Law"; Tuck, Philosophy and Government; Haakonssen, "Hugo Grotius"; and Haakonssen, Natural Law and Moral Philosophy.

[9]LWP, Prolegomena 5.

[10]Grotius writes approvingly of Cicero: "He calls first principles of nature those in accordance with which every animal from the moment of its birth has regard for itself and is impelled to preserve itself, to have zealous consideration for its own condition and for those things which tend to preserve it, and also shrinks from destruction and things which appear likely to cause destruction" (LWP, I. ii. 1. i).

arguing that it is in man's self-interest to enter into society, Grotius reasons that the content of natural law consists of those laws that must be respected for society to exist.[11] The content of these laws can be found in De Iure Belli ac Pacis, however, they are most clearly stated in his earlier work, De iure praedae commentarius (also known as De Indis), where he details the laws as follows:

> It shall be permissible to defend one's own life and to shun that which threatens to prove injurious and it shall be permissible to acquire for oneself, and to retain, those things which are useful for life...Let no one inflict injury upon his fellow and let no one seize possession of that which has been taken into the possession of another.[12]

According to Grotius then, for society to exist it is required that at a minimum these laws, which Richard Tuck calls the laws of self-preservation and the laws of inoffensiveness and abstinence, be respected. Like the sceptics, Grotius also turns to empirical evidence to support his theory, arguing that no society exists or has been known to exist without these minimum natural laws.

One of the important by-products of Grotius' defense of natural law against the sceptics was its secularization.

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[11]Grotius writes: "Right reason, moreover, and the nature of society, which must be studied in the second place and are of even greater importance, do not prohibit all use of force, but only that use of force which is in conflict with society, that is which attempts to take away the rights of another. For society has in view this object, that through community of resource and effort each individual be safe-guarded in the possession of what belongs to him" (LWP, I. ii. 1. v).

[12]Hugo Grotius, De iure praedae commentarius, I, trans. G.L. Williams (Oxford, 1950), pp. 9-13, quoted in Tuck, "Theory of Natural Law," p. 111.

According to Knud Haakonssen, whereas it had been previously argued that the content of natural law could be established independently of God, Grotius was the first to argue that natural law would oblige even if God did not exist.[13] Prior to Grotius, it was believed that the only basis for our obligation to follow natural law was the will of God. But Grotius had established that there was a source for the obligation of natural law in nature, that is, in the principle of man's self-interest. As we have seen, being that it is in man's self-interest to enter into society, man is obligated to obey the natural laws of self-preservation, inoffensiveness and abstinence because these laws must be respected for society to exist. In the process of establishing that there was a reason to obey natural law independently of God's will, Grotius also separated natural law from the Christian religion by diminishing its content. Previously, the content of natural law was often identified with Scripture. Grotius, however, denied that either the Old or New Testament was a statement of the natural law.[14]

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[13]Haakonssen, Natural Law and Moral Philosophy, p. 29; and Knud Haakonssen, "Natural Law," The Encyclopedia of Ethics, 2 vols., ed. Lawrence C. Becker (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), vol. 2, p. 887. Grotius writes: "What we have been saying would have a degree of validity even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God, or that the affairs of men are of no concern to Him" (LWP, Prolegomena 11).

[14]Grotius writes: "There are some who urge that the Old Testament sets forth the law of nature. Without doubt they are in error, for many of its rules come from the free will of God...This [the New Testament] however -- contrary to the practice of most men -- I have distinguished from the law of nature" (LWP, Prolegomena 48-50).

Thus, he removed much of the previous content of natural law and separated it by marking it as divine positive law.

In using the sceptic's own principle of self-interest, Grotius had founded a school of modern natural law theory which was to include as its members Thomas Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf, Richard Cumberland and John Locke.[15] As we shall see, Tindal can also be interpreted as writing in this broader context.

The other and more immediate context for Tindal's Essay is John Locke's attack on Sir Robert Filmer's patriarchalist political theory. Filmer wrote his Patriarcha in defense of absolutist monarchy and in response to the Catholic natural law theories of consent. While his argument consists mainly of Biblical references, he too appealed to the law of nature. According to Filmer, the power of the king over his subjects is of the same nature as that of a father over his children. Therefore, as a father by the law of nature has absolute power over his children, a king has absolute power over his subjects.

It is Filmer's view that Locke attacks in the first of the Two Treatises of Government. In the second, which has been called, "the most influential work on natural law ever written,"[16] Locke asserts that humans are naturally equal

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[15]This was the interpretation of eighteenth-century historians of moral philosophy. For Hobbes see Tuck, "Grotius," pp. 59-62, and for Pufendorf, Cumberland, and Locke see Tuck, "Theory of Natural Law," passim.

[16]Sigmund, Natural Law, p. 81.

and from this argues that consent is necessary for government to be legitimate. According to Paul Sigmund, Locke's theory differs from the previous theories of consent because the act of consent is individual whereas the others were "a corporate act of the community at some point in the past."[17] Locke begins his theory with the state of nature.[18] One feature of this state is that it is one

> *of Equality*, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection.[19]

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[17] Sigmund, Natural Law, p. 84.

[18] The following account is taken from Locke's Second Treatise of his Two Treatises of Government (1689). Other chief sources for Locke's views on natural law include Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding (1689), The Reasonableness of Christianity (1695) and Essays of the Law of Nature. It should be noted that the last work was not published until 1954. Accordingly, unlike the other works, it would have been unavailable to Tindal and consequently, of no influence on him. The literature on Locke and natural law is voluminous. Probably, the best essay is Hans Aarsleff, "The State of nature and the nature of man in Locke," John Locke: Problems and Perspectives, ed. John W. Yolton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 99-136 and "Some observations on Locke scholarship," John Locke: Problems and Perspectives, pp. 262-72. This essay reviews some of the literature and refutes many of what Aarsleff calls the "pseudo-problems" raised by other scholars in this area. More recent work is David Wootton, "John Locke: Socinian or Natural Law Theorist?" Religion, Secularization and Political Thought: Thomas Hobbes to J.S. Mill, ed. James E. Crimmins (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 39-67; David Wootton, Introduction to John Locke: Political Writings (London: Penguin Books, 1993); James Tully, "Liberty and Natural Law," An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 281-314; Schneewind, "Locke's Moral Philosophy"; and John Marshall, John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[19] TT, II. ii. 4.

The other important characteristic of this state is that it is one "*of perfect Freedom* [for men] to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man."[20] In this natural condition, men,[21] then, are governed by the law of nature -- "the *fundamental Law of Nature* being *the preservation of Mankind*."[22] This law consists of two duties: the first being man's duty "*to preserve himself*" and the second being "when his own Preservation comes not in competition...[the duty] *to preserve the rest of Mankind*."[23] It is in positing this second duty to preserve others that Locke breaks with Grotius. As we have seen, the content of Grotius' natural laws with respect to others is negative rather than positive in the sense that man is only obliged to abstain from certain actions towards others but has no obligation to assist them. Locke reaffirms the negative duty writing that "no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions."[24] But by stipulating that

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[20] TT, II. ii. 4.

[21] Again, in reconstructing Locke's and Tindal's arguments in this chapter, we will follow their use of "man", "men" and the corresponding pronouns so as to accurately represent their views. However, this is done with the recognition that this language is indeed sexist. It should be noted that neither Locke in the Second Treatise nor Tindal in the Essay explicitly state that women do not have the rights accorded to men.

[22] TT, II. xi. 135.

[23] TT, II. ii. 6.

[24] TT, II. ii. 6.

the fundamental law of nature is the preservation of mankind rather than solely the preservation of self, he adds the positive duty of providing for others to the content of natural law. In order to carry out these obligations, each man is empowered with the right to execute the law of nature, that is, to punish another when he breaks it. Although the state of nature is relatively peaceful and far from a state of war, men do encounter "inconveniences"; in particular, when they have to render a judgement on a conflict in which they themselves have a personal interest. To remedy these inconveniences, they each agree to give up their individual right to execute the law of nature in order to form a civil society. The civil society then chooses a government to act as the common judge of conflicts and the determiner and renderer of punishment. In civil society, the law of nature still applies -- "the *first and fundamental natural Law*, which is to govern even the Legislative it self, is *the preservation of the Society*, and (as far as will consist with the publick good) of every person in it."[25] As such, the law of nature that mankind is to be preserved which is present in the state of nature still applies in civil society in that the preservation of society necessarily entails the preservation of mankind. Locke refers to the end of government as being "the peace and safety of the people"; "the preservation of the people";

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[25] TT, II. xi. 134.

"the preservation of property"; and "the public good". The concept of the public good is central: indeed, it is "the Foundation and End of all Laws."[26] As such, to be legitimate human law "must...be conformable to the Law of Nature"[27] by satisfying the requirement that it is for the public good. If a government does not succeed in fulfilling the purpose for which it was established, it loses its legitimacy and its power returns to the civil society who becomes free to place it in another government. In this way, Locke's theory provides for revolution -- it is the people who judge whether the government has failed to carry out the end for which it was created.

Tindal's own Essay clearly exhibits the influence of Locke, indicating that Tindal's text must have been written after the publication of Locke's Two Treatises, and thus, after the revolution.[28] First published in 1694, the political context of Tindal's tract is the aftermath of the

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[26] TT, II. xiv. 165.

[27] TT, II. xi. 135.

[28] There are a few differences between Tindal's Essay and Locke's Second Treatise. For one, while Tindal does mention property at one point, he does not emphasize it as Locke does. While Locke says on more than one occasion that the chief end of government is the preservation of property, Tindal emphasizes protection by which he appears to mean protection of one's life. However, as Locke defines property in a broad sense as referring to one's own person as well as one's material goods, this difference would seem to be minimal. Nevertheless unlike Locke who devotes all of chapter five to consider the matter of property, Tindal does not specifically address this issue. Another difference relates to the division of government. Where Locke divides government between the executive, legislative and federative, by which he appears to mean the part of government dealing with international relations, Tindal's mixed government includes the king, legislative and judiciary.

revolution and, in particular, England's ensuing war with France. Tindal, who clearly supports both the revolution and the war, appears to fear an attempt to restore the Stuart line to the English throne. Employing Locke's natural law theory of government, he argues that it is the people's "Duty as well as Interest, to bear True Faith and Allegiance to the present Government."[29]

The 68 page pamphlet is divided into fourteen chapters with an introduction. However, as Tindal tends to repeat himself even in this short work, we will endeavour to reconstruct the main lines of his argument rather than proceed with a chapter-by-chapter analysis. As most of the important themes of the work arise in his account of the origin of government in chapter one,[30] we will begin with this section of the Essay and then draw out the remaining key ideas in the text.

Tindal begins his Essay with a definition of government:

> Government is, as it is usually defined, *The Care of other Peoples Safety*; which consists in Protecting and securing them from being destroyed or oppressed by one another, as well as by Strangers; and re-dressing the Grievances of those that are injured, and preventing the like for the future, by punishing Offenders.[31]

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[29] EOSP, p. 1.

[30] EOSP, pp. 1-7. Cf. Locke's account in TT, II. ii. 4-15 and II. viii. 95 to II. ix. 131.

[31] EOSP, pp. 1-2. Cf. Locke's definition of "political power" in TT, II. i. 3.

Echoing Locke, Tindal asserts that without government, men are in a state of nature. In this state, "the Law of nature, which obliges mankind to act for their good"[32] applies. Like Locke, then, Tindal places the emphasis on mankind rather than solely the individual. From this obligation mankind has to act for their good, it follows that man has the duty to preserve himself and the duty to preserve others. Tindal emulates Locke's focus on positive obligation with respect to others when he writes about "the mutual Assistance, which by the Law of Nature Mankind owe one another."[33] From the duties which men are obliged to carry out by the law of nature, it follows that

> every one had a Right to take away the life of another, if he could not otherwise secure his own, or what was in order to the supporting it; and might do the same in defence of any innocent person, and could punish any one for injuring him or his neighbours, because by it he acted for his own and their security.[34]

Thus, as in Locke, men have the right to execute the law of nature in the state of nature. In this state, men "are by Nature equal, being of the same rank, promiscuously born to the same Advantages of Nature, and to the use of the same common Faculties."[35]

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[32] EOSP, p. 3.

[33] EOSP, p. 7.

[34] EOSP, p. 6.

[35] EOSP, p. 3.

In this part of the Essay, Tindal glosses over why men choose to leave the state of nature and consent to government by a magistrate (Tindal uses the term magistrate to refer to the government but like Locke he asserts that the people are free to choose their form of government, i.e. monarchy, democracy etc.).[36] He does state that "the Power they gave him was not only for the defence and safety of their Lives, but to secure them in the enjoyment of their Properties, and to judge concerning them by known and impartial Laws."[37] Men place themselves under government by voluntarily giving the magistrate their right to judge disputes and punish one another. The magistrate becomes the common judge, determining and carrying out punishment.

Tindal's statement that the law of nature is superior to all human laws and, specifically, that no law can take away a man's right to preserve himself implies that there are limits on the magistrate's power. Tindal sets out these limits by stating that the magistrate only has the powers that the people have given him. Since, in the state of nature, men do not have the right to kill another if such an

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[36]Tindal does talk about "inconveniences" of the state of nature in EPM, p. 4. Cf. Locke's discussion of "inconveniences" in TT, II. ii. 13, II. vii. 90, II. ix. 124-127, II. xi. 136.

[37]EOSP, p. 7. Cf. Locke in TT on the end of government being: the peace and safety of the people, II. ix. 131; the preservation of the people, II. xiv. 159; the preservation of property, II. vii. 94, II. ix. 124, though by property he does not mean exclusively material possessions -- he writes: "Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general name, *Property*" (II. ix. 123); and the public good, II. ix. 131, II. xiv. 163.

act does not in some way preserve their own life, they could not have given that power to the magistrate. In civil society, therefore, the magistrate "can have no right to take away the life of any person, except it be for the Publick Good."[38] Again, "nor can men, though at the Command of the Magistrate, without being guilty of Murther, deprive any of their lives, when the good of the Society does no way require it."[39] On these grounds, the people may justly oppose the magistrate.[40]

Tindal also responds to the objection that men could not choose their own governors because they are not free by nature but are born subject to the absolute power of their parents. This objection is derived from Filmer's theory of the origin of government, discussed above, and demonstrates the existence of this context for Tindal's work. In response, Tindal contends that parents only have such absolute authority over their children up to the age at which these children become adults. After this, they are no longer subject to their parents' command. In addition, Tindal asserts that if this argument was correct, all civil government would be illegal because it deprives parents of their right to absolute authority over their children.[41]

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[38] EOSP, p. 6.

[39] EOSP, pp. 6-7.

[40] Cf. Locke in TT on the limits of legislative power, II. xi. 134-42; and on the people's right to oppose the magistrate, II. xix. 240-42.

[41] Cf. Locke in TT, II. vi. 52-76.

The conclusion is clear: the magistrate only receives his power by the consent of his subjects.

In addition to the principal themes present in this account of the origin of government, one of the central ideas in Tindal's work is that the government must protect the people in order to be legitimate. Tindal considers protection in a number of contexts. In his discussion of consent and the origin of government he affirms, for example, that though men are born free, they are obliged to give up their right to judge conflicts and punish one another in order to be protected by the government. He declares that, indeed, people have always consented to pay allegiance to those who could protect them.[42] In another instance, Tindal counters the argument that allegiance is owed to the one (individual or group) who holds the "Legal Title" of sovereign by contending that it should instead be rendered to the one who provides protection.[43] He also suggests that if the government loses its ability to protect the people, the obligations to it, such as oaths, are dissolved and the people are returned to the natural liberty of the state of nature. Hence they are free to give their consent to another who can provide them with protection.[44]

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[42] EOSP, pp. 36-38. Cf. Locke in TT on the necessity of man entering into society, II. ix. 127.

[43] EOSP, pp. 17-20.

[44] EOSP, pp. 54-55, 16, 29-30, 36. Cf. Locke in TT on the dissolution of government, II. xix. 211-43.

For example, conquest whether just or unjust, frees the people from their obligations to the government since it no longer protects them. The conqueror is not, however, automatically entitled to the allegiance of the people. Invariably, though, they choose to be governed by him because he is able to protect them.[45]

Tindal's emphasis on protection also relates to another important idea concerning the matter of possession. He reasons that since men are obligated to consent to government by the one who can protect them, they are obligated to consent to the one who possesses this power. Thus, possession determines who governs. He also states that it is not the length of possession that matters, but that the "Governor" (as he also calls the magistrate) protects the people.[46] He claims that the principle that present powers are to be obeyed by virtue of the right of possession even extends to a son who kills his father to become sovereign.[47] Evidently, this principle applies even if the king is unjustly deposed.[48]

The most important theme in Tindal's Essay is that the good of the society is the test of legitimacy: what is

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[45] EOSP, pp. 37-42. Cf. Locke in TT on conquest and usurpation, II. xvi. 175 to II. xvii. 198.

[46] EOSP, pp. 42-44.

[47] EOSP, p. 31.

[48] EOSP, pp. 34-37.

right is that which serves the public good.[49] This is one of the fundamental laws of nature and, according to Tindal, this natural law is the foundation of all human laws and all of God's laws.[50] It is a law that is applicable to both the subject and the king.[51] In order to be legitimate, positive law must contribute to the public good. Thus, Tindal uses the public good as the standard by which to evaluate various situations. He notes, for example, that an innocent person may be killed if it is for the public good. Clearly, for Tindal, the good of the community is more important than the good of one individual.[52]

Furthermore, he asserts that if attempting to overthrow the present government is detrimental to the public good it is a sin. If being obedient to the present government is consistent with the public good, it is a duty.[53] After coupling the public good with duty, he goes on to relate

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[49]Cf. Locke in TT on the public good, II. I. 3, II. vii. 89, II. ix. 131, II. xi. 135, II. xi. 142, II. xii. 147, II. xiv. 163, II. xiv. 165.

[50]EOSP, p. 22. Cf. Locke in TT on positive law being legitimate only if it is founded on natural law, II. ii. 12, II. xi. 135; and on the law of nature being a declaration of the will of God, II. xi. 135.

[51]EOSP, p. 15. Cf. Locke in TT on the legislative power being subject to the law of nature, II. xi. 135; and on the prince being subject to the law of nature, II. xvi. 195.

[52]EOSP, p. 24. Cf. Locke in TT on the primacy of the public good, II. xi. 134. Tindal's emphasis on the public good directed me to look for it in Locke and, indeed, I found it there. Therefore, we may wish to rethink the dominant interpretation of Locke as a spokesperson for individualism.

[53]EOSP, p. 21. Cf. Locke in EHU on sins and duties, II. xxviii. 7-8.

duty to one's interest and happiness.[54] Thus, the test of the public good determines one's duty. It is one's duty to pursue one's interest. This in turn results in one's happiness.

Tindal also employs the two commandments, the love of God and of one's neighbour, as a test of positive law. Like the measure of the public good, no action is valid if it is inconsistent with these commandments.[55] The implication is that they are, in effect, equivalent to the public good. Tindal maintains that the design of all laws is the good of society and, thus, any specific law is null and void when it thwarts this design.[56] Moreover, he distinguishes between the spirit and the letter of the law, arguing that an individual is obliged to act against the letter of the law if following it would contradict the spirit in which the law was enacted. This spirit must, of course, be consistent with the public good.[57] Tindal also suggests that if an oath is contrary to the public good, it too is null and void.[58]

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[54] EOSP, pp. 1, 21, 40. Cf. Locke in EHU on happiness and interest, I. iii. 6; and on duty and happiness, II. xxviii. 8.

[55] EOSP, pp. 25-26.

[56] EOSP, pp. 29-30.

[57] EOSP, p. 30. Cf. Locke in TT on acting contrary to the letter of the law, II. xiv. 164-65.

[58] EOSP, pp. 54-56.

Finally, in a discussion of persecution, Tindal states that persecution with respect to indifferent religious matters (those that do not affect the public good) is wrong because it does not fulfil either of the two commandments -- it neither honours God nor man.[59] He further contends that persecution regarding indifferent matters is contrary to the public good because it leads to a state of war.[60] In doing so, he confirms that the two commandments correspond with the public good.

It is striking that many of these themes reappear in Tindal's most important work, Christianity As Old As the Creation. In this text, natural law arguments are used as the basis for many of Tindal's criticisms of revealed religion in general and Christianity in particular. In Christianity As Old As the Creation, Tindal defines his terms in the first part of the text. Relevant to our discussion are the definitions of the law of nature and natural religion. Tindal writes:

> And therefore, I shall attempt to shew You, That Men, if they sincerely endeavour to discover the Will of God, will perceive, that there's a *Law of Nature, or Reason*; which is so call'd, as being a Law, which is common, or natural, to all rational Creatures; and That this Law, like its Author, is absolutely perfect, eternal, and unchangeable.[61]

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[59] EOSP, pp. 45-46. Cf. Locke on the "indifferent" aspects of religion; see his Epistola de Tolarantia: A Letter on Toleration, ed. Raymond Klibansky and trans. J.W. Gough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 103-9.

[60] EOSP, p. 66.

[61] COC, p. 8.

Clearly, Tindal's definition of natural law is consistent with the definition we gave at the beginning of the chapter. It is also important to note that throughout the text "natural law" and "law of nature" are used interchangeably, as are "natural religion" and "religion of nature". Natural religion he defines as follows:

> By *Natural Religion*, I understand the Belief of the Existence of a God, and the Sense and Practice of those Duties, which result from the Knowledge, we, by our Reason, have of him, and his Perfections; and of ourselves, and our own Imperfections; and of the Relation we stand in to him, and to our Fellow-Creatures; so that the *Religion of Nature* takes in every Thing that is founded on the Reason and Nature of Things.[62]

By defining natural religion in terms of three kinds of duties (to God, ourselves and "our Fellow-Creatures") as Tindal does in this quotation, he echoes the definition of natural law as encompassing humankind's duties to God as author of that law, our duties to ourselves, and our duties to others. In so doing, Tindal implicitly identifies natural religion with natural law. This correlation between the two underscores the importance of natural law to Tindal's views on religion.

According to Tindal, to concur with the law of nature a principle must fulfil either of two requirements: it must be for the good of mankind or the honour of God. Echoing

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[62] COC, p. 13.

his reference to the two commandments in the Essay, Tindal writes in Christianity As Old As the Creation:

> By the Law of Nature as well as the Gospel, the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, being the two Grand, or General Commandments; all particular Precepts must be comprehended under these Two, and belong alike to the Law of Nature as well as the Gospel; and what does not, can belong to neither. Thus any particular Precept, if by Change of Circumstances it ceases to contribute to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man, much more if it become prejudicial to either, must lose its obliging Force.[63]

As "what promotes the Honour of God necessarily promotes the Good of Man," Tindal equates these two commandments with one another and ultimately with the public good.[64] Thus, "So true is it in Divinity as well as Politicks, that *The Good of the People is the supreme Law*."[65] As in the work on natural law, the public good is then also identified with man's duty, duty with interest and duty with happiness.[66]

Just as in the Essay, the law of nature becomes the ideal to which positive law must conform if it is to be legitimate. In Christianity As Old As the Creation, we read:

> That when any Disputes arise about the right Meaning of any positive Law, the constant, and best Method of understanding the Equity and true Intent of it, is by running back to its Head, and observing what is most agreeable to the Law of Nature; This is the Test and Touch, This is the

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[63] COC, p. 70.

[64] COC, p. 71.

[65] COC, p. 46.

[66] COC, pp. 177, 366, iv.

> Level, and the Truth, by which the rest are to be judged.[67]

As an example, he states that if the killing of an individual would benefit the public good, it is legitimate; however, if it would not contribute to the good of the people, it is wrong.[68] This is consistent with his statement in the Essay that positive law should agree with natural law.

As with positive law, the test of the public good is also brought to bear on positive religion. Tindal does this by using the two commandments. He writes: "No arbitrary, or merely positive Precepts, as not tending to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man, can belong either to Natural, or Reveal'd Religion."[69] As such, the law of nature in the form of the two commandments or the public good (which as we have seen are in effect the same) becomes the measuring stick by which to evaluate Christianity.

There are a number of aspects of Christianity with which Tindal is concerned, one of the most important being the clergy. Tindal assesses the priesthood by employing the natural law test of the public good. His conclusion is that the clergy having "claim'd such Powers and Privileges, as are inconsistent with the common Good"[70] have pursued their

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[67] COC, p. 63.

[68] COC, p. 345.

[69] COC, p. 70.

[70] COC, p. 47.

own interests to the detriment of those of the people. The term "priestcraft" refers to the means by which they have accomplished this. To gain control over the people, the clergy persuaded them that various practices which could only be conducted by priests, such as confessing one's sins, were necessary if an individual was to attain salvation. These "artful Men...have mix'd with pure Religion, Thing [sic] tending, indeed, to their own Honour, and their own Good; but far from being consistent with the Honour of God, and the Good of Man."[71] Again, the natural law test in the form of the two commandments is invoked: "Let every Thing not tending to promote the Honour of God and the Good of Man, be accounted Superstition."[72] Superstition is the mainstay of priestcraft. It involves "needless Speculations and useless Observances,"[73] such as making the sign of the cross, which fail the natural law test because they are of no benefit to the public good. In fact, because the clergy use these superstitious practices to gain power over the people, they are actually detrimental to the good of society. Tindal traces examples of such practices throughout the histories of the pagan, Jewish, Muslim and Christian religions. To legitimize these practices, the clergy invoke the authority of tradition. Tindal uses the

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[71] COC, p. 281.

[72] COC, p. 166.

[73] COC, p. 107.

law of nature to oppose this method of validating these practices:

> In saying This, you own the Law of Nature to be the Standard of Perfection; and that by It we must judge antecedently to any traditional Religion what is, or is not a Law absolutely perfect, and worthy of such a Being for its Legislator.[74]

By subjecting tradition to the test of natural law, Tindal attacks the grounds for the authority of the superstitious practices of priestcraft.

Priestcraft and superstition are tied closely to persecution. Tindal writes:

> But if they [men] are made to believe there are Things, which have no Relation to this Good [of Society], necessary to Salvation; they must suppose it their Duty to use such Means as will most effectually serve this Purpose; and that God, in requiring the End, requires all those Means as will best secure and propagate it. And, 'Tis to this Principle we owe the most cruel Persecutions, Inquisitions, Crusades and Massacres.[75]

In this way, priestcraft's superstitious beliefs become the motivation for members of one religion to persecute those of another and even for Christians to persecute other Christians.

Tindal employs natural law to forge an anti-persecution, pro-toleration stand. Again, he uses the natural law test of the public good as his measure, arguing that in the practice of religion, there exists "indifferent" matters (he also calls them "merely religious"), that is,

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[74] COC, p. 59.

[75] COC, pp. 151-52.

matters which neither benefit nor injure the public good. Tindal argues that, since these matters do not affect the good of the community, there should be a toleration of diverse beliefs on these subjects rather than persecution to enforce one view. He writes: "It's true, the Law of Nature leaves Men at Liberty to act as they please in all indifferent Matters; and if any traditionary Law abridges this Liberty, so far 'tis contrary to that of Nature, and invades those Rights which Nature and its Author has given Mankind."[76]

This connection with natural law is demonstrated further in Tindal's work exclusively on the subject of persecution and toleration, An Essay concerning the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion (1697). Though it was written some 33 years before Christianity As Old As the Creation, I have chosen to discuss it here rather than prior to that text because this earlier essay relates entirely to the discussion of persecution and toleration -- one of many themes in Christianity As Old As the Creation. In this essay on persecution and toleration, Tindal also employs the criterion of the public good to distinguish between two types of religious matters: "those [duties] that Man owes to God; I mean those that have an influence on Humane Life, and conduce to the Welfare and Support of Societies" and

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[76] COC, p. 134.

"those Opinions and Actions which relate to God alone, in which no third Person has an Interest."[77] It is with respect to the latter that Tindal urges toleration. In defence of his position, Tindal argues that persecution fails the natural law test of the public good in a number of ways.[78] For instance, he contends that persecution makes the two commandments of loving God and loving man clash with one another.[79]

One of his chief arguments is based on the Lockean natural law theory of the origin of government. As we have seen in Tindal's Essay, this theory stipulates that men leave the state of nature by agreeing to give up their right to execute the law of nature and place it in the hands of a sovereign power by whom they consent to be governed. Tindal concludes that all of the magistrate's powers are given to him by the people. Since men could not give the magistrate powers they do not have, Tindal sets out to argue that men, in the state of nature, did not have the right to force their views about merely religious matters on one another:

> As to those Opinions and Actions which relate to God alone, in which no third Person has an interest...there is no Law of Nature that gives one Man a Right to use Force on another; and consequently they could not invest any of their Brethren with this Power. All the Rights that Equals (as all by Nature are) have over one another, is a Right to prevent or repel Force by

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[77] EPM, pp. 5-6.

[78] EPM, pp. 9-10, 11, 13, 14, 42.

[79] EPM, p. 50.

> Force, and to punish the Aggressor, thereby to discourage him or any other from attempting the like and to seek Reparation for the loss sustained. They that have no such Power over themselves, as to do themselves any Hurt, much less to take away their own Lives, have as little Right to deprive others (whom they are obliged to love as themselves) of their Lives or Properties, or commit any Violence on them otherways than may be necessary to defend themselves, and their own Rights. But what Right of his Neighbour's does any Man invade? or what Injury or Injustice does he do him, in worshipping God according to that Method he judgeth best for the saving his own Soul?[80]

This passage illustrates how Tindal uses Locke's natural law theory of the origin of government against persecution and in support of toleration. To begin, he asserts that by the law of nature men are equal. As equals, they have the right to preserve themselves. Thus, when their preservation is threatened, they may use force to defend themselves. But since differing beliefs on merely religious matters do not affect another's ability to preserve himself in the state of nature, individuals never had the right to force their beliefs about these matters on one another. Secondly, by the law of nature men are obliged to love one another. According to Tindal, persecution in merely religious matters is contrary to this law. Thirdly, since there is no law of nature giving the people the right to force their beliefs about matters of mere religion on one another, they could not have given this power to the magistrate.

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[80] EPM, pp. 6-7.

He also employs the concept detailed in the Essay that if the magistrate fails to achieve the end for which he was given his power, then his power reverts to the people. On the assumption that the magistrate has the power to use force in merely religious matters, Tindal states that if the magistrate was neglecting it or unable to enforce it, such powers would devolve back to the people. This would mean that men had that right in the state of nature. But, Tindal argues, if they did, then that state would not be one of relative peace but a "state of Anarchy, War, and Confusion,"[81] that is, a state clearly resembling the one described by Hobbes. Since it is not, Tindal concludes that in the state of nature, the people do not have this power and thus in forming a civil society could not have given it to the magistrate.

Finally, Tindal also responds to the use of the parent-child analogy, an objection he raised in his Essay. In this case, he addresses the argument that since by the law of nature parents have the power to instruct their children in a specific religion, a king likewise has a right to enforce a specific religion on his subjects. As in the Essay, Tindal rejects this argument on the grounds that parents only have such powers over their children up until the children have reached the age of adulthood. Since subjects are of all ages, both children and adults, the analogy

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[81] EPM, p. 10.

supporting the king's power in these religious matters does not hold.

Given that Tindal followed Locke closely on natural law, and that natural law was important to Tindal's views on Christianity, one would expect Locke to have had similar convictions. Indeed, like Tindal, Locke denounced the clergy's use of superstitious practices and their appeal to tradition to gain power over the people. In The Reasonableness of Christianity he characterizes the priests as "fill[ing] their [the people's] heads with false notions of the Deity, and their worship with foolish rites, as they pleased: and what dread or craft once began, devotion soon made sacred, and religion immutable." He also talks about the priests "secur[ing] their empire" and as "those wary guardians of their own creeds and profitable inventions."[82] Likewise, Locke condemned persecution and, in its place, advocated toleration. In fact, he authored four works on this subject. In these works, Locke, like Tindal, not only advocates toleration, he grounds some of his arguments in support of this view in natural law. The locus for these arguments is chapter two of A Third Letter for Toleration: To the Author of the Third Letter concerning Toleration where Locke discusses "*Of the Magistrate's Commission to use Force in Matters of Religion.*" He argues against his opponent who, like Filmer, appeals to natural law, stating

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[82] RC, p. 135.

that this commission "to use force in matters of religion, is a duty of the magistrate as old as the law of nature, in which the magistrate's commission lies."[83] Locke responds with many arguments, of which a number are grounded in his natural law theory of the origin of government. Some of these arguments, such as those he uses to refute his opponent's reasoning from patriarchalist political theory, are clearly borrowed by Tindal.[84]

But when it comes to Scripture, Christian morality and natural religion, Tindal's and Locke's views begin to diverge. Tindal attacks the Bible, the sole basis for the Protestant religion after the Reformation. As with the clergy and persecution, the natural law test of the public good (in the form of the two commandments) becomes the standard by which to judge what is Scripture and what is not. Tindal writes: "The best Way not to be mistaken, is to admit all for divine Scripture, that tends to the Honour of God, and the Good of Man; and nothing which does not."[85] Tindal not only argues that natural law should determine what is admitted as divine Scripture, he also argues that natural law should be the standard for interpreting Scripture. His reasoning for such a guide is that the

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[83]John Locke, A Third Letter for Toleration: To the Author of the Third Letter concerning Toleration, The Works of John Locke, 10 vols. (London, 1823; reprint, Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1963), vol. 6, p. 202.

[84]Locke, Third Letter for Toleration, pp. 202-28.

[85]COC, pp. 327-28.

Bible's use of figurative language, such as parables, allegories and metaphors, leaves it open to so many different and conflicting interpretations that it is rendered practically useless.[86] He writes: "And I may add, that most of the particular Rules laid down in the Gospel for our Direction, are spoken after such figurative a Manner, that except we judge of their Meaning, not merely by the Letter, but by what the Law of Nature antecedently declares to be our Duty, they are apt to lead us wrong."[87] As an example, he takes Jesus's sayings in the New Testament, asserting that they must be interpreted by the principle of the public good:

> I will venture to say, that this Rule of acting according as the Circumstances we are under, point out to us, to be for the general Good, is a Rule without Exception...And further, that this universal, and unexceptionable Rule is highly necessary, in explaining all the Precepts of our Saviour; especially those relating to *loving of Enemies*, and *forgiving Injuries*.[88]

The implication of Tindal's scathing critique of the Bible, is that one is better off following the law of nature instead of Scripture. He writes:

> In a Word, if the highest internal Excellence, the greatest Plainness and Simplicity, Unanimity, Universality, Antiquity, nay, Eternity, can recommend a Law; all These, 'tis owned do, in an eminent Degree, belong to the Law of Nature. A Law, which does not depend on the uncertain Meaning of Words and Phrases in dead Languages,

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[86] COC, pp. 64, 206-7, 229, 231, 238, 240, 288, 324.

[87] COC, p. 27.

[88] COC, pp. 349-50.

> much less on Types, Metaphors, Allegories, Parables, or on the Skill or Honesty of weak or designing Transcribers (not to mention Translators) for many Ages together; but on the immutable Relation of Things always visible to the whole World.[89]

For Tindal, all these difficulties make it foolish to attempt to seek direction from the Bible.

Tindal's assault on the Bible culminates in a critique of the morality imparted by it. Pointing to the law of nature as it exists in "the Reason and Nature of Things," Tindal writes "that if Men are not well grounded in the Reason and Nature of Things, and from thence judge of their Duty, in Relation to one another; there are Things either commanded, or approv'd of in the Scripture, which might be apt to lead Men astray."[90] His examples from the Old Testament are numerous:

> How many Precedents, besides that of Ehud, (who, on a Message from the Lord, stabb'd the King to whom his People sent him with a Present) did the Popish Priests plead from the Old Testament, for the Assassination of the two Henries of France? And had the Gun-Powder-Plot succeeded here, they wou'd, no doubt, have made Use of the same Plea to justify it.[91]

Another illustration is the story of Jacob and Esau, by which "a Man, who looks no further than That, might think it

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[89] COC, p. 64.

[90] COC, pp. 262-63. This claim was stated most forcefully by Pierre Bayle, who drew attention to the immorality of numerous heroes of the Old Testament, early Christianity and the Reformation. See H.T. Mason, Pierre Bayle and Voltaire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 25-44.

[91] COC, p. 264.

no Crime to cheat his elder Brother, impose on his aged Parent, and by a Lie obtain his Blessing."[92] Importantly, his criticisms do not end there but extend to the New Testament as well, where he notes that "the Harlot *Rahab* [was] celebrated...for lying to the Government, and betraying her Country to its most cruel Enemies."[93] He also points to such New Testament "texts, which seem to condemn the Rich as such, and require, not the setting the Poor at Work, but the *selling All, and giving to the Poor*; or those other Precepts, which seem to forbid *Self-defence*."[94] These are just a few of the numerous examples Tindal marshals to demonstrate that Christianity teaches improper moral lessons. The political nature of some of these examples of improper moral behaviour reinforces the point made in chapter one that politics and religion were perceived as interconnected in this period rather than as occupying separate spheres of thought and action.

In place of Christianity, Tindal proposes an alternative: natural religion. The goal of this religion can be apprehended from the following passage: "As Nature teaches Men to unite for their mutual Defence, and Government was instituted solely for this End; so to make This more effectual, Religion, which reaches the Thoughts,

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[92] COC, p. 263.

[93] COC, p. 263.

[94] COC, p. 344.

was wholly ordain'd."[95] Tindal is suggesting that religion improves the government's ability to realize its purpose, namely the protection of the people. How does it do this? All indications are that it does so by inculcating in people a code of morality. Tindal writes that "the End of Religion...is to render him [man] as perfect as may be in all moral Duties whatever."[96] Unlike Christianity, which fails the natural law test of the public good, "the Religion of Nature is...entirely calculated for the Good of human Society."[97] For Tindal then, natural religion is superior to Christianity because it obeys the natural law test of the public good, a test which Christianity fails.

While agreeing with Tindal about priestcraft, superstition, persecution and toleration, when it comes to the Bible, Christian morality and natural religion, Locke held beliefs that were anathema to Tindal. It is important to note, however, that with respect to these latter subjects, Locke's views were not entirely consistent. Many of the opinions expressed in The Reasonableness of Christianity conflict with his statements in the Essay concerning Human Understanding and the Two Treatises,

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[95] COC, pp. 20-21.

[96] COC, p. 46.

[97] COC, p. 63.

despite the fact that these two works were revised after he wrote The Reasonableness.[98]

Beginning with the Bible, Locke expresses a belief in the proof of miracles for the divine origin of Scripture. In The Reasonableness, he writes: "The evidence of our Saviour's mission from heaven is so great, in the multitude of miracles he did before all sorts of people, that what he delivered cannot but be received as the oracles of God, and unquestionable verity."[99] This is clearly in contrast to Tindal's attack on such proofs of the authority of Scripture detailed in chapter three. Furthermore, in the Essay concerning Human Understanding, Locke makes room for the existence of things above reason:

> There being many Things, wherein we have very imperfect Notions, or none at all; and other Things, of whose past, present, or future Existence, by the natural Use of our Faculties, we can have no Knowledge at all; these, as being beyond the Discovery of our natural Faculties, and above *Reason*, are, when revealed, *the proper Matter of Faith*. Thus that part of the Angels rebelled against GOD, and thereby lost their first happy state: And that the dead shall rise, and live again: These, and the like, being beyond the Discovery of *Reason*, are purely Matters of *Faith*; with which *Reason* has, directly, nothing to do.[100]

This is at odds with Tindal's position which is to believe neither in things contrary to reason nor above reason. In Christianity As Old As the Creation, Tindal remarks:

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[98] Wootton, "John Locke," p. 60.

[99] RC, p. 135.

[100] EHU, IV. xviii. 7.

> it being their [designing Men] Interest to confound Mens Understandings, and prevent all Inquiry, craftily invented the Notion of believing Things above Reason...On this Foundation, *Transubstantiation* is built, and most of those mysterious Propositions, about which in former Days Christians so frequently murder'd each other.[101]

In contrast to Tindal, Locke also praises the Scripture's moral teachings. In The Reasonableness, he asserts repeatedly that the Bible contains the best, clearest and plainest representation of the moral law. About Scripture, he writes: "all the duties of morality lie there clear, and plain, and easy to be understood." [102] This contrasts starkly with Tindal's argument that there are numerous problems associated with interpreting Scripture. It also stands in opposition to Tindal's belief that one can draw improper moral lessons from the Bible. That being said, in his Essay concerning Human Understanding, Locke also raises potential difficulties for Scripture. In that work, he discusses three problems: the problem of communicating with words in general, the problem of understanding ancient writings; and the problem of testimony losing its force over time. The first two he applies to the Bible:

> The Volume of Interpreters, and Commentators on the Old and New Testament, are but too manifest proofs of this. Though every thing said in the Text be infallibly true, yet the Reader may be, nay cannot chuse but be very fallible in the

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[101] COC, p. 222.

[102] RC, p. 147. See also pp. 122, 138-40, 143, 146.

> understanding of it. Nor is it to be wondred, that the Will of GOD, when cloathed in Words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty, which unavoidably attends that sort of Conveyance.[103]

He does not mention Scripture with respect to the problem of testimony losing its force over time; however, it begs to be applied to the Bible and as we have seen in chapter three, Tindal does this.

In addition to his praise for Scripture, Locke reveals in The Reasonableness a concern about the inability of man to discover the laws of nature through unassisted human reason. He writes:

> It should seem, by the little that has hitherto been done in it, that it is too hard a task for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts, upon its true foundation, with a clear and convincing light. And it is at least a surer and shorter way, to the apprehensions of the vulgar, and mass of mankind, that one manifestly sent from God, and coming with visible authority from him, should, as a king and lawmaker, tell them their duties, and require their obedience, than leave it to the long and sometimes intricate deductions of reason, to be made out to them.[104]

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[103] EHU, III. ix. 23. On the imperfection of words and the problem of understanding ancient writings, see EHU, III. ix. 1-23. On the problem of testimony losing its force over time, see EHU, IV. xvi. 10.

[104] RC, p. 139. See also p. 140. There is some disagreement in the literature on whether Locke had indeed given up all hope of unassisted human reason establishing a moral law. Wootton writes: "Did Locke believe in a law of nature that could be known by every reasonable man and that was binding on all men, at all times, in all places? Certainly he had done [sic] when he wrote the *Essays on the Law of Nature*, for this is one of their central claims. Equally clearly he really did not by the end of his life" when he wrote A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul ("John Locke," p. 42; see also, pp. 43, 50, 59, 60). Haakonssen, however, argues that "Locke strongly emphasizes that reason, represented by philosophy, had in fact not developed a full system of morals, but he does not deny the possibility of such a philosophical enterprise" (Natural Law and Moral Philosophy,

This belief is fundamental to Tindal's argument: it is through unassisted human reason that man comes to know the content of natural religion. If this ability was not present in man, Tindal's proposed alternative to Christianity would be seriously undermined. Again, it should be noted that Locke contradicts himself: in both the Two Treatises and the Essay concerning Human Understanding, he maintains that the natural law is easily accessible to all rational men. In the Two Treatises, he writes: "it is certain there is such a Law [of Nature], and that too, as intelligible and plain to a rational Creature, and a Studier of that Law, as the positive Laws of Common-wealths, nay possibly plainer."[105] Likewise in the Essay concerning Human Understanding, he states that "Our Faculties...plainly discover to us the Being of a GOD, and the Knowledge of our selves, enough to lead us into a full and clear discovery of our Duty."[106] His belief in the abilities of human reason extends even further in that work when he argues that reason is more certain than revelation. He writes: "For whatsoever Truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the Knowledge and Contemplation of our own *Ideas,* will always be

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p. 57). This disagreement may again point to the problem of inconsistencies in Locke.

[105] TT, II. ii. 12. See also II. ix. 124.

[106] EHU, IV. xii. 11. See also I. iii. 12-13, III. ix. 23, IV. xviii. 8. On morality being capable of demonstration like mathematics, see EHU, III. xi. 16, IV. iii. 18, IV. iv. 7.

certainer to us, than those which are conveyed to us by *Traditional Revelation*."[107]

The contrast between Locke's and Tindal's views on these aspects of Christianity, in conjunction with Locke's inconsistencies on some of these matters, points to an important conclusion about the relationship between Locke and English deism. We can see how Tindal could have logically arrived at some of his more radical views by following those of Locke's ideas that pointed in that direction. However, in the case of Locke, these conclusions conflicted with his strong commitment to Christianity, hence his inconsistencies.

Nevertheless, while Locke and Tindal disagree on whether Christianity best represents the proper code of morality, both agree that there is a standard of right and wrong by which to judge the ethicalness of human actions.[108] In this sense, like Locke, Tindal can be placed in the line of natural law theorists extending from Grotius who argued against moral scepticism while accepting the sceptical principle of self-interest.[109] Tindal, in fact, refers

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[107] EHU, IV. xviii. 4-5. See also III. ix. 23.

[108] Tindal writes in COC: "Since Good and Evil have their Foundation in the essential Difference of Things, and their Nature is fix'd and immoveable..." (p. 26).

[109] By accepting the sceptical principle of self-interest, Tindal situates himself as a member of that school which, beginning with Grotius, brought about the secularization of natural law. Tindal, however, does not detail explicitly how natural law obliges. He writes: "All These agree in acknowledging a *Law of Nature*, and that they are indispensably oblig'd to obey its Dictates" (COC, p. 12). That being said, we can state definitively that he does not take the path of

explicitly to scepticism in the last chapter of Christianity As Old As the Creation, casting his opponent, Samuel Clarke, in the role of promoter of universal scepticism. Tindal writes: "All the Dr. has been doing, on Pretence of promoting the Honour of Revelation, is introducing universal Scepticism...as if he thought the best Way to support the Dignity of Revelation, was to derogate from the immutable, and eternal Law of Nature."[110] Tindal blames Clarke for fostering scepticism by casting doubt on the legitimacy of natural law. Tindal, as we have seen, clearly believes that there is a natural law and that through unaided reason man can know it. In this sense, he can be situated in the context of the seventeenth century anti-sceptical movement within the natural law tradition.

Pufendorf and Locke who while also partaking in the secularization of natural law tried to soften this effect by making an explicit appeal to God's will as the source of human obligation to obey the laws of nature; see Haakonssen, Natural Law and Moral Philosophy, pp. 43-45, 55-58. Tindal appears to subscribe to Grotius' theory of obligation when he writes in EOSP: "The conquered may in a sense be said to be forced to what they did, because they are bound by a moral Necessity to act for their own preservation, and happiness; and for that reason they were obliged to leave the state of nature, and be governed by him that had the power to Protect them" (p. 40). Cf. EPM where he writes: "But [men] were absolutely required by the Law of Self-preservation to avoid the Inconveniences and Dangers of an unsafe State of Nature by placing the Power of governing them in one or more Hands, in such Forms, and under such Agreements as they should think fit...Now by the Law of Nature no Man had a Right to deprive another of his Life, Liberty, or Property, but in defence and for the preservation of his Own, which by that Law he is obliged to preserve, and consequently had a Right to what-ever is necessary to that End. But the Difficulty of exercising this Right, (every one having the same) obliged Men to enter into Societies" (pp. 4-5). While Tindal does not say explicitly that man is obliged to obey the natural laws because these laws are necessary for social existence, these statements do reflect the Grotian view that it is in man's self-interest to enter into society.

[110] COC, pp. 381-82.

Our analysis has shown that the natural law tradition is an important factor in the intellectual origins of English deism as represented by Tindal. In particular, we have highlighted two contexts: the broader seventeenth century refutation, led by Grotius, of moral scepticism, and the more specific response to Filmer by Locke. It was these developments in the natural law tradition on which Tindal drew in employing natural law to launch his attack on Christianity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

We began this thesis on Matthew Tindal with the following question: Would a fresh reading of the primary sources produce an interpretation of English deism at odds with the present historiography? Indeed, this study of Tindal has touched on many of the aspects of deism discussed in the literature: its origin, its definition, the content of its beliefs, and its goals. In fact, our analysis both affirms and questions many of the interpretations examined in chapter one. While we will not detail how our investigation relates to each of them, we will review its implications for some of the chief characterizations of English deism.

The first of these is Margaret Jacob's. As we have seen, Jacob depicted the English deists Toland and Tindal as "radical republicans" out to undermine the traditional political and social order. In chapter two, her interpretation was shown to be problematic in a number of ways. We pointed to scholarly literature which argues that Toland and his associates were not the political nor social radicals Jacob makes them out to be. For our own part, we examined Tindal's political publications to see what, if any, bearing they might have on Jacob's interpretation. The result was another blow to Jacob's theory. Our analysis revealed that far from launching an attack on the political

order, Tindal supported the post-Revolution political establishment.

Our critique of Jacob did not end there. Hand in hand with her characterization of these men's politics went her argument that they were proponents of a materialistic pantheism; a movement in opposition to the natural religion of their establishment enemies. Our work in chapter four dealt Jacob's interpretation a knock-out blow. Tindal's writings demonstrated no evidence of materialistic pantheism and, in fact, showed him to be a proponent of natural religion.

In chapter three, we turned our attention to David Berman's theory that Tindal and other English deists were atheists who preached their beliefs covertly in their texts. Berman scored a point early as we established that he was indeed justified in reading between the lines of Tindal's works. However, we proceeded to refute his contention that Tindal should be read as an atheist in the modern sense of one who denies the existence of God. Our refutation consisted of three elements. First, we scrutinized the foundation of Berman's argument: that Tindal was called an atheist by some of his contemporaries. By examining the meaning of the label "atheist" in this period, we showed how Tindal could be called an atheist without being one in the modern sense of the term. We also examined Berman's atheism-follows-mortalism argument, demonstrating that in this period, one could be a mortalist without being an

atheist. Finally, our examination of Tindal's most significant publication, Christianity As Old As the Creation, failed to show any evidence of atheism.

In place of Berman's reading, we considered a Socinian interpretation of Tindal; however, while we found that Tindal shared similar views with that movement (perhaps suggesting some influence), his attack on Scripture clearly went beyond the boundaries of Socinianism. Instead, our reading between the lines revealed Tindal to be mounting an attack on revealed religion in general and Christianity in particular. Ostensibly, Tindal is arguing that Christianity as a revealed religion is in accord with natural religion. But a closer reading of Christianity As Old As the Creation disclosed that under the veil of orthodox pronouncements, Tindal is really suggesting that Christianity fails to exemplify the principles of natural religion. As such, our analysis also scored blows against interpretations such as Frank Manuel's, in which the English deists are characterized as Christians.

Chapter four examined in more detail the specifics of Tindal's attack, emphasizing in particular one previously neglected aspect, that of natural law. We argued that Tindal used natural law as one of the cornerstones for his critique of Christianity, specifically his criticisms of the clergy, superstition, tradition, persecution, the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) and Christian morality. He also employed it to support his belief in toleration and

natural religion. In particular, we placed his use of natural law in two contexts: the seventeenth century response (led by Grotius) to moral scepticism, and Locke's response to Filmer's patriarchalist political theory. In doing so, we reaffirmed the literature's emphasis on the importance of Locke in the development of deism, but unlike the literature which focuses on Locke's epistemology, we uncovered a new aspect of his influence, namely his natural law theory.

Our analysis of Tindal's use of natural law to attack the clergy and to promote natural religion also confirmed J.A.I. Champion's characterization of this movement as anti-clerical and as wanting to establish a civil religion which would inculcate virtue in the people. However, it will be recalled that we faulted Champion's view that the deists suggested that all religion was man-made, but were nevertheless "religious" themselves. In short, we equated such an outlook to a Machiavellian view of religion as merely a convenient fiction necessary to maintaining a stable political and social order. It is worthwhile to ask where Tindal is located in terms of these conceptions of religion. Our analysis shows that Tindal did not go beyond the belief in a God-given natural religion accessible to all people through their reason. In fact, it was this belief that stood him in opposition to moral scepticism. While he followed Grotius in approaching scepticism by accepting the force of the sceptical argument that humans act in their own

self-interest, he believed in the existence of a natural law by which to judge the legitimacy of human beings' moral beliefs, political institutions and laws. In sum, while we maintain that Champion's reasoning is faulty, we believe Tindal can be interpreted as "religious".

Finally, we need to ask what implications our analysis of Tindal has for future work in the field. Indeed, our discovery of the importance of natural law as a factor in the intellectual origins of English deism as represented by Tindal does suggest an avenue for further study. Did other English deists use natural law in their works? If so, does their use of this tradition point to conclusions similar to those we have drawn about Tindal? Or will future studies indicate that Tindal's use of natural law was isolated and thus reinforce the conclusion with which we began, that English deism is a movement so diverse it defies generalizations?

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[1]This list has been taken from Lalor, "Matthew Tindal," pp. 171-75. Curll also mentions that Tindal wrote a Discourse concerning Hell Torments (Memoirs, p. 58), but no such work has been found.

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