

Comments on Crossnoe's "Liberty in Things Doubtful..."

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Professor Crossnoe's reconstruction is a laudable and foundational look at the idea of religious "toleration" within a 17th and 18th century context. It helps to greatly illuminate the ways in which this topic coalesced within first English roots which were then enhanced by later American religious leaders.

Being a historian myself, I always find it both helpful and necessary to approach a subject from its beginnings to help to underclass its process and ultimately perhaps to assess its future needs and pathways for successful completion. In identifying both the context from which Anglican toleration began its expression as well as the immediate changes that it underwent early in its development, one can see the motivations behind the initial dialogues concerning what toleration meant (which continues to be an ongoing debate), if/why it should be employed, and lastly to whom it should be applied. It helps to not only provide a framework to discuss the Freedom of Religious Conscience, but also helps to point a direction for the ongoing dialogue concerning this topic. While this treatment deals specifically with Anglican sources for this topic, it also (as preliminary treatments go) leads one to larger questions that stimulate further inquiry: how do these Anglican roots relate to similar contemporary movements of toleration both in Europe and American? How did the growth of American Religious Diversity impact religious toleration? How did this dialogue impact political ideology concerning religious diversity and the role of the government within this process. This is an area in which the writings of John Locke (as Prof. Crossnoe has discussed) can be especially enlightening.

It is always difficult to comment upon such papers that seek to identify key foundation principals upon which a debate begins for it is often seen as a "chore" or a basic that has to be done before a scholar can get to disseminating their academic position—yet it is very often a key

step in the process. Professor Crossnoe has accomplished this task in a superior fashion not only identifying those key theoretical origins but also providing a framework by which our subsequent discussions can be further understood and pushed into new arenas of understanding.