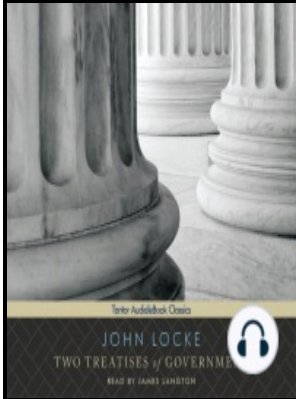


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Political Thought in England from Locke to Bentham by Harold J. Laski

The view of it as simply a religious body to which the State had conceded certain rights and dignities, they repudiated with passion. The Church, he claims, is not a visible society, presided over by men who have authority directly transmitted by Christ. An able tract of 1689 had collected much material to show how integral the doctrine was to the beliefs of the Church.

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Intrigue, a sudden dislike, some backstairs piece of gossip, here is the real root of great changes. That sure insight is, of course, one current only in a greater English stream which reaches back to Hobbes at its source and forward to T. Superiority is, by its nature exclusive, the more especially when it is united to a certainty of truth and a kinship with the dominant political interest of the time.

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The fall of James was caused, not as the Nonjurors were tempted to think, by popular disregard of Divine personality, but by his own misunderstanding of the limits to which misgovernment may go. The concept of natural right is most closely related to this position. The Church of England comes to be regarded as no more than the creature of Parliamentary enactment; and thus to leave it as the creature of human votes, is to destroy its divinity.

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Jeremy Bentham was a British lawyer and philosopher who worked for political and legal reforms in England during the late 1700's and early 1800s. He is at all points the offspring of a great and unbroken tradition; and that not the least when he seems unconscious of it.

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The seventeenth century had, for the most part, been interested in theology and government; and its preoccupation, in both domains, with

supernatural sanctions, made its conclusions unfitted for a period dominated by rationalism. And William, after all, had come to free the church from her oppressor.

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All at least were conscious that a new era had dawned. It is this which explains the acrimonious debates of the next two years. Though Church and State are thus distinct, they act for a reciprocal benefit; and it is thus important to see why Locke insists on the invalidity of persecution.

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Where, indeed, opinions destructive of the State are entertained or a party subversive of peace makes its appearance, the magistrate has the right of suppression; though in the latter case force is the worst and last of remedies. Adam Smith discussed in what fashion the prosperity of peoples could be best advanced. His value can be tested in another way.

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