Diego Lucci, *John Locke's Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2021, 244 pp.

There are many good reasons to read Diego Lucci's book with the utmost attention. First of all, Locke's Christian beliefs are examined in great detail, so as to highlight their sources, developments, and, mainly, their originality. Lucci points out that, although the similarities between Locke's theological views and those of some religious currents of his time are striking, there are some important differences that prevent us from subsuming his version of Christianity under any denomination. The comparison between Locke's religious beliefs and Arminianism, which was highly influential on English seventeenth-century latitudinarians, is very illuminating in this regard. As Lucci remarks, Locke's sympathy with Ariminian soteriology emerges both in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* and in the *Paraphrase*, where he introduces the concept of *assisting* grace and the governmental theory of atonement formulated by Hugo Grotius, who was Arminian in theological matters. However, Locke did not embrace the Arminians' comprehension, which entailed the idea of a less doctrinally rigid national church. To Locke, this model of toleration was likely to generate intolerance against those Dissenters who refused to join the national church and was, therefore, to be discarded in favour of a different model, allowing Nonconformists to enjoy freedom of worship.

Another very important source of inspiration for Locke's Christianity was Socinianism, as Lucci emphasises. Locke's tolerationism, his adhesion to mortalism, his rejection of the doctrine of original sin and of the satisfaction theory of atonement are evidence of this, together with his moralist soteriology. The exclusion of the belief in the Trinity from the fundamentals of Christianity in the *Reasonableness* attests to Locke's agreement with the main

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tenets of Socinianism, which regarded the Trinitarian dogma as unscriptural and illogical. Moreover, Locke's proof of scriptural authority, grounded on the moral excellence of the biblical precepts, is very similar to Socinus', and the emphasis he placed on Christ's resurrection as the most important aspect of his mission in the *Paraphrase* was likewise typical of Socinianism. However, Locke's views on the Law of Nature differ from those of the Socinians sharply. Unlike them, he did not believe that Christian revelation contradicted and invalidated some elements of moral law, including the rights to self-preservation and self-defense. Locke regarded revelation as disclosing the content of moral law to human reason in its entirety and enforcing its commands through the idea of rewards and punishments in the afterlife. In his view, Christ's precepts had not nullified the content of the Law of Nature (which had remained somehow obscure before revelation, due to the weakness of human understanding) but rather had complemented it with newly revealed truths concerning otherworldly sanctions and God's mercy. To Locke, the fundamental command of the Law of Nature, the preservation of our and others' natural rights, was not superseded by the Christian imperative of non-violence. While the Socinians embraced radical pacifism as the only position coherent with the Gospel, he described war as just under certain circumstances in the *Second Treatise*, and maintained the right to resist and even revolt against a despotic power.

The book also highlights Locke's distance from the Socinians as far as Christology is concerned. Lucci affirms that, while in the *Reasonableness* Christ is non incarnational and, therefore, non Trinitarian, in perfect agreement with Socinus' denial of his divine nature, in the *Paraphrase* Locke seems to introduce an Arian notion of Christ as pre-existent but created, which is no longer consistent with Socinianism. This attests to a development of Locke's Christology in his later years, as is also suggested by some manuscript notes he drew up during the last decade of the seventeenth century. Lucci's book offers a detailed examination of these notes, which is another reason for reading it with the utmost attention.

Lucci's analysis of Locke's attitude towards antinomianism is, likewise, of great interest, not only because it helps clarify the context in which the *Reasonableness* was written – the antinomian controversy revolving around the issue of justification, which involved several Nonconformist theologians in the first half of the 1690s. Lucci makes it clear that Locke not only rejected Calvinistic antinomianism with its belief in predestination – an opinion he judged injurious to salvation – , but also Roman Catholic antinomianism,

namely the belief that obedience to the infallible authority of the pope takes priority over obedience to moral rules. In his writings on toleration, Locke declared the Catholics' antinomian practical principles intolerable because they endangered civil society, but he did not declare Protestant antinomianism intolerable. According to Lucci, the reason for this disparity was that Locke did not consider Protestant antinomianism as socially dangerous as the practical principles held by Roman Catholics. He regarded the former as *potentially* intolerable, because claims of divine inspiration could lead Calvinists to disregard moral norms. However, some of the principles held by Roman Catholics were immoral, and therefore *actually* intolerable. This explanation sounds very convincing, since it fits in nicely with the political meaning of toleration in Locke's thought.

Lucci also focuses on some disputed aspects of Locke's ethics. Regarding the debate over Locke's voluntarism/intellectualism triggered by the seemingly incompatible explanations he offers for the binding force of the law of nature, Lucci argues that this incompatibility is blurred in Locke's ethics, because both natural law and natural reason are considered as God-given. The theological voluntarism in the *Essays of the law of nature*, where natural law achieves its binding force because of God's will, and the intellectualism of the *Essay*, which makes the rational apprehension of what is right sufficient for natural law to be binding, may be reconciled in Locke's thought, given the similarity between reason and natural law. Lucci agrees with Alex Tuckness that this similarity is sufficient to make the law of Nature appear not arbitrary to us, an argument that sounds convincing given what Locke affirms in the *Essay* regarding morality being the "proper Business of Mankind".

There are many other interesting ideas in the book, but here I shall only mention one of them, which in my opinion is worth further discussion. Lucci affirms that the various elements in Locke's religious thought are able to create an internally coherent form of Protestant Christianity. However, it seems hard to reconcile the foundation of Locke's religious thought, namely his idea of a benevolent creator, with his conviction that there is no salvation outside Christianity (or, more properly, outside his moralist version of Christianity). The position Locke assumed in the *Paraphrase* regarding heathens, including those who had "never heard of the Promise or News of a Saviour" (p. 201), seems to be quite extreme, since it amounts to their exclusion from salvation. According to Lucci, this opinion might be due to Locke's notion of saving faith in the *Paraphrase*, which is more demanding than in the *Essay* for it entails trustful reliance on Christ's message, not merely rational assent. This, however, implies

tightening the requirements for salvation, which are no longer such as to be met by the heathen world. I wonder whether this position may be reconciled with the idea of a benevolent, merciful God, which permeates Locke's religious writings.

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