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Tolerance

The Beacon of the Enlightenment

EDITED AND TRANSLATED
BY CAROLINE WARMAN, *ET AL.*

TOLERANCE

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Philander et Clorinda by Philippe-Jacques Loutherbourg, Musée des beaux-arts de Strasbourg (1803): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philippe-Jacques_Loutherbourg-Philander_et_Clorinda.jpg

Introduction

Caroline Warman

This is a century of political and cultural imperialism, of wars about borders and control of resources, of world-wide trade and profit based on world-wide exploitation. It is also a century of revolution, and of fierce debate about rights and laws, about the right to follow a religion or to reject it, about policing and its limits. It is a century of violence, and it provokes violent reactions. I'm talking about the eighteenth century, yet I might as well be talking about now. History repeats itself, as has been said before, and will be said again. Its battles are still being lost, its triumphs still being struggled towards. This is why we are publishing this book: *Tolerance* is a collection of some of those violent reactions and fierce debates, written by people who were revolted by the injustice around them and who found ways of saying so, whether they were allowed to or not.

When, on 7 January 2015, the cartoonists and columnists of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* were attacked in their offices in Paris and many killed, France went into shock. One of its most deeply-held values, the right to free speech, had itself been attacked, and it felt intolerable. The context in which two vulnerable young French Muslims had grown up marginalised, been radicalised, and become the *Charlie Hebdo* killers also felt intolerable.

Many turned to the eighteenth-century writer and campaigner Voltaire and to his pithy slogans about free speech and religious tolerance to reiterate their values and express their grief. His face appeared on posters and banners in marches and vigils throughout France. What tends now to be known as the Enlightenment, after the widespread and vociferous campaign mounted by Voltaire and many others to bring the 'light' of

reason to everyone and to enable them to think for themselves, was back in the news. Modern France, a republic, seemed to be identifying with it and wanting to reiterate what it taught us. But the Enlightenment wasn't one thing, and it has no agency: to call it the 'Enlightenment' at all or to situate it in the past is to agree with this notion of illumination, suggest that it worked, and imply that it's over now: job done. Yet we know that this isn't so. What we do know is that eighteenth-century France was home to a unique concentration of thinkers subjecting society to intense scrutiny, writing about what it was and what it ought to have been, and about how to live together despite, or even because of, conflicting views.

A group of French academics, knowing this and keen to make a contribution to public debate in the immediate aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* assassinations, decided to bring those voices to us. They put aside their own research, and within a month, they had assembled the texts for the French edition of this book.* Within one month more, *Tolerance* was for sale across France in the ubiquitous newspaper kiosks.

The writers of the eighteenth century, it emerges, have a great deal to say to us that sounds not just relevant, but also urgent in today's world. A chorus of voices from across the century passionately rose up against oppression in the name of religion or any other banner, and against the unjust treatment of people for their creed, colour, gender, wealth, or sexuality. These voices tried again and again to make the case for tolerance, free speech, and equality. Their moment of apparent triumph came with the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, the text that opens this anthology and which still stands at the beginning of the French Constitution. Yet declaring those rights to exist and to be inalienable didn't immediately change the life of French male citizens for the better. Moreover, all those who weren't French or male remained excluded. The battle was far from won; it is still not won. Many people continue to be oppressed and voiceless. Power battles are still played out in the name of nation, ideology, and religion, whilst the slaughter of innocents still occurs. The writers in this book say again and again that whatever religion is, it shouldn't be a tool for power or a justification for persecution.

Since the *Charlie Hebdo* assassinations, there have been attacks on students in a Kenyan university, on holiday makers on a Tunisian beach, on a pro-Kurdish peace rally in Turkey, on a crowded shopping street in

* La Société Française d'Etude du Dix-Huitième Siècle (ed.), *Tolerance: le combat des Lumières* (Paris: SFEDS, 2015).

Lebanon, and back in France again. In all these attacks, values associated with the Enlightenment were targeted – whether they be education, tolerance, equality, or even the right to have free time and to spend it in the pursuit of happiness, as defined by those individuals pursuing it and not as decreed by anyone else. Meanwhile conflicts deepen – in Palestine, in Syria, in Afghanistan, in Nigeria, in Libya, in Ukraine, and in many other places – and people flee, often at great peril to themselves. We are all wondering what is happening to our world, and why it is as it is.

The writers in this book can help us work through these questions; they can help us identify structures of power or abuse and, in identifying them, reject them. They can do this for us because that's what they did for themselves. They may not always be right. But we can be certain that through the debates they raise, we can get a little closer to some tolerable answers.

When we persecute people and opinions, we isolate them, we make those opinions dearer to those who hold them, we make proselytism more likely, and we swell the ranks of those who wish to tread the path to martyrdom. Said Henri Grégoire, the priest and Revolutionary politician, in a speech of 1794 (p. 33).

Freedom disappears the instant laws make it possible in certain circumstances for a man to stop being a person and become a thing. Wrote Cesare Beccaria, the great Italian legal philosopher, in his analysis of Crimes and Punishments from 1764 (p. 64).

To claim that God permits the use of violence to uphold or further the interests of truth, while truth is being simultaneously claimed by all sides, is tantamount to saying that the Supreme Being wishes to blow up the entire human race. Asserted Louis de Jaucourt, the freemason and Encyclopédist, with his typical acerbic touch (p. 128).

These critical thinkers are not just critical; they are impassioned. The venal self-interest, cruelty, stupidity, hypocrisy, and racism underpinning slavery are depicted in a savage piece by Montesquieu, who turns them inside out by ironically listing all the reasons which 'justify' bondage (p. 27). Voltaire's famous fictional character Candide weeps when he meets a mutilated slave and hears his story (p. 66). The naturalist, traveller, and novelist Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre asks us why abuses from the past can be so freely condemned, but modern-day slavery accepted as a necessity (p. 79). And these are only a few of the many short texts included here, all arguing angrily, energetically, wittily, sometimes even

outrageously, against oppression in any form and for tolerance of all sorts – the free and unimpeded practice of all religions or none, the free exchange of ideas and dissemination of knowledge by whatever means available, the recourse to the law to protect these rights, and the free expression of outrage whenever any of these elements are contravened. They use stories, arguments, letters, speeches, drama, verse, satire, dictionary definitions, newspaper articles, confession, history, and often combinations of all these, with one inside another like a series of Russian dolls. They encourage us to compare culture, race, class (they call it ‘rank’), and even gender, and they show us how to use comparison to inspect our own views and assumptions. They try to get us to think, although, as the philosopher Rousseau dryly notes, ‘thinking is a skill humans learn like any other, only with greater difficulty’ (p. 41). But we’re trying.

When I write ‘us’, ‘we’, and ‘our’, I write as if these long-dead writers were addressing us directly, as if there were no gap between them and us. It’s part of the power of these texts that it feels this way. Their writers were involved in a massive and sustained campaign of persuasion, and they unceasingly talk to their readers, questioning, confronting, comparing, reasoning, persuading, thinking up new ways to get our attention. So whoever the reader is, whether it’s a man in a wig and frock coat – probably Catholic, French, and well-to-do, someone who has now been dead for at least two hundred years – or a modern person, just as likely to be a woman as a man and to represent any race, creed, or sexuality, this writing makes appeals to us constantly. These writers want us to agree with them, but they know that we might not. In leaving us that room to decide what we think, they give us freedom even as they argue for it.

But writing is not dissemination until it has a reader and that reader passes it on. Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and the many others in this book were intensely read and discussed in their time, and that’s why we still study them today. They are still known to the extent that their names are recognised, and some of Voltaire’s slogans still circulate in the public sphere, as we have recently seen. But that is not enough. Those French academics who put this anthology together were convinced that it would be of burning interest to those beyond academia, and made a gift of it to the French public, for whom and on behalf of whom these eighteenth-century thinkers were writing in the first place. We all need access to these texts, because they belong to us all: they are the inheritance of everyone who lives in society and are particularly necessary in times of conflict.

This is where our translation comes in. Dissemination stops if we can't read the language a text was written in, or if the text is not available to all who wish to access it. *Tolerance* contains forty writers. It was assembled by thirty-five academics, with the backing of the French Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. This English-language edition was translated by over 100 students and tutors of French from fifteen Oxford colleges, with the support of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and Open Book Publishers who are making it free for all on the internet. At every stage, this has been a collective effort, a celebration of fraternity – that third term in the famous French trio. We hope that this open access edition will now reach new readers, and that you will enjoy the eloquence and practical idealism of these extraordinary texts in their new English versions as much as you might have done in the original. Because language is nothing if it isn't communication and transmission, from one person to the next, from one century to the next, from one language to the next.

Caroline Warman, Oxford, 1 December 2015

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1. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, 1789**

*On 4 August 1789, those given the task of drawing up the Constitution decided that it should be preceded by a Declaration of Rights.** The deputies debated this Declaration fiercely and voted on it article by article throughout the week of 20-26 August 1789. The text remains an active part of the French Constitution.*



The representatives of the French people, constituted as a National Assembly, consider that ignorance, neglect or scorn for the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortune and of the corruption of governments, and have resolved to set out, in a solemn Declaration, the natural, sacred and inalienable rights of man, so that this Declaration, constantly present to all members of the social body, may continually remind them of their rights and duties; so that the acts of the legislative power, and those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all public institutions and may thereby be the more respected; so that the petitions of citizens, henceforth founded upon simple and incontestable principles, may ever tend to the maintenance of the Constitution and to the happiness of all.

In consequence, the National Assembly recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Article 1. Men are born and remain free and equal in their rights. Social distinctions may only be founded upon the common good.

* *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, 1789.*

** Representation of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier (c.1789): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen_in_1789.jpg

Article 2. The aim of any political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are freedom, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

Article 3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body and no individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from it.

Article 4. Freedom consists in being able to do anything which does not harm anyone else; thus, the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which ensure that all other members of society enjoy the same rights. These boundaries may be determined only by the law.

Article 5. The law has the right to prohibit only those actions which are harmful to society. Anything which is not forbidden by the law cannot be prevented, and no man may be constrained to do anything which is not ordered by the law.

Article 6. The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to contribute personally, or through their representatives, to its creation. The law must be the same for all, whether in punishment or protection. All citizens being equal in its eyes, all are equally eligible for all distinctions, positions and public employments, according to their capacities, and without any discrimination other than that of their virtues and their talents.

Article 7. No man may be accused, arrested or detained other than in the cases determined by the law, and in accordance with the forms it has prescribed. Those who seek, send, execute or cause to be executed arbitrary orders must be punished; but any citizen who is called or summoned by virtue of the law must obey without delay: resistance will incriminate him.

Article 8. The law shall set only punishments which are plainly and absolutely necessary, and no man may be punished except by virtue of a law which has been established and promulgated prior to the offence, and legally applied.

Article 9. Every man being presumed innocent until he has been declared guilty, any rigour which is not deemed necessary for the securing of his person must be severely punished by the law.

Article 10. No man may be harassed for his opinions, even religious opinions, provided their expression does not disturb the public order established by the law.

Article 11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen may therefore speak, write and publish freely, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

Article 12. The safeguard of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces: these forces are thus established for the good of all, and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be entrusted.

Article 13. For the maintenance of the public force, and for administrative expenses, a common contribution is indispensable: it must be equally levied from all citizens in proportion to their means.

Article 14. All citizens have the right to determine, either personally or through their representatives, the necessary level of the public contribution, to consent to it freely, to survey its employments, and to decide its rates, basis, collection and duration.

Article 15. Society has the right to demand that every public agent account for his administration.

Article 16. Any society in which the respect of rights is not guaranteed, nor the separation of powers secured, has no constitution at all.

Article 17. Property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one may be deprived of it, except when public necessity, as attested in law, manifestly requires it, and on condition of just compensation, payable in advance.

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[http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/Droit-francais/Constitution/
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2. Voltaire (1694-1778), 'Prayer to God', from *Treatise on Tolerance*, 1763*



*In 1762, Jean Calas, a Protestant, was accused of murdering his son for having wanted to convert to Catholicism. Despite the absence of any evidence, he was condemned to be broken on the wheel. Voltaire quickly became convinced that this was an outrageous miscarriage of justice, and decided to do something about it.** He wrote the *Treatise on Tolerance*, ending it with this prayer.*

It is no longer to people that I speak; it is to you, God of all beings, of all worlds, and of all times: if we feeble creatures, lost in the immensity of the universe, and invisible to the rest of it, are allowed to ask anything of you, you who have given everything and whose decrees are as unchanging as they are eternal, then may you deign to have pity on the errors inherent in our nature; may these errors not be our undoing. You did not give us a heart so that we could hate each other, nor hands so we could slit each other's throats; help us to help each other endure the burden of this painful and brief life; may the tiny differences between the clothes which cover our feeble bodies, between our inadequate languages, between our ridiculous customs, between all our imperfect laws, our absurd opinions, between all our circumstances, so disproportionate in our eyes and yet so equal before yours; may all these tiny variations which differentiate the atoms called humans not be the triggers of hatred and persecution; may those who light candles at midday in adoration of you learn to tolerate those who simply bask in the light of your sun; may those who wrap a white cloth round their robes to express the command to love you not hate those who say the same thing under a coat of black wool; may it be equally acceptable to

* Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet, known as), 'Prière à Dieu', from *Traité sur la tolérance*, 1763.

** Image of Voltaire: 'Monsieur de Voltaire fait d'après une découpure' by Abbé Charles-Philippe Campion de Tersan (1763): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arolsen_Klebeband_14_045.jpg

adore you in the jargon of an ancient language or of a more recent one; may those whose clothes are dyed red or violet and who rule over a small plot on a little heap of the mud of this world, and who happen to possess some rounded pieces of a certain metal, enjoy what they call greatness and riches without pride, and may others view them without envy: for you know that there is nothing to envy or boast about in these vanities.

May all men remember that they are brothers! May they abhor the tyranny wielded over souls, as they ever execrate the violent theft of the fruits of hard work and peaceful industry! If the scourge of war is inevitable, let us not hate each other, let us not tear each other apart when we are at peace. Let us spend the brief moment of our existence blessing, together and in a thousand different languages, from Siam to California, your goodness in bestowing on us this moment.

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[https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=WuVGAAAcAAJ&pg=PA194](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=WuVGAAAcAAJ&pg=PA194)



3. Three aphorisms from Denis Diderot (1713-1784), *Philosophical Thoughts*, 1746; Montesquieu (1689-1755), *The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748; and Voltaire, *Portable Philosophical Dictionary*, 1764*



'Lecture de la tragédie de l'orphelin de la Chine de Voltaire dans le salon de madame Geoffrin' by Anicet Charles Gabriel Lemonnier (1812). The group includes the three authors: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salon_de_Madame_Geoffrin.jpg

Precedent and imitation, miracles and power can all create dupes or hypocrites. Only reason can create believers.

Diderot

The problem stems from this notion that one must avenge the Divine Being. But one must honour Divinity and never avenge it. Indeed, if we allowed ourselves to follow this notion of vengeance, where would our torments

* Denis Diderot, *Pensées philosophiques*, La Haye: Laurent Durand, 1746; Montesquieu (Charles Louis de Secondat), *De l'esprit des lois*, Geneva: 1748; Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*, London: 1764, p. 192.

ever end? If the laws of man are to avenge an infinite being, they will have to model themselves on its infinity and not on the failings, the ignorance and the caprices of human nature.

Montesquieu

What do you say to a man who tells you that he prefers to obey God not men, and who is convinced he will earn his place in heaven by slitting your throat?

Voltaire

Read the free original text online (facsimile, with transcription) of Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*, 1875 edition: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Diderot_-_Œuvres_complètes,_éd._Assézat,_I.djvu/222



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4. Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-1794), 'On Admitting Women to the Rights of Citizenship', 1790*

On 3 July 1790, Condorcet published this plea against the exclusion of women from the public sphere in the Journal de la Société de 1789.

Did [all philosophers and legislators] not violate the principle of equal rights for all when they calmly deprived half humanity of the right to contribute to legislation and when they excluded women from the rights of citizenship? Is there any stronger proof of the power of habit, even among enlightened men, than seeing the principle of equal rights invoked on behalf of three or four hundred men who had been deprived of their rights by some absurd prejudice and yet at the same time forgetting these same rights when it comes to twelve million women?

For this exclusion not to be an act of tyranny, one would need either to prove that the natural rights of women are not absolutely the same as those of men, or show that they are not capable of exercising them.

Now, the rights of men derive exclusively from the fact that they are sentient beings, capable of acquiring moral ideas and of reasoning about these ideas. Since women possess the same qualities, they necessarily possess equal rights. Either no human individual possesses true rights, or all humans possess the same ones; and those who vote against the rights of others, whatever their religion, colour, or sex, have from that moment abjured their own rights.

It would be difficult to prove that women are incapable of exercising the rights of citizenship. Why should human beings exposed to pregnancies and to passing indispositions not be able to exercise the same rights that no one has ever imagined taking away from people who contract gout every winter and who easily catch colds? Even if we accept that men do enjoy some intellectual superiority beyond the simple difference in their

* Nicolas de Condorcet, 'Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité', *Journal de la Société de 1789*, V, 3 July 1790, pp. 1-13.

education (a superiority which is far from being proven, but which should be before women are unjustly deprived of a natural right), this superiority can consist in only two points. It is said that no woman has ever made any important discovery in the sciences or given any proof of genius in the arts, in writing, etc.; but presumably nobody would propose to grant the rights of citizenship exclusively to men of genius. Some add that no woman enjoys the same breadth of knowledge or the same power of reasoning as certain men; but what does this prove other than that, with the exception of a very small class of highly enlightened men, there is complete equality between women and the rest of men; that if this tiny class of men were set aside, inferiority and superiority would be equally shared between the two sexes. Now, since it would be completely absurd to limit the rights of citizenship and eligibility for public offices to this superior class, why should women be excluded rather than those men who are inferior to a great number of women?

Finally, some will say that there are certain qualities in the hearts and minds of women that ought to exclude them from the enjoyment of their natural rights. Let us examine the facts. Elizabeth of England, Marie Theresa of Austria, and the two Catherines of Russia have all proven that women lack neither strength of character nor intellectual resolve.

Elizabeth possessed all the frailties of woman; did these do more to undermine her reign than the frailties of her father or her successor? Have the lovers of certain Empresses exerted a more dangerous influence than the mistresses of Louis XIV, Louis XV, or even Henry IV?

[...] It has been said that women have never been guided by what is called reason, despite possessing much intelligence, wisdom, and a faculty for reasoning developed in them to the same degree as in subtle dialecticians.

This observation is false: they are not governed, it is true, by the reason of men, but rather by their own.

Their interests not being the same, which is the fault of the law, and the same things not having for them the same importance as for us, they can, without being unreasonable, determine their actions according to other principles and work towards different goals. It is as reasonable for a woman to occupy herself with the attractiveness of her person as it was for Demosthenes to cultivate his diction and his gestures.

It has been said that women, though better than men, being gentler, more feeling, and less subject to the vices that derive from egotism and

hard-heartedness, do not properly possess the instinct for justice; that they follow their sentiments more than their conscience. This observation is truer, but it proves nothing: it is not nature but rather education and social existence that cause this difference. Neither has accustomed women to the idea of what is just, but rather to the idea of what is decent. Removed from public affairs and excluded from every decision that is determined with reference to justice or fixed laws, they concern themselves with and act upon those things which are settled by invoking natural decency and sentiment. It is therefore unjust to propose, as the grounds for continuing to deny women the enjoyment of their natural rights, arguments that only derive from a kind of reality because women do not in fact enjoy their natural rights.

If one were to admit such arguments against women, one would need also to take away the rights of citizenship from that part of the population which, given over as it is to ceaseless toil, can neither enlighten itself nor exercise its reason, and soon, little by little, the only men permitted to be citizens would be those who had pursued studies in public law. Were one to admit such principles, one would need, as a necessary result, to abandon any kind of free constitution. The various different types of aristocracy used precisely these kinds of pretexts when establishing or justifying themselves; the very etymology of the word 'aristocracy' proves this.

One cannot put forward the argument that women are dependent on their husbands, for it would be possible at the same time to bring to an end this tyranny created by civil law, and in any case no injustice can justify committing another.

There remain therefore only two objections to discuss. In truth, they only provide arguments against granting women the rights of citizenship that are founded on utility, arguments of a type that cannot be used to outweigh true rights. The contrary maxim has too often provided tyrants with pretexts and excuses; it is in the name of utility that commerce and industry groan in their chains, and that Africans remain enslaved; it is in the name of public utility that the Bastille was filled with prisoners, that censors were appointed to limit the publication of books, that trials were held in secret, and that suspects were tortured. [...]

I now ask you to be so kind as to refute my arguments with something other than jokes or rants. I would like you to explain in particular, any

natural difference between men and women that would legitimately justify excluding women from rights.

The equality of rights established between men in our new constitution has brought upon us eloquent declamations and ceaseless derision; but until now, nobody has been able to provide a single reason against this equality of rights, and this failure has not been for want of talent, nor for want of trying. I am so bold as to believe that the same will be the case when it comes to the equality of rights between the sexes.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1790 edition:
http://lf-oll.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/1014/0570_Bk.pdf



5. John Locke (1632-1704), *Letter on Toleration*, 1686*



*The English philosopher John Locke wrote his Letter on Toleration (1686) in Latin and sent it to a friend who published it.** We reproduce here, unmodernised, William Popple's 1689 English translation. Locke is arguing for religious toleration and also for a clear separation of power between the State – whose aim is to promote the 'common wealth' of its citizens – and the church – whose focus is the salvation of their souls.*

That any man should think fit to cause another man—whose salvation he heartily desires—to expire in torments, and that even in an unconverted state, would, I confess, seem very strange to me, and I think, to any other also. But nobody, surely, will ever believe that such [conduct] can proceed from charity, love, or goodwill. If anyone maintain that men ought to be compelled by fire and sword to profess certain doctrines, and conform to this or that exterior worship, without any regard had unto their morals; if anyone endeavour to convert those that are erroneous unto the faith, by forcing them to profess things that they do not believe and allowing them to practise things that the Gospel does not permit, it cannot be doubted indeed but such a one is desirous to have a numerous assembly joined in the same profession with himself; but that he principally intends by those means to compose a truly Christian Church is altogether incredible. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at if those who do not really contend for the advancement of the true religion, and of the Church of Christ, make use of arms that do not belong to the Christian warfare. If, like the Captain of our salvation, they sincerely desired the good of souls, they would tread in the steps and follow the perfect example of that Prince of Peace, who sent out His soldiers to the subduing of nations, and gathering them into His Church, not armed with the sword, or other instruments of force, but

* John Locke, *Letter on Toleration*, London: A. Churchill, 1689.

** Portrait of John Locke by Godfrey Kneller (1697): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Locke.jpg

prepared with the Gospel of peace and with the exemplary holiness of their conversation. This was His method. Though if infidels were to be converted by force, if those that are either blind or obstinate were to be drawn off from their errors by armed soldiers, we know very well that it was much more easy for Him to do it with armies of heavenly legions than for any son of the Church, how potent soever, with all his dragoons.

The toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind, that it seems monstrous for men to be so blind as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it in so clear a light. I will not here tax the pride and ambition of some, the passion and uncharitable zeal of others. These are faults from which human affairs can perhaps scarce ever be perfectly freed; but yet such as nobody will bear the plain imputation of, without covering them with some specious colour; and so pretend to commendation, whilst they are carried away by their own irregular passions. But, however, that some may not colour their spirit of persecution and un-Christian cruelty with a pretence of care of the public weal and observation of the laws; and that others, under pretence of religion, may not seek impunity for their libertinism and licentiousness; in a word, that none may impose either upon himself or others, by the pretences of loyalty and obedience to the prince, or of tenderness and sincerity in the worship of God; I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interest of men's souls, and, on the other side, a care of the commonwealth.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1689 edition:
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6. Diderot (1713-1784), 'Aius Locutius', from the *Encyclopédie*, 1751*

In this article from the Encyclopédie, Diderot seems to be describing an obscure Roman deity named Aius Locutius or Aius Loquens, whose claim to fame is to have assumed the form of a voice in order to warn the Romans of an imminent Gaulish



*attack.** In fact what he's doing is playing with ideas of free speech, ironically assuming a persona to argue that a little bit of free speech, as long as it's all in Latin, can't do any harm.*

AIUS-LOCUTIUS. God of speech, on which the Romans bestowed this extraordinary name, though since it is also necessary to know when to keep quiet, they also had a god of silence. When the Gauls were about to invade Italy, a voice from the wood of Vesta was heard

to cry out: *if you do not raise the height of the city walls, the city will be taken*. That advice was ignored; the Gauls arrived, and Rome was taken. Once the Gauls had retreated, the Romans remembered the oracle, and built an altar to the god with the name that we are discussing. It then acquired a temple in Rome on the exact spot where the voice was first heard. Cicero says in the first book of *On Divination* that when no one had any knowledge of this god, it spoke, but once it had a temple and altars, it fell silent, and that the god of speech was struck dumb as soon as it became the object of worship. It is hard to reconcile

* *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772.

** Portrait of Denis Diderot by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1766): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greuze_Portrait_of_Diderot.jpg

the particular veneration the pagans showed for their gods with the patience they showed for the claims of certain Philosophers. And did those Christians they persecuted so mercilessly, say anything worse than Cicero? The books of *On Divination* are nothing other than irreligious treatises. Yet what sort of impression did those eloquent passages in which the Gods are invoked, called upon as witnesses, and their threats repeated, passages in which, in short, the existence of Gods is presupposed, what sort of impression did these passages make on the masses when they heard them? When they were delivered by men who had also produced a host of philosophical writings that treat the Gods and religion as mere fictions! Might the answer to these various problems not be the scarcity of manuscripts in ancient times? In those days, people didn't read much; they would listen instead to their Orators' speeches, which were always filled with piety towards the Gods, and they would have had no idea what the Orator thought about the Gods, nor what he wrote about them in the privacy of his study because those writings were kept for the eyes of only a few intimates. Now since there will never be any way of stopping men from thinking and writing, would it not be a good idea to do as the Ancients did? The works of unbelief are only to be feared for their effects on the masses and on the faith of simple people. Those who know how to think also know what to believe, and a pamphlet will not lead them abandon a path they have chosen carefully and want to follow. Absurd little arguments will not persuade a Philosopher to abandon his God, and so impiety is something only to be feared for those who would allow themselves to be influenced. There is one way, however, of reconciling the respect owed to the beliefs of a people and to the religion of a nation with the freedom of thought that is so desirable for the discovery of truth and for that civil peace without which there can be no happiness for either the Philosopher or the people, and that is to ban all works against the government and religion that are written in the vernacular, to allow all those who write in a learned language to get on with it, and just persecute the translators. Then, it seems to me, the nonsense that Authors produce would do no harm to anyone. In fact, the degree of freedom of speech that would thereby be achieved is, in my view, the greatest that a well-ordered society can afford. So while those societies in which this freedom is not enjoyed to any great extent may be no less well governed, there will be, without fail, a defect in the government of any society in which this freedom has been allowed to extend any further.

This is, I believe, to be the case in England and Holland, where it seems people think they have no freedom at all if they do not have complete impunity to say, unhindered, whatever they like.

Read the entry for 'Aius Locutius' on the ARTFL

Encyclopédie Project (text): <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:1025.encyclopedia0513.2913934>



Read the entry for 'Aius Locutius' on the ARTFL

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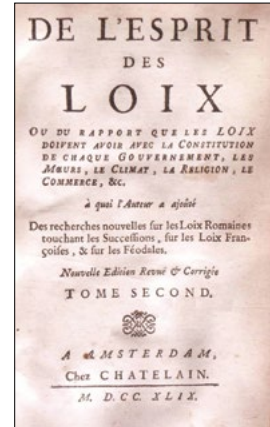


7. Montesquieu, 'On the Enslavement of Negroes', from *The Spirit of the Laws**

*Irony is the Enlightenment philosopher's favourite weapon when ridiculing his opponents. How does one go about deconstructing the justification for slavery? By pretending to defend it, as Montesquieu shows here.***

If I had to justify our right to enslave negroes, this is what I would say:

Once the peoples of Europe had wiped out the people of America, they were obliged to enslave the peoples of Africa, because they needed someone to clear the land in America.



Sugar would be too expensive if there were no slaves to cultivate the plant it comes from.

The people in question are black from head to foot; and their nose is so squashed that it is almost impossible to feel sorry for them.

The mind will simply not accept the idea that God, who is a very wise being, would have put a soul, especially a good soul, into a completely black body.

It is so natural to think that colour is the essence of humanity, that the peoples of Asia, who make people into eunuchs, continue to deprive blacks of what they have in common with us in an even more extreme way.

You can tell skin colour from hair colour, and hair was so important to the Egyptians that they killed all redheads who fell into their hands, and the Egyptians were the best philosophers in the world.

* Montesquieu, 'De l'esclavage des Nègres', in his *De l'esprit des lois*, Geneva: 1748, Book XV, ch. 5.

** Title page of *L'Esprit des lois*, II, Amsterdam: Chatelain, 1749: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Esprit_Loix_1749.JPG

The fact that negroes value glass necklaces more highly than gold ones, which are worth so much more in civilised countries, just goes to show that they have no common sense.

It is impossible to believe that these people are human beings, for, if we did believe them to be human beings, we would have to wonder whether we ourselves are Christians.

Small minds exaggerate the injustice done to the Africans. For if it was as bad as they would have us believe, would it not have crossed the minds of the Princes of Europe, who together make so many pointless treatises, to have drawn up a general convention to promote compassion and mercy?

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http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/montesquieu/de_esprit_des_lois/de_esprit_des_lois_tdm.html



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<https://books.google.fr/books?id=au9AAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA205>



8. Jean-François Marmontel (1723-1799), 'Minds are not Enlightened by the Flames of an Executioner's Pyre', from *Belisarius*, 1767*



*An active contributor to the Encyclopédie, Jean-François Marmontel is the author of a novel considered scandalous by his contemporaries, *Bélisaire* [Belisarius] (1767).** The work, censored by the Church authorities, was hugely successful throughout Europe. This particular passage, where Belisarius, a general, and the Emperor Justinian discuss the punishment of dissent, has been interpreted as a declaration of deism, that is to say, the belief in a God who created the universe but who is quite different from the God of organised religion.*

'In the vast expanse of error, truth is but a tiny speck. Who has found it, this single speck? Everyone claims to be the one to have done so, but what is their evidence? And does even the most evident truth give anyone the right to demand, to insist, sword in hand, that somebody else should agree with them [...]? Minds are never more united than when everyone is free to think whatever they want. Do you know what makes public opinion jealous, tyrannical and intolerant? It is because rulers quite wrongly attach a very high price to it; it is because of the way they favour one sect to the detriment of all other rival sects which they thereby exclude. Nobody wishes to be humiliated, rejected, and denied the rights of the citizen and loyal subject; thus every time the State creates two classes of people, one of which deprives the other of social advantages, whatever the motive might be for this act of dispossession, the excluded class will regard the fatherland as its wicked stepmother. The most trivial issue takes on the utmost importance as soon as it seriously affects the status of a citizen. And

* Jean-François Marmontel, 'On n'éclaire pas les esprits avec la flamme des bûchers', *Bélisaire*, ed. Robert Granderoute, Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 1994, ch. XV, pp. 190-195.

** Portrait of Marmontel by Alexander Roslin (1767): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexander_Roslin_-_Jean-François_Marmontel_-_WGA20068.jpg

let there be no doubt about it, this is what motivates the different factions. If we were to attach the same significance to a dispute about the number of grains of sand on the sea shore, the same animosity would spring up before our eyes. Fanaticism is, more often than not, nothing other than the spirit of envy, greed, pride, ambition, hatred, and revenge, all espoused in the name of heaven; and these are the gods for which a gullible and brutal ruler will act as the ruthless minister. If there were nothing more to be gained on earth by fighting for heaven; if fervour and truth were no longer a way of defeating one's rival or one's enemy, of furthering oneself at their expense, of profiting from their downfall, of winning preferential treatment to which they might themselves have been entitled; if all this were true, then there would everyone would calm down, and all sects would live in peace'.

'And we would have abandoned the cause of God', said Justinian.

'God does not need you to defend his cause', said Belisarius. 'Is it because of your edicts that the sun rises and the stars shine in the sky? Truth shines with its own light, while the flames of a burning pyre enlighten no one. God gives to princes the responsibility for judging the actions of men but he keeps for himself alone the right to judge their thoughts, and the proof that truth has not chosen princes as its arbiters, is that not a single one is free from error'.

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9. Three aphorisms from Diderot, *The Philosopher and Marshal ***'s Wife Have a Deep Chat*, 1774; Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), *Émile, or On Education*, 1762; and Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712-1786)*

I allow everyone to think as they please, so long as I am left to think as I please; and in any case, those who are capable of freeing themselves from prejudice hardly need to be preached at.

Diderot

In Constantinople, the Turks explain their beliefs, but we don't dare explain ours; when we're over there, it's our turn to grovel. If the Turks require us to pay the same respect to Mohammed, in whom we do not believe, that we ourselves require Jews to pay to Jesus Christ, in whom they don't believe either, are the Turks in the wrong? Are we right? What principle of fairness can we call on to decide the question? Two thirds of the human race are neither Jewish, Muslim, nor Christian, and there are countless millions who've never even heard of Moses, Jesus Christ, or Mohammed!

Rousseau

There must be tolerance for all religions, and the State must ensure that they do each other no harm, since everyone must be allowed to go to Heaven however they like.

Frederick the Great

* Denis Diderot, *Entretien d'un philosophe avec la maréchale de ****, in his *Œuvres complètes*, 1875; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'éducation*, in his *Œuvres complètes*, 1852; Frederick the Great of Prussia, in Thomas Carlyle, *History of Friedrich II of Prussia, Called Frederick the Great*, III, London: Chapman & Hall, 1862, p. 16.



Painting of Friedrich II by Wilhelm Camphausen (1882): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wilhelm_Camphausen-Die_Huldigung.jpg

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Read the free original text online (facsimile, with transcription) of Rousseau's *Œuvres complètes*, 1852 edition: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Œuvres_complètes_de_Jean-Jacques_Rousseau_-_II.djvu/594



10. Abbé Grégoire (1750-1831), *On Freedom of Worship*, 1794*

*In 1794, it took a brave man to ask for complete freedom of worship for all, and the reopening of the churches.** The priest Henri Grégoire, known as Abbé Grégoire, an abolitionist and defender of the Jews and all non-Catholics, was to stick to his position in spite of political turmoil. This excerpt is taken from a speech given on 1 Nivôse, year III (1794). When Abbé Grégoire died in 1831, at the height of the Restoration, he had been rejected by his Archbishop for his role in the Revolution and for refusing to renounce the oath he made in 1790 to obey the laws of the State over the laws of the church (known as the Civil Constitution of Clergy); he received religious burial in defiance of the Archbishop. In 1989, his remains were transferred to the Panthéon in Paris.*

Any opinion is the result of the operations of the mind; these operations may be altered only by reason: an opinion will give way to a burst of illumination but never to force; the wish to dictate thought is a fanciful undertaking because it exceeds man's powers; it is a tyrannical undertaking because no man has the right to set any limits on my reason.

From the instant I am allowed to have thoughts, I am also allowed to express them and behave in accordance with them. Public worship, which results from this, is a function of natural law and an equivalent to the freedom of the press; to attack it would be to destroy the basis of the social contract. Sometimes the way in which a question is posed is enough to resolve it; the question of the freedom of worship may be framed in these terms: may one require any member of the social body to do anything other than his duty as a good citizen?

The government must not adopt, let alone finance, any single religion, although it must acknowledge the right of each individual to worship as he pleases. The government may not therefore refuse protection or give preference to any one religion without being unjust; it follows that it must

* Abbé Grégoire, *Discourse sur la liberté des cultes*, Paris: Maradan, 1795, pp. 11-12.

** Background information on the 'dechristianization' of France during the French Revolution is available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dechristianization_of_France_during_the_French_Revolution

not itself say or do anything which, by offending those who hold something sacred, would endanger harmony or destroy political equality; it must hold all religions in balance and prevent them from being disrupted and from disrupting others.

It would, however, be necessary to forbid any religion which caused persecution, any religion which failed to acknowledge the full extent of national sovereignty or accept the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity; but once the government has satisfied itself that a given religion will not be not harmful to these principles, and that all its followers will swear allegiance to the political orthodoxy of the State, whether an individual is baptised or circumcised or whether he calls on Allah or Yahweh falls outside the realm of politics.

Even if there were a man so insane as to wish, as in Ancient Egypt, to worship a vegetable and build an altar to it, we have no right to stand in his way, because what the law does not forbid is allowed; and indeed I would make sure I did not disturb a Jew in his synagogue, a Muslim in his mosque or a Hindu in his temple, for that would be to violate one of their most sacred rights, that of honouring the Supreme Being in the way they choose. If I am wrong, the citizen would then say, you should pity and love me, teach me but do not persecute me: in any case, what are my beliefs to you? So long as I bend my own interest to the national interest and work with my brothers, liberty prospers and the Republic triumphs!

Let us appeal to the experience of the past to guide the present; for the experience of all centuries and all peoples proves that suppressing religious ideas only gives them more energy and, in the words of the philosopher Forster, increases their elasticity. Persuasion or pride make all the more precious any belief for which we have shed blood: when we persecute people and opinions, we isolate them, we make those opinions dearer to those who hold them, we make proselytism more likely, and we swell the ranks of those who wish to tread the path to martyrdom.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1795 edition:

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k45245h>



11. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), 'Dare to Know', from *What is Enlightenment?*, 1784*



Here the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, writes his famous answer to the question set by a Berlin journal: 'What is Enlightenment?' He begins by quoting the Latin poet Horace, '*Sapere aude*': Dare to know!**

What is Enlightenment? It is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without guidance from someone else. This immaturity is self-imposed if its cause lies not in any lack of understanding but in indecision and in the lack of courage to use one's own mind without the help of someone else. *Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your own understanding is therefore the motto of the Enlightenment.

Read the free original text online (facsimile, with transcription): http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/kant_aufklaerung_1784?p=16



* Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?', *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, XII, 1784, pp. 481-494.

** Portrait of Immanuel Kant by unknown artist: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kant_foto.jpg

12. Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732-1799), *The Marriage of Figaro*, 1784*



*In 1784, Beaumarchais was finally able to stage his censored play The Marriage of Figaro.** In this famous soliloquy, Figaro bitterly assesses his life and opportunities, looking back over the different jobs he's had, particularly as a writer, when he was ceaselessly subjected to censorship, whatever he wrote, and threatened with imprisonment for debt by the bailiff's assistant. This extract picks up just after Figaro's explanation of why he gave up being a vet.*

Tired of making sick animals miserable, and looking for a complete change of job, I throw myself body and soul into the theatre: if only I'd tied a stone round my neck instead! I put together a comedy set in a harem. As I'm Spanish, I think I can be rude about Mohammed without any trouble, but some emissary from I don't know where immediately complains that my lines are offensive to the Ottoman Empire's Sublime Porte, to Persia, to a sub-section of the Indian sub-continent, to all of Egypt and to the kingdoms of Cyrenaica, Tripoli, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, and the result is that my play is done for, just to please some Muslim princes, not one of whom can read so far as I know, and who like to give us a good whipping as they call us names and tell us we're Christian dogs. – When people can't debase wit or cleverness, they take their revenge by abusing it. – My cheeks hollowed out, I had run my course: I could see the horrendous bailiff's assistant looming over the horizon, a quill stuck ominously in his wig: shaking and shuddering with fear, I make one last effort. Everyone's debating the nature of wealth, and given that it isn't necessary to have any wealth to be qualified to discuss it, and without a penny to my name, I publish a piece on the value of money and its net product, whereupon I'm

* Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, Act V, scene iii, in *Théâtre*, ed. by Jean-Pierre de Beaumarchais, Paris: Garnier, 1980, pp. 305-306.

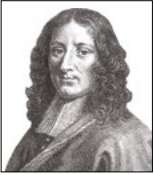
** Portrait of Beaumarchais after Jean-Marc Nattier (c.1755): [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Marc_Nattier,_Portrait_de_Pierre-Augustin_Caron_de_Beaumarchais_\(1755\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Marc_Nattier,_Portrait_de_Pierre-Augustin_Caron_de_Beaumarchais_(1755).jpg)

immediately hauled off to prison. From the back of a carriage, I watch the drawbridge of a fortress lowering just for me, and there I abandon hope and freedom. (*He stands up.*) How I would love to get hold of one of those flash-in-the-pan powerful men who so lightly give the order for disaster to strike, once they've fallen from grace good and proper, and their pride all been scooped away! I would tell him... that printed nonsense only ever means anything in those places where it's blocked; that, without the freedom to criticise, there can be no truly flattering praise; and that only small men mind about little pieces of writing. (*He sits back down.*) They finally tire of giving someone as obscure as me bed and board, and turn me out onto the street. As I still need to eat, even though I've been freed from prison, I sharpen my pen once more, and ask around to find out what the current hot topic is : I am told that during my economic retreat a system has been set up in Madrid to permit the free sale of commodities which extends even to the press, and that, so long as I don't write about the authorities, about worship, politics, morality, about anyone in power, protected institutions, the Opera or other performing arts, or about anyone who particularly stands by anything, I can publish whatever I like, subject only to inspection by two or three censors. To take advantage of this delightful freedom, I advertise that I will be setting up a periodical, and, assuming I won't be treading on anyone's toes, I call it the *Useless Journal*. We-hey! Straightaway a thousand poor devils set on my paper, I am suppressed, and here I am, jobless again!



Title page of Act I, *The Marriage of Figaro*, 1785 edition: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Figaro-acte1-éd_originale_1785.jpg

13. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), *On Tolerance, or A philosophical Commentary on these Words of the Gospel, Luke XIV. 23, Compel Them to Come in*, 1686*



*Pierre Bayle, a thinker and a Protestant, in exile and aware of the acts of violence committed against Protestants in France, might instinctively have adopted the cause and anger of his co-religionists.** Instead he wrote a text dismissing the fanatics in both camps.*

God presents the truth to us in such a way that he requires us to examine everything before us, and to investigate whether or not it is true. Now, we can deduce from this that he asks nothing of us other than to examine and investigate what is before us and to do this with care, and that he will be satisfied so long as, once we've examined it to the best of our ability, we accept as true those objects which seem to be true, and so long as we love them as a gift from heaven. It is impossible for a sincere love of any object which, once we've examined it most carefully, we accept as a gift from God, and which we only love because of our conviction that it comes to us from God, to be a bad thing, even were that conviction to be mistaken.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1686 edition:

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k76029k/f335>



* Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ Contrains-les d'entrer, ou Traité de la tolérance universelle*, 'A Cantorbery chez Thomas Litwel', 1686, p. 525.

** Portrait of Bayle, engraving by Pierre Savart (1774): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pierre_Bayle_2.png

14. Alexandre Deleyre (1726-1797), 'Fanaticism', from the *Encyclopédie*, 1756*

Alexandre Deleyre, contributor to the Encyclopédie, is the author of its influential entry on 'Fanaticism'. Extracts from this article were found among Voltaire's papers after his death. It may be helpful to know that in this context 'superstition' means blind belief.

FANATICISM. Fanaticism is zeal of the most blind and fervent sort. It is caused by superstition, and makes people commit ridiculous, unjust and cruel acts, not only without shame or remorse but also with a kind of delight and even a feeling of solace. Fanaticism, therefore, is simply superstition in action. *See Superstition.*

Imagine an immense rotunda, a pantheon with a thousand altars; then picture beneath the dome a devotee of every sect past and present, at the feet of the divinity whom he honours in his own way, with all the strange rituals that have sprung from the human imagination. To the right, a contemplative lies on his back on a mat, waiting for the celestial light to penetrate his soul; to the left, a prostrate energumen bangs his forehead against the ground to bring forth its abundance; over here, an acrobat dances on the tomb of the person he prays to; there, a penitent, who is as mute and motionless as the statue before which he abases himself; one man displays what modesty might prefer him to keep concealed, for God is not ashamed of his own image; another veils himself completely, even his face, as if the Creator were disgusted by his own creation; one worshipper turns his back to the south, to shield himself from the devil's winds; another extends his arms to the East, where God reveals his radiant face; sobbing girls whip their young innocent flesh to calm the demon that is lust, but risk arousing it; others, adopting a rather different posture, invite their deity to come closer: a young man seeks to mollify the instrument of his virility by attaching iron rings to it that weigh as much as it can bear [...]

* Alexandre Deleyre, 'Fanatisme', *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772.

Look at them all leaving the temple, full of the god that burns within them, spreading fear and delusion across the face of the earth. They carve up the world between them, and soon it is engulfed in flames.

How horrifying it is to realise that once the idea that killing people is the best way to placate the heavens was adopted, it then spread worldwide to almost every religion, whilst the list of reasons to sacrifice others grew ever longer, until no one could escape the knife. [...] Just think about all the thousands fanaticism has enslaved, be it in Asia, where being uncircumcised was a mark of disgrace, or in Africa, where to be Christian was a crime, or in America, where baptism was excuse enough to suffocate humanity. Count the thousands who have perished, either on the scaffold over the centuries of persecution, or at the hands of their fellow citizens during civil war, or by their own hand, in excessive self-laceration. The Earth is becoming a place of exile, peril and tears.

Read the entry for 'Fanaticism' on the ARTFL Encyclopédie

Project (text): <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.5:530.encyclopedia0513>



Read the entry for 'Fanaticism' on the ARTFL Encyclopédie

Project (facsimile): http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/extras/encpageturn.pl?V6/ENC_6-393.jpeg



15. Four aphorisms from Louis de Jaucourt (1704-1779), 'Intolerant', from the *Encyclopédie*, 1765; William Warburton (1698-1779), *Essay on Egyptian Hieroglyphics*, 1744; Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*; and Anon., 'Refugees', from the *Encyclopédie*, 1765*

The person who is intolerant towards or persecutes someone else, treating him like a wild animal just because he holds different views, has forgotten that they are both human. Religion is the pretext for this unjust tyranny, the result of which is that we refuse to tolerate any way of thinking that does not conform to our own.

Jaucourt

But when we see our own countrymen reprobate their native language, and affect to employ only *Bible phrases* in their whole conversation, as if some inherent sanctity resided in the *Eastern* modes of expression, we cannot chuse but suspect such men far gone in the delusions of a heated imagination.

Warburton

Humans do not naturally think. Thinking is a skill they learn like any other, only with greater difficulty. There are just two groups into which the sexes

* Louis de Jaucourt, 'Intolérant', *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772; William Warburton, *Essai sur les Hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens – où l'on voit l'Origine & le Progrès du Langage & de l'Ecriture, l'Antiquité des Sciences en Égypte, & l'Origine du culte des Animaux*, Traduit de l'Anglois de M. Warburthon, Avec des Observations sur l'Antiquité des Hiéroglyphes Scientifiques, & des Remarques sur la Chronologie & sur la première Ecriture des Chinois, Paris: Guérin, 1744, I, First Part, IX, pp. 59-60; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'éducation*, in his *Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Fourne, 1835, pp. 393-722; 'Réfugiés', *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772: the article was probably written by Diderot.

can really be separated: the group of people who think, and the group that never do. This difference arises almost exclusively from their education.

Rousseau

What are we to think of the humanity and religion of those who advocate intolerance? Those who believe that violence can shake the faith of others give a contemptible impression of their sentiments and of the very stability of their own faith.

‘Refugees’

Read the entry for ‘Intolerant’ on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (text): <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.7:2658.encyclopedia0513>



Read the entry for ‘Intolerant’ on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (facsimile): http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/extras/encpageturn.pl?V8/ENC_8-844.jpeg



Read online the free original text (facsimile) of Rousseau’s *Œuvres complètes* 1835 edition: <https://books.google.fr/books?id=aNFQAAAACAAJ&pg=PA669&lpg=PA669>



Read online the free original text (facsimile) of Warburton’s *Essai sur les Hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens*, 1744 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=AFcVAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA60>



Read the entry for ‘Refugees’ on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (text): <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.12:2622.encyclopedia0513>



Read the entry for ‘Refugees’ on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (facsimile): http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/extras/encpageturn.pl?V13/ENC_13-907.jpeg



16. Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783), On the Suppression of the Jesuits, 1765*



*The Society of Jesus** was one of the most important religious orders in France. For all its power, it was not short of enemies, and foremost amongst these were the Jansenists.*** The order's fortunes changed in 1764 when it was outlawed in France by King Louis XV. In a sardonic pamphlet published in 1765, the philosophe d'Alembert plays Jesuits and Jansenists off against each other.*****

It is not only France whose honour would be served by seeing an end to these idle disputes, but even more so the honour of religion, by virtue of the obstacles which such quarrels place in the way of the conversion of non-believers. I picture one of those men who have made the common mistake nowadays of attacking religion in their writings, and against whom both Jesuits and Jansenists alike have taken up cudgels. He is addressing the staunchest theologian from each side, and making this speech to them both:

'Good sirs', you are right to cry foul against me, and it is my intention to make amends. Therefore, spell out a profession of faith for me to swear, that I may be reconciled first with God, then with each of you as well'.

* Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Sur la destruction des Jésuites, Par un auteur désintéressé*, England (?): 1765, pp. 211-213.

** The Society of Jesus was founded in 1540 by the Spanish priest Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). It was strongly evangelical and sent many missionaries to the non-Christian world (in particular to the Americas and to China) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It also ran many schools in Catholic Europe. Jesuits were known to be intellectual but not libertarian. By the mid-eighteenth century there was much resentment of their power networks. The Society of Jesus was suppressed in France in 1764. Jesuits stood in stark opposition to the Jansenists.

*** 'Jansenists' were so named after the Catholic Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638) who followed the position of St. Augustine on divine grace, believed in the predestination of souls, and preached a severe form of bodily abstinence. Their theology was rejected as heretical by the Church, and condemned by the Pope. They nonetheless had widespread influence in late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century France. Jansenists stood in stark opposition to the Jesuits.

**** Portrait of d'Alembert by unknown artist: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Le_Rond_d'Alembert_by_French_school.jpg

Inevitably, from the very first article of the Creed, 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty', he will have his two catechists at loggerheads on the question of whether God's might extends in equal measure over body and soul.

'Of course', avers the Jansenist.

'Not entirely, no', mutters the Jesuit under his breath.

'You blasphemer!' exclaims the one.

'And you', retorts the second, 'you destroyer of freedom and of the merit of good works!'

Then turning to their prospective convert, together they address him thus:

'Ah sir, it is better not to believe at all than to follow the abominable theology of my opponent. Beware of putting your soul in the wrong hands. For as is written in the Gospel: if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch'.

It must be said, the blind non-believer is bound to feel a little uncomfortable caught between two men each offering to serve as his guide, while accusing one another of being even more blind than he.

'Good sirs', he will doubtless say, 'I thank you both for your charitable offers. But to lead me through the darkness, God has given me the staff of Reason, which, as you say, will surely set me on the path to faith. Well, I shall make use of this worthy staff; I will go straight where it leads me, and I hope it will prove more useful than the two of you have'.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1765 edition:

<https://archive.org/details/surladestructio01alemgoog>



Download the free original text (facsimile), 1765 edition:

<http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/N10084693.pdf>



17. Jeanne-Marie Roland (1754-1793), *Personal Memoirs, 1795**



*Jeanne-Marie Roland was a leading figure of the Girondist faction, a group which was very influential in the early stages of the Revolution but ultimately attracted the suspicion of Robespierre and his Jacobins.** Along with many other Girondists, she was condemned to death, and it is said that her last words, on seeing the statue of a goddess beside the guillotine, were: 'Oh Freedom, how many crimes are committed in your name!' She wrote the *Mémoires* from which this extract comes when she was imprisoned in the Conciergerie, awaiting trial.*

Philosophy has dispelled the delusions of baseless faith, but it has not reduced the effect certain objects have on my senses, nor has it undermined their impact on the thoughts or moods which such things used once to inspire in me. I can still feel involved in the celebration of Holy Communion if the service is conducted with solemnity; I forget all the falsity of the priests, the ridiculous nature of the tales they tell, or the absurdity of their (so-called) mysteries; all I see is the coming together of frail humans, imploring the help of a Supreme Being; the sufferings of humanity, the consoling hope of a powerful Judge occupy my thoughts; outlandish images fade away, passions are stilled, I have a keener desire to do my duty; if music plays a part in these ceremonies, I find myself transported to another world, and I am a better person when I leave the place to which an ignorant populace has come without thinking, just to pay tribute to a piece of bread. What is true of so many other human institutions is true also of religion; it does not change the mind of an individual, it accommodates itself to one's nature, and is elevated or diminished with it. The common man thinks little, takes

* Jeanne-Marie Roland, *Mémoires particuliers*, in Catriona Seth, *La Fabrique de l'intime*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 2013, p. 533.

** Portrait of Jeanne-Marie Roland de la Platière by unknown artist: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Madame_Roland.png

people at their word, and acts out of instinct, with the result that there is a permanent contradiction within him between the teaching he has received and the way he behaves. Those of strong moral fibre conduct themselves quite differently; their need is harmony, their behaviour is the perfect realisation of their beliefs. As a child, I had to absorb the beliefs I was given; they remained mine until I was sufficiently enlightened to be able to question them; but even at that point, all my actions flowed from them. I was astonished by the casual attitude of those who, while professing similar beliefs to mine, behaved quite differently, just as it angers me now to see the cowardice of men who wish to have a homeland and yet still attach importance to their personal life at a time when they should be putting it on the line in the service of their country.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1847 edition:

<https://books.google.com.ec/books?id=EL0NAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover>



18. Evariste de Parny (1753-1814), *The War of the Gods*, 1799*

In 1799, The War of the Gods caused great controversy. Its author, Evariste de Parny (1753-1814), who had been a well-known poet before the Revolution, describes a conflict between the Graeco-Roman and Scandinavian gods on the one hand, and the holy figures of Christian history on the other. The poem's plea for tolerance can be seen in this extract, in which a Muslim, a Jew, a Quaker, a Lutheran, a Catholic and an agnostic arrive in Paradise.

Leaving their terrestrial home, one day, it is said, six virtuous men who died at the same time, arrived at the same moment to present themselves at the gate of Heaven. The angel appears and asks each of them what their religion is; and the oldest approaches, saying: you have before you a good Muslim.

The angel: Come in, my friend, and if you turn left you will find the Muslim quarter.

The second man: I am Jewish.

The angel: Come in, and find a place amongst the Jews. You, who are frowning at this Jewish man, what are you?

The third man: Lutheran.

The angel: Very well, come in and be surprised by nothing here, go and sit in the temple where your brothers are gathered.

The fourth man: Quaker.

The angel: Well, come in, and keep your hat on. In that grove the sedentary Quakers gather in a group and there they smoke.

The Quaker: Bravo.

* Evariste de Parny, *La guerre des dieux*, 1799, in his *Œuvres*, Paris: Debray, 1808, V, pp. 46-48.

The fifth man: I am fortunate enough to be a good Catholic, and as such, I am rather surprised to see a Jew and a Turk in paradise.

The angel: Come in, and join your people beneath this portico.

You are next. What religion have you followed?

The sixth: None.

The angel: None?

The sixth: No.

The angel: But then what did you believe in?

The sixth: An immortal soul, a God who rewards and punishes, nothing more.

The angel: In that case, come in and take your place wherever you like.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1808 edition:
<https://books.google.fr/books?id=x-tEuRsk5ZUC&pg=PA46>



19. Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793), *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*, 1791*



*In 1791, the actress, playwright, fervent participant in the Revolution, and Girondist sympathiser, Olympe de Gouges, wrote her famous Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen.** She dedicated it to the queen, Marie Antoinette, not that it helped either of them or indeed its own reception. Both perished on the guillotine within a month of each other. Olympe de Gouges's Declaration of Rights was not adopted in any respect.*

Preamble

The mothers, daughters, and sisters who together make up the female representatives of the Nation ask that they be constituted as a National Assembly. Considering ignorance of, neglect of, or contempt for the rights of women to be the sole causes of public misfortune and governmental corruption, they have resolved to set out, in a solemn declaration, the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman, so that this declaration, constantly present to all members of the social body, may ceaselessly remind them of their rights and their duties; so that the acts of the female executive and of the male executive may at all times be compared to the goals of any political institution, and as a result be all the more respected; so that the demands of female citizens, founded henceforth on simple and incontestable principles, will always revolve around the maintenance of the constitution, of sound morals, and of the happiness of all. Consequently, the sex that is as superior in beauty as it is in the courage that it needs to endure the suffering of childbirth, acknowledges and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen:

* Olympe de Gouges, *Déclaration des droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne*, presented to the National Assembly in 1791.

** Portrait of Olympe de Gouges by Alexandre Kucharsky: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marie-Olympe-de-Gouges.jpg>

I:

Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only on the common good.

II:

The aim of any political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man: these rights are freedom, property, security, and above all resistance to oppression.

III:

The principle of any sovereignty essentially resides in the Nation, which is nothing other than the reunion of woman and man: no body and no individual may exercise any authority which does not emanate directly from the Nation.

IV:

Freedom and justice consist in returning anything that belongs to someone else to them; thus the exercise of the natural rights of woman has no limits other than those which the endless tyranny of man opposes to them; these limits must be reformed according to the laws of reason and nature. [...]

VI:

The Law should be the expression of the general will; all female citizens and citizens should take part, personally or via their representatives, in its formation; it must be the same for everyone: all citizens, female and male, being equal in its eyes, should be equally admissible to all public dignities, positions, and employments, according to their abilities, and with no other distinctions than those of their virtues and of their talents.

X:

No persons should be harassed for their opinions, whatever they regard; if woman has the right to mount the scaffold, she must equally have the right to mount the tribune, provided that what she says does disturb public order as established by the Law. [...]

XIII:

For the maintenance of the public force, and for administrative expenses, the taxation of woman and man is equal; she has her share in all publicly

imposed duties and in all onerous tasks; she must therefore receive her share when it comes to the distribution of positions, employments, offices, dignities, and labour. [...]

XVI:

Any society in which the respect of rights is not guaranteed, nor the separation of powers secured, has no constitution at all: the constitution is null and void if the majority of the individuals who make up the Nation has not taken part in its drafting.

XVII:

Property belongs to both sexes, whether together or separate; for each individual, it is an inviolable and sacred right; no persons may be deprived of it, for it is the true patrimony of Nature, except when public necessity, as attested in law, manifestly requires it, and on condition of just compensation, payable in advance.

Read the free original text online, 1791 edition:

<https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/>

Déclaration_des_droits_de_la_femme_et_de_la_citoyenne



Listen to the free audio book (in French):

<https://archive.org/details/>

DeclarationDesDroitsDeLaFemmeEtDeLaCitoyenne



20. Pierre Bayle, *On Tolerance*, 1686*

From the 1680s onwards, the number of anti-Protestant measures in France began to increase. The philosopher Pierre Bayle went into exile. He published many clandestine works defending moderate positions: for instance, that no one religion can claim a monopoly on truth or use this as a pretext to persecute others.

We need to thoroughly grasp who is right and who is wrong; if it is merely a matter of assertions, and assertion is excuse enough to persecute others, everyone will engage in persecution; each person will say he is persecuted unjustly and will persecute others justly. For the time being, as we wait for God to pass the final judgement, the strong will oppress the weak in good conscience. Are these not noble principles?

It is therefore clear that the right to persecute others cannot be wrested from Protestants by the ridiculous reason used by this author, but only by those that I have established in this work, which remove them universally from all religions.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1686 edition:

<https://books.google.co.uk/>

[books?id=2aNm5hYJke4C&pg=RA1-PR31](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=2aNm5hYJke4C&pg=RA1-PR31)



* Pierre Bayle, *De la Tolérance*, in his *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ Contrains-les d'entrer, ou Traité de la tolérance universelle*, 'A Cantorbéry chez Thomas Litwel', in fact Amsterdam: Abraham Wolfgang, 1686, Preface, p. xxxi.

21. Voltaire, *La Henriade*, 1723*

Voltaire is supposed to have composed the first canto of La Henriade, his epic poem about the French Wars of Religion and the peacemaker King Henri IV, during his time in the Bastille in 1717-18. With no paper at his disposal, he must have done so entirely in his head. He was young, ambitious, and dreamed of making his name as a writer. The first edition was published clandestinely; he was already expressing himself with his trademark audacity and conviction, notably in the lines dealing with the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, one of the most violent episodes of the Wars of Religion.



Illustration from *La Henriade*, 1728 edition: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Voltaire_-_La_Henriade_-_LONDRES_-_1728.JPG

While all was dark and night lay black and still,
 They raised the signal, gave the call to kill.
 [...]

 The fate of Coligny, a bleak presage,
 Was only a mild foretaste of their rage.
 Unbridled soldiers of a murderous race,

* Voltaire, *La Henriade*, ed. Beuchot, Paris: Lefèvre & Firmin-Didot, 1723, X, pp. 87-93.

With eyes that burnt like fire marched on apace,
To carnage sworn through duty and through zeal,
Whilst treading our kin's corpses under heel.
There at the head strode Guise, with wrath aflame,
And on us sought to venge his father's name,
Nevers, Gondi, Tavanne, with daggers raised,
Aroused by savage hate, by fervour crazed,
Had in their hands a list of those infractions
For which they sought revenge with murderous actions.
I shan't tell of the chaos and the screams,
The blood that flowed through Paris in full streams.
The boy, his corpse atop his father's piled,
Sister with brother, mother and her child;
Here, man and wife are burnt alive in homes,
There, infants dashed on rocks with broken bones.
We ought not to be shocked by human vice,
But in the future no words will suffice
To justify what you won't understand:
That these cruel monsters with blood on their hand,
Roused by the voices of bloodthirsty priests,
Invoked their God whilst brothers bled like beasts,
The blood of innocents dripping from their swords,
Offering it up as incense to the Lord.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1834 edition:
<https://books.google.fr/books?id=dg44AQAAIAAJ&pg=PA87>



22. Three aphorisms from Diderot, *The Eleutheromaniacs*, 1772; Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 1766; and Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), *Morning Hours*, 1786*

The child of nature always detests slavery:
Merciless enemy of all authority,
He rejects the yoke, is revulsed by constraint;
Liberty is his vow, Liberty his cry.

Diderot

Whoever dares to say that 'without the church there is no salvation' deserves to be hounded from the State, unless the State is the Church, and its prince is the pontiff. Such a dogma only works in a theocracy, and for any other government it is harmful.

Rousseau

My fear is that, when all is said and done, this famous debate between materialists, idealists and dualists will be nothing more than a verbal quarrel, better suited to the linguist than to the speculative philosopher.

Mendelssohn

* Denis Diderot, 'Les Eleuthéromanes, ou les furieux de la liberté', in his *Œuvres de Denis Diderot*, Paris: Brière, 1821, III, pp. 467-468; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 1762, Book IV, ch. 8, Geneva: chez Marc-Michel Bousquet, 1766, p. 268; Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden*, Berlin: 1786, I, p. 116.



Portrait of Moses Mendelssohn after Anton Graff (1771): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Moses_Mendelson_P7160073.JPG

Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Diderot's *Ouvres*, III, 1821 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Rd5ewRvz0qMC&pg=PA461>



Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Rousseau's *Contrat social ou principes du droit politique*, 1766 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=xmEHAAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PR37>



Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden*, 1786 edition: <https://books.google.fr/books?id=azQtawSj7UUC&pg=PA116>



23. Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*, 1721*

In The Persian Letters, Montesquieu introduces the Persian travellers Usbek and Rica, who, as they discover France, write letters to their friends back home. It is an opportunity for the philosopher to criticise, with an affected air of naïveté, the customs and opinions of France at the time.

Letter 85, from Usbek to Mirza, in Spain [?].

Were I to be forced to speak my mind openly, Mirza, what I would say is that I actually wonder whether it may not in fact be a good thing for there to be a variety of religions within a state.

It is evident that those whose religions are tolerated by the state generally make themselves more useful to their country than those who practise the dominant religion. This is because, precluded from attaining honours and unable to distinguish themselves other than by opulence and wealth, they try to acquire honours by hard work and by taking on the most difficult jobs society can offer.

Moreover, since all religions contain useful principles for society, it is a good thing for them to be zealously obeyed. And what is more likely to inspire this zeal than having more than one?

They are rivals who forgive each other nothing. Jealousy permeates through to individuals: everyone stands guard, and fears doing anything which would dishonour their faction or expose it to the contempt or unbearable condemnation of the opposing faction.

Thus has it ever been remarked that introducing a new sect to the state was the surest way of correcting the abuses of the former. It is all very well saying that it is not in the interests of a prince to allow multiple religions in his state. Even if all the sects in the world were to congregate in his country, it would not do him any harm because there is not a single one that does not ordain obedience and preach submission.

I accept that history is filled with wars of religion. But we must be very careful on this point: for it is not the multiplicity of religions which has

* Montesquieu, 'Lettre 85', in his *Lettres persanes*, Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1721, pp. 96-99.

produced these wars, but the spirit of intolerance that animated the religion which believed itself to be dominant; it is this spirit of proselytism that is to blame – the Jews picked it up from the Egyptians it passed from them like an epidemic disease to the Muslims and Christians; finally it is this unbalanced way of thinking, whose progress can only be seen as a total eclipse of human reason.

For, ultimately, even if there were no inhumanity in attacking the conscience of others, even if it did not result in the manifold evil effects which are caused by it, merely contemplating it would be an act of madness. He who would have me change my religion does this without hesitation, because he would not change his own, even in the face of violence, yet he finds it strange that I will not do something that he would not do himself, even for the empire of the world.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1721 edition:

[https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=0PFDAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA96](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0PFDAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA96)



24. Abbé Grégoire, 'New Observations on the Jews and in Particular on the Jews of Amsterdam and Frankfurt', 1807*



*A representative of the clergy sent to attend the Estates General in 1789, Abbé Grégoire was a man of faith who was also influenced by Enlightenment philosophy.** He was an abolitionist who espoused the notion that every individual should be free and recognised as a citizen, irrespective of his origins. Here he reflects on the situation of the Jews, particularly those of Frankfurt. When he looks back on the*

liberties Jews have enjoyed in France for seventeen years, he is referring to the rights conferred on them by the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

The question comes down to whether Jews are human beings. How contemptible and disgraceful are those individuals who offend against the dignity of the human race when they offend against the person of an Israelite! Have these Christians who persecute others not, then, read the Gospel? That would be a crime. They certainly do not follow it, which is another. These Christians to whom St Paul commends as necessary virtues faith, hope and charity, pointing out that the greatest of these is the last. These Christians whose pastors frequently remind them of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and of Jesus Christ's saying 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. These Christians who find this precept in a book revered by both themselves and the Jews: 'Turn from evil and do good'. Turn from evil; the many people who restrict their morality to that first part have only fulfilled half their duties. [...]

The strict observance of justice is in the true interests of all, but particularly of our rulers. To deprive one part of the people of their social benefits is to legitimise their discontent and justify their complaints. All members of the body politic should be judged by the same laws, exercise

* Abbé Grégoire, 'Observations nouvelles sur les juifs, et spécialement sur ceux d'Amsterdam et de Francfort', *La Revue philosophique, littéraire et politique*, XVI, 1 June 1807, pp. 391-394.

** Portrait of Abbé Grégoire, by unknown artist (1801): <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gregoire.jpg>

the same rights and fulfil the same duties. The esteem accorded each individual should be measured out according to his usefulness, virtue, and the use he makes of his talents. [...]

Aside from some lingering prejudices which will disappear, France has for seventeen years now been the country with which the Jews may be most satisfied, particularly at the current time. The supreme authority has pronounced in their favour, and they will justify its hopes. The Jews were the pariahs of Europe. The fact that a great injustice against them has been redressed is the promise that one day others will be also. People will feel that if it was iniquitous to banish individuals on account of their religious beliefs, it is no less so to banish others because of the colour of their skin. Public opinion, chief among powers, since in the last analysis it brings down or props up all the others, is gradually clearing away the rubble of feudalism, and leading Europe towards a new order of things. [...]

Gradually a pit is opening up, which will swallow up – along with Dom Ramon-Joseph de Arcé, Archbishop of Burgos and his tortures which are no longer anything but political tools – the Inquisition whose very existence is a calumny to the Catholic religion. Jovellanos and other renowned victims whom despotism destined to its furies, will go to join Las Casas, Savonarola, Carranza, Yérikui etc. in a better world. Their tombs are heaped with tributes of love and admiration, while the memory left by Torquemada, Eymeric, Sepúlveda is reviled. Persecutors of every rank and nation, such is the fate which awaits you. And if the names of some among you do come down to posterity, you will find yourself consigned with horror to the sewers of history. If it is a consolation to think that virtue must be purified by the trials of this world, and if justice is sometimes late in coming, then at least crime can never escape the justice of God, and only rarely that of men.

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25. Rétif de la Bretonne (1734-1806), *Paris Nights*, 1788*

In a passage from Paris Nights, Rétif de la Bretonne muses on the subjects of blasphemy and fanaticism.

My day was taken up by work, as usual. In the evening, I witnessed a new scene of fanaticism. At ten o'clock, as I passed in front of the police superintendent's door in the square near where I lived, I saw a crowd gathered. I enquired why. Some local women replied that it was someone who had blasphemed against the Virgin Mary. I felt compelled to go into the Superintendent's office. I found, alone with the clerk, a man with plain flat hair, who was sitting peacefully. I asked them who the blasphemer was.

'It is this man', the clerk told me, 'who is staying here until the crowd disperses'.

I said to the man with the Jansenist hair: 'Tell me, please, sir, why you are accused of blasphemy'.

'Please believe me, sir', the man responded, 'when I say that I have not committed blasphemy. Here are the facts: I was walking down the Rue St Victor; on the corner of the Rue du Mûrier, were three women, who were chatting, and two seemed to be consoling the other. The eldest said to her: 'Call upon the Holy Virgin Mary; she will hear you: she's my port of call. Isn't the Holy Virgin Mary everywhere?'

I felt I should pick up on this phrase, from the lips of a pious woman and deserving of an explanation: 'What you just said was heretical, my good woman: it is God alone who is all around us'.

The three women looked at me for a moment in silence and I was just about to explain the true principles of faith to them, when the old woman who had spoken before shrieked, 'Help! Atheist! Huguenot! He says that the Virgin Mary isn't everywhere!'

* Nicolas-Edme Rétif de La Bretonne, Night 81: 'L'Homme aux cheveux plats', in his *Les nuits de Paris ou l'observateur nocturne*, London: Libraires de France, 1789, pp. 114-116.

At these words, I was surrounded by a huge crowd of people who all came out of their homes in an instant. People flung themselves at me: I asked for help from the guards and to be brought before the Superintendent.

I smiled and said to the fellow: 'Sir, you have acted recklessly! You should be very careful before attacking the prejudices of common people, and only do it when their prejudices are truly harmful: this one isn't, even though it is an error'.

'What! Sir, you want a true Christian to see an error and not fight against it?'

'Yes, sometimes'.

'You would let it be, a mistake like that?'

'Well why not?'

'That's Jesuit morality, pure and simple'.

'Jesuits may not have been right about everything; but they were no fools'.

'You're a Molinist, sir!'

'No, good sir'.

'Aha! So then you must be... an honest person...'

'Well I'd like to think so!'

'You're a moderate then!!'

'Oh! Yes, I am a moderate! One can never be sufficiently so'.

At these words, the fellow meditated, sat down (he had been standing up while talking), and said nothing more to me: this word 'moderate' had scandalised him. I went to see if the rabble was dispersing. There were no more than a dozen left. And as I knew the Superintendent, I took it upon myself to tell the guard to bring all these nosey people in. When they heard this, they all withdrew, and I returned to invite the Jansenist to leave. Which he did. I accompanied him just beyond the fateful Rue du Mûrier, before taking my leave. He was extremely cold towards me: I was moderate. I

concluded from his behaviour that he always took the most foolish stance, the stance of those who exaggerate, and who are the cause of all ills.

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books?id=K5EUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=K5EUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1)



26. Three aphorisms from Diderot, *Philosophical Thoughts*; Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794), *On Crimes and Punishments*, 1786; and Rousseau, *The Social Contract**

Everywhere I hear loud accusations of heresy. The Christian is heretical in Asia, the Muslim in Europe, the Papist in London, the Calvinist in Paris, the Jansenist at the top of the rue St Jacques, the Molinist at the bottom of the faubourg Saint-Médard. What is a heretic? Is everyone heretical, or nobody?

Diderot

Freedom disappears the instant laws make it possible in certain circumstances for man to stop being a person and become a thing.

Beccaria

If we try to find out what exactly constitutes the greatest good of all, which must be the ultimate aim of any system of legislation, we will find that it can be reduced to two main principles, liberty and equality. Liberty, because any amount of dependency on the State means that the State loses that same amount of strength. Equality, because liberty cannot survive without it.

Rousseau

Read online the free original text (facsimile) of Diderot's *Œuvre Philosophiques et Dramatiques*, 1772 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zDgHAAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PA42>



* Denis Diderot, *Pensées philosophiques*, in his *Œuvres philosophiques et dramatiques de M. Diderot*, Amsterdam: 1772, III, pp. 1-82; Cesare Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, Paris: Cazin, 1786, p. 106; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 1762, Book II, ch. 11: 'Des Divers systèmes de législation', Geneva: chez Marc-Michel Bousquet, 1766, p. 88.

Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Beccaria's
Dei delitti e delle pene, 1786 edition, p. 106: <https://books.google.fr/books?id=Zb5CAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA101>



Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Rousseau's
Du contrat social, 1766 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=xmEHAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1>



27. Voltaire, *Candide*, 1759*

*Voltaire's Candide is both tender-hearted and savagely ironic.** His hero witnesses tragic events without being able to do anything to stop them. Along with his servant Cacambo, and a train of sheep loaded with gold, gems and diamonds, Candide sets off for Surinam to find his beloved Cunégonde. But once he gets there, he discovers the horror of the slave trade.*

As they came closer to the town they came across a negro lying on the ground, only half dressed, that is to say, wearing nothing but some blue canvas trousers. This poor man no longer had his left leg or his right hand.

'Oh good God!' Candide said to him in Dutch, 'what are you doing here, my friend, in this horrible state I see you in?'

'I am waiting for my master, the famous merchant, Mr Vanderendur' replied the negro.

'Is it Mr Vanderendur', asked Candide, 'who has treated you in this way?'

'Yes, sir', said the negro, 'that's how it works. Twice a year, they give us blue canvas trousers and nothing else to wear. When we work in the sugar factories and the mill traps a finger, they cut our hand off; when we want to run away, they cut our leg off: I found myself in both these situations. This is the price we pay for the sugar you eat in Europe. And yet when my mother sold me for two Spanish crowns on the Guinea coast, she said to me: 'My dear child, bless our shamans, love them always, and they will give you happiness in life, for you have the honour of becoming the slave of our masters the white men, and in so doing you are making your father and mother's fortune'. Alas! I don't know if I made their fortune, but they

* Voltaire, *Candide, ou l'optimisme*, traduit de l'Allemand de Mr. le docteur Ralph, 1759, ch. 19.

** Portrait of Voltaire, workshop of Nicolas de Largillière (after 1724-25): [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Atelier_de_Nicolas_de_Largillière,_portrait_de_Voltaire,_détail_\(musée_Carnavalet\)_-002.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Atelier_de_Nicolas_de_Largillière,_portrait_de_Voltaire,_détail_(musée_Carnavalet)_-002.jpg)

certainly didn't make mine. Dogs, monkeys, and parrots are a thousand times less miserable than we are: the Dutch shamans who converted me tell me every Sunday that we are all children of Adam, black and white. I am no genealogist, but if these preachers are telling the truth, then we are all cousins. In which case you will concede that it would be not be possible to treat your relatives any worse'.

'Oh Pangloss', cried Candide, 'you had not foreseen this abomination; I have had enough, I am finally obliged to give up on your optimism'.

'What is optimism?' asked Cacambo.

'Alas', exclaimed Candide, 'it is the obsessive insistence that everything is fine when it couldn't be worse'. And he burst into tears as he gazed at the negro, and he was still weeping when he reached Surinam.

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28. d'Alembert, 'Geometer', from the *Encyclopédie*, 1757*

D'Alembert (1717-1783) was co-editor of the Encyclopédie with Diderot and the author of its 'Preliminary Discourse', a general introduction to all areas of knowledge and how they all connect up. The article on the 'Geometer', meaning here 'mathematician', defends the scientific way of thinking in opposition to ignorance and superstition.

Among us, geometry has all kinds of critics. There are some who go so far as to contest its usefulness; we refer them to the well-known preface to the history of the Academy of Sciences, where mathematics are strongly defended against such attacks. Yet aside from the physical and tangible uses of geometry, we shall presently consider another facet of its efficacy, which up until now has perhaps not received enough attention: the way in which this area of study can serve to imperceptibly pave the way for a philosophical way of thinking, and to encourage and prepare an entire nation to receive such illumination as this way of thinking may bring. This is perhaps the only way for certain European nations to begin to shake off the yoke of oppression and profound ignorance beneath which they groan.

The small number of enlightened men living in those countries under the rule of the Inquisition complain bitterly, although in secret, of the minimal progress that science has made thus far in those desolate climes. The precautions taken to stop any rays of light from getting through have been so successful that philosophy is in almost the same state there as it was for us in the time of Louis the Younger.** It is undeniable that the most intolerable abuses of this court which has always so rightly horrified us are only the result of ignorance and superstition, and persist only due to them. Enlighten the nation, and the chancellors of these tribunals will

* Jean le Rond d'Alambert, 'Géomètre', *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772.

** D'Alembert is presumably thinking of Louis VII (1120-1180), King of France (1137-1180), who presided over the building of the Basilica of St Denis, expelled the Jews from France on pain of death or mutilation in 1144, and led the Second Crusade in 1147, which was a failure. He divorced his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, who then married Henry II of England, giving England extensive lands in France and leading ultimately to the One Hundred Years' War.

readily forswear those excesses of which they will be the first to recognise the injustice and disadvantages. This is what we have seen happen in countries where an inclination for the arts and the sciences, as well as an understanding of philosophy, have been maintained. Study and reason prevail in Italy; and the Inquisition has much abated the tyranny it exercises in those parts, where it is still customary to swear not to teach any non-Aristotelian philosophy. Engender, if it is possible, geometers among these peoples; it is a seed which will in time produce philosophers, almost without us realising it. The most exacting and rigorous orthodoxy cannot contend with geometry. Those who might think it was in their interest to keep minds in darkness, supposing they were far-sighted enough to foresee the consequences of this science's progress, would always lack any justification for preventing its spread. Soon the study of geometry will give rise to that of mechanics; this will lead, all by itself and without hindrance, to the study of sound natural science; and finally, natural science will lead in turn to true philosophy, which, through the general and swift enlightenment it will spread, will soon be more powerful than all of the efforts of superstition combined; for these efforts, however great they may be, become useless once the nation is enlightened.

Read the entry for 'Geometer' on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (text): <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.6:949.encyclopedia0513>



Read the entry for 'Geometer' on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (facsimile): http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/extras/encpageturn.pl?V7/ENC_7-627.jpeg



29. Rabaut Saint-Étienne (1743-1793), 'No Man Should Be Harassed for His Opinions nor Troubled in the Practice of His Religion', 1789*

Rabaut Saint-Etienne, a deputy representing the Third Estate and himself the son of a Protestant pastor, looks at the flaws in the so-called 'edict of tolerance' promulgated by Louis XVI in 1787: the 'non-Catholics' (Protestants and Jews) continue to be discriminated against. He argues that complete liberty should be enjoyed by all.

The only thing that non-Catholics gained in the edict of November 1787 (and some of you, gentlemen, may not be aware of this), was what could not be refused them. Yes, what could not be refused them; I do not repeat this without shame, but it is not an empty accusation, these are the edict's own terms. This law, more famous than fair, lays down the ways in which their births, marriages, and deaths should be recorded; it thereby makes it possible for them to be recognised in civil law, and to exercise their professions... and that's all it does.

And this, gentlemen, is how, in France and in the eighteenth century, we continue to apply that axiom of the dark ages and divide our nation into two castes, one favoured, and one excluded; and how we have viewed as a great stride forward for legislation that French people, who have been deprived of their civil rights for a hundred years should now be allowed to exercise their professions, that is to say, to exist, and for their children no longer be regarded as illegitimate. Moreover what the law requires of them to gain even this much is difficult and fraught with obstacles, while the execution of its mercy has brought about chaos and suffering in those provinces where Protestants live. [...]

And so it is, gentlemen, that Protestants do everything for their country, while their country treats them with ingratitude. They serve it as citizens, yet it treats them like outlaws; they serve it like men who have been liberated by you, and yet are treated like slaves. But we do finally have a French nation,

* Rabaut de Saint-Étienne, 'Opinion de M. Rabaut de Saint-Étienne sur la motion suivante de M. le Cte de Castellane: Nul homme ne peut être inquiété pour ses opinions, ni troublé dans l'exercice de sa religion', Versailles: Baudouin, 1789, pp. 6-7.

and it is on behalf of two million useful citizens who demand their rights as Frenchmen that I make my appeal today. I am not so unjust to my nation as to suppose that she could utter the word *intolerance*; it is banished from our language or will only exist as one of those barbarous outmoded terms which we no longer use because the idea it represents no longer exists. But Gentlemen, it is not even tolerance which I demand: it is liberty. Tolerance! Support! Pardon! Mercy! All ideas which are overwhelmingly unjust to all dissenters for as long as it is true that difference in religion or opinion is not a crime. Tolerance! I demand that the very word be banished; and it will be, this unfair word, which presents us only as citizens deserving of pity, as criminals to be pardoned, those people whom chance, mainly, and upbringing have impelled to think differently from us. Error, gentlemen, is not a crime: the person who has fallen into it takes it as the truth; it is the truth for him; he is obliged to believe in it, and no man or society has any right to prevent him.

Well, gentlemen, in the general carving up of error and truth which men hand out, hand on, or fight over, who amongst us will be so bold as to claim that he has never been in the wrong, that truth has always been on his side, and error always elsewhere?

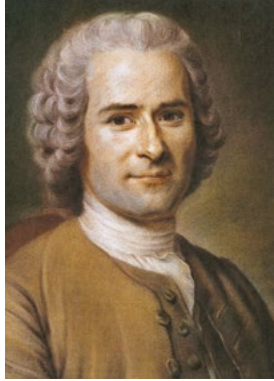
And thus I demand, gentlemen, for all French Protestants, for all the non-Catholics in the kingdom, the same that you demand for yourselves: liberty and equal rights. I demand it for that people uprooted from Asia, endlessly wandering, endlessly banished, endlessly persecuted over the course of nearly eighteen centuries, and which would adopt our customs and ways if our laws made it one with us, and whose morals we have no right to criticise, given that they are the result of our cruelty and of the humiliations we have unjustly inflicted on it.

I demand, Gentlemen, everything you demand for yourselves: I demand that all French non-Catholics be given the same status as all other citizens in every respect and without the slightest reservation, because they are citizens too, and because law and liberty are impartial and do not share out unequally the rigorous acts of their exact justice.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1789 edition:
<https://books.google.fr/books?id=MypCAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA1>



30. Three aphorisms from Diderot, 'Letter to My Brother', 1760; Voltaire, *Treatise on Metaphysics*, 1735; and Rousseau, *The Citizen, or An Address on Political Economy*, 1765*



Portrait of Rousseau by Maurice Quentin de La Tour (after 1753): [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Jacques_Rousseau_\(painted_portrait\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Jacques_Rousseau_(painted_portrait).jpg)

Philosophy is as far from impiety as religion is from fanaticism, but from fanaticism to barbarism is only a step.

Diderot

Adultery and love between men are allowed in many countries, but you will not find a single one in which you are allowed to break your word. This is because society can rub along perfectly well with adulterers and men who love each other, but not with people who pride themselves on deceiving each other.

Voltaire

* Denis Diderot, 'Lettre à mon frère', in his *Collection complete des œuvres philosophiques, littéraires et dramatiques*, London: 1773; Voltaire, *Traité de Métaphysique* (1735), ch. 9: 'De la vertu et du vice', in his *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Beaumarchais, 'de l'imprimerie de la société littéraire typographique', 1784, XXII, p. 70; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Le Citoyen, ou Discours sur l'économie politique*, Geneva: 1765, p. 20.

Those citizens who deserve thanks from their country should always be rewarded with honours but never privileges, for the instant anyone is allowed to think what a fine thing it would be to disregard the law, the republic will teeter on the brink of disaster.

Rousseau

**Read the free original text online (facsimile)
of Diderot's, 'Lettre à mon frère', in *Collection
complete des œuvres philosophiques, littéraires et
dramatiques*, 1773 edition:** [https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=Dj4HAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA141](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Dj4HAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA141)



**Read the free original text online (facsimile)
of Voltaire's, *Traité de Métaphysique* in *Œuvre
completes*, 1796 edition:** [https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=3iAHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA520](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3iAHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA520)



**Read the free original text online (facsimile) of
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books?id=9ClkAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA20](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9ClkAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA20)



31. Diderot, Extract from a Letter to Princess Dashkova, 3 April 1771*



*It was in their correspondence with friends that the Enlightenment philosophers expressed themselves most freely, without fear of censorship. This letter from Diderot to a Russian acquaintance, a confidante of Catherine the Great, is particularly open.***

There is a characteristic spirit for every age. Our own seems to be characterised by the spirit of liberty. The first attack against superstition was violent, excessive. As soon as men dare any sort of assault on the bastion of religion, the most formidable as well as the most respected bastion in existence, there can be no turning back. Once they have looked threateningly upon the majesty of Heaven, they cannot fail, the next instant, to turn their gaze upon those who hold sovereignty on Earth. The cord that binds and humanity and keeps it down is made from two strands; one cannot break without the other also giving way.

Read the free original text online:

[https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Correspondance_\(Diderot\)/56](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Correspondance_(Diderot)/56)



* Denis Diderot, *Correspondance*, ed. Georges Roth, Paris: Minuit, 1955-70, XI, p. 20 (letter 665).

** Portrait of Ekaterina Vorontsova-Dashkova by Dmitry Grigorevich Levitsky (1784): [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:E._Vorontsova-Dashkova_by_Dm._Levitsky_\(1784,_Hillwood\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:E._Vorontsova-Dashkova_by_Dm._Levitsky_(1784,_Hillwood).jpg)

32. Voltaire, 'Free Thinking', from *Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1764*

In this extract from the Dictionnaire philosophique, Voltaire invents a dialogue between the Englishman Boldmind – whose name describes his character – and the Spaniard Medroso – his name meaning 'fearful' in Spanish, and evoking the fear inspired by the Spanish Inquisition (the Holy Office) and the Dominican monks who supported it.

Around the year 1707, when the English had won the battle of Sargasso, defended Portugal and for a time given a king to Spain, General Officer Lord Boldmind, who had been injured, was taking the waters at Barèges. There he met Count Medroso who, having fallen from his horse behind the baggage train a mile and a half from the battlefield, had also come to take the waters. He was familiar with the Inquisition; Lord Boldmind was just familiar in conversation. One day, after a few drinks, he had this conversation with Medroso:

Boldmind: So you're sergeant to the Dominicans? You've got a nasty job there.

Medroso: That's true, but I prefer to be their lackey than their victim, and I decided I would rather have the misfortune of burning my neighbour than being roasted myself.

Boldmind: What a dreadful alternative! You lot were a hundred times happier under the yoke of the Moors when you were allowed to fester freely amongst your superstitions; for all that they were conquerors, they did not presume to exert the unheard-of right of putting souls in chains.

Medroso: What do you expect? We are not permitted to write, to speak or even to think. If we do speak, it is easy to interpret our words, even more so our writing. Moreover, as we cannot be burned at the stake for

* Voltaire, 'Liberté de penser', in his *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*, 1764, pp. 224-228.

our private thoughts, we are threatened with being burned eternally by the order of God himself if we do not think like the Dominicans. They have convinced our government that if we were allowed to use our common sense the entire state would combust, and the nation would become the most wretched on Earth.

Boldmind: Do you find us so wretched, we English who cover the seas with our ships, and who have just won several battles for you at the other end of Europe? Do you see the Dutch, who have snatched from you almost all your finds in India, and who now enjoy the status of being your protectors, being cursed by God for having granted total freedom to the press, or for trading in men's thoughts? Was the Roman Empire less powerful because Cicero wrote freely?

Medroso: Who is this Cicero? I have never heard of him; it's not about Cicero, it's about our Holy Father the Pope and Saint Anthony of Padua, and I have always heard it said that the Roman Catholic religion would be lost if men started to think.

Boldmind: It's not for you to believe it or not, because you are certain that your religion is divine, and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. If that is true, nothing can ever destroy it.

Medroso: True, but it can be reduced to not much; and it's thanks to free thought that Sweden, Denmark, your entire island, and half of Germany now languish in inexpressible misery, no longer being subjects of the Pope. It is even being said that if mankind continues to follow their false enlightenment, they will soon be worshipping nothing but God and virtue. If the gates of Hell ever get that far, what will become of the Holy See?

Boldmind: If the first Christians hadn't had the freedom to think, isn't it true that there would have been no Christianity?

Medroso: What do you mean? I don't understand you.

Boldmind: I'm sure you don't. What I mean is that if Tiberius and the first emperors had had Benedictine monks to prevent the early Christians from having pen and ink, and if free thought hadn't been long established in the Roman Empire, they would never have been able to set out their articles of belief. If Christianity only developed because of the freedom to think, then

by what contradiction or injustice could it possibly want to eradicate the freedom on which it itself is based?

If someone makes you a business offer, don't you think about it for a long time before agreeing to it? What more important business could there be in the world than our eternal happiness or misery? There are one hundred religions on the earth, every one of which will send you to hell if you persist in believing in your own dogmas which theirs consider to be nonsensical and ungodly: so look again at those dogmas.

Medroso: How can I look at them? I am not a theologian.

Boldmind: You are a man, and that is enough.

Medroso: Alas! You're more of a man than me.

Boldmind: It's up to you to learn to think; you were born with a mind. You are a bird caught in the Inquisition's cage – the Holy See has clipped your wings, but they will grow back. If you don't know any geometry, you can learn it – everyone can find things out; it is shameful to put your soul in the hands of people you'd never give your money to. Dare to think for yourself!

Medroso: People say that if everyone thought for themselves, everything would become strangely confused.

Boldmind: On the contrary. When people go to the theatre, everyone freely speaks their mind, and there's no disorder. It's only when some arrogant patron tries to push a rubbish poet on people who can tell good from bad that you will hear the boos start up. The two sides might even hurl apples at each other, as once happened in London. It's the people who want to rule our minds who have caused a good chunk of the misery in this world. We have only been happy in England since everyone gained the right to speak his mind freely.

Medroso: We're just as tranquil in Lisbon where nobody is allowed to say what they think at all.

Boldmind: You may be tranquil but you are not happy: it's the tranquillity of slaves condemned to row in a galley. You row to the beat, and in silence.

Medroso: Do you think that my soul is chained to a galley then?

Boldmind: Yes, and I'd like to free it.

Medroso: But what if I like it in the galley?

Boldmind: Then you deserve to be there.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1765 edition:

<https://books.google.co.uk/>

[books?id=1gg1AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA224](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=1gg1AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA224)



33. Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814), 'Reflections on Slavery', from *A Voyage to the Island of Mauritius*, 1773*



*After his stay on the Île de France (as Mauritius was formerly known), the setting for his novel Paul et Virginie, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre wrote a record of his travels in which he gives an eye-witness account of slavery and its inhumanity.***

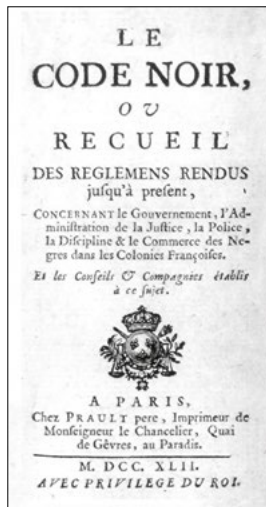
I know not whether coffee and sugar are necessary for Europe's fortune, but I know for certain that these two plants have been disastrous for two parts of the world. America has been depopulated in order to make space for them to grow; Africa is being depopulated in order to get people to farm them [...]. A land owner would be comfortably off with twenty farmers, he is poor with twenty slaves. They number twenty thousand here, one eighteenth of whom have to be replaced each year. Left to itself, therefore, the colony would die after eighteen years, so true is it that there can be no repopulation without freedom and property, and that injustice is a bad manager.

It is said that the Code Noir or Slave Code*** is conceived for their benefit. That may be so: but the harshness of the masters exceeds the permitted punishments, while their avarice withholds the food, rest and rewards they owe. And if these wretched people wished to complain, to whom might they complain? Their judges are frequently those who were tyrannising over them in the first place.

* Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Réflexions sur l'esclavage', in his *Voyage à l'Île de France*, Amsterdam: 1773, p. 201.

** Portrait of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre by Ernst Hader: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bernardin_de_Saint-Pierre_by_Ernst_Hader.jpg

*** The 'Code Noir' or Slave Code, first enacted in law by Louis XIV in 1685, establishes the laws regulating the 'rights' of slaves, which included marriage (although only between slaves, and only with the permission of the owner) and the right not to have families divided. It also establishes the penalties permitted by law for punishing slaves.



Title page of *Le Code Noir*, 1742 edition: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Code_Noir_1742_edition.jpg

But, it is said, this slave people can be controlled only with very great harshness; it takes torture, three-hooked iron collars, whips, blocks to which they are tied by their feet, chains which grip them by the neck; they must be treated like animals so that the whites may live like men. Oh, I know all too well that once a thoroughly unjust principle is established, all its consequences will be most inhumane.

It was not enough that these wretches should be given up to the greed and cruelty of the most depraved of men, they had also to be the plaything of their owners' sophistry.

Theologians aver that in exchange for slavery on earth, they are rewarded with freedom of the spirit. But most of them are bought at an age where they can never learn French, and the missionaries do not learn their language. In any case, those who are baptised are treated in the same way as the others.

They add that they have merited punishment from on high by selling one another. Is it then for us to be their torturers? Let us leave it to the vultures to destroy the kites.

Politicians have condoned slavery, saying it was justified by war. But it is not the blacks who are fighting us. I concede that the laws of man permit it; we should at least remain within the bounds they set.

It angers me to see that the philosophers who so bravely fight against abuses have barely mentioned the slavery of the blacks except to make jokes about it. They look away, into the distance. They speak about the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre, and the slaughter of the Mexicans by the Spaniards, as if this crime were not still being committed now, by half of Europe. Is it worse suddenly to kill people whose opinions differ from our own than to persecute a whole nation to whom we owe our luxuries? The lovely rose and flame colours in which our ladies dress, the cotton with which they trim their gowns, the sugar, coffee and chocolate for their breakfast, the rouge they use to set off their pallor, all this is prepared for them by the hands of wretched black people. Women of feeling, you weep at tragedies, yet those things which bring you pleasure are drenched with human tears and tainted with blood!

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1773 edition:
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1019923>



34. Pierre de Marivaux (1688-1763), *The French Spectator*, 5 October 1723*



*Marivaux is best known as a dramatist and novelist, but he also worked as a journalist.** With *Le Spectateur français*, he aimed to produce a periodical focusing particularly on moral reflection, in the vein of the seventeenth-century moralists. It ran to twenty-five issues and was published sporadically between June-July 1721 and October 1724.*

It is true that we are all born wicked, but this wickedness takes the form of a monster that we carry within us, with which we must struggle; we recognise this monster all too clearly whenever we gather en masse. [...]

There is little doubt that the particular mores and customs of men are flawed; what else can we expect, when these mores are the pure invention of men, when these customs are as varied and numerous as there are nations in the world? But the law that commands us to be just and virtuous is everywhere the same: men did not invent it, they merely agreed that they must follow it as it was revealed to them by reason or by God himself, as it is revealed everywhere with perfect uniformity. There was no need for men to say, 'this is how we must be just and virtuous'; they merely said, 'let us be just and virtuous', and that was sufficient. Everyone understands it everywhere, in no land does it require explanation. Wherever I go, I find in the minds of men the same thinking on this matter, a point of agreement among all peoples.

* Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux, *Le Spectateur français*, 5 October 1723, in his *Journaux et Œuvres diverses*, ed. Frédéric Deloffre et Michel Gilot, Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1969, pp. 233-235.

** Portrait of Marivaux after Louis-Michel van Loo (1743): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Loo_Pierre_Carlet_de_Chamblain_de_Marivaux.jpg

35. Louis-Alexandre Devérité (1743-1818), *Collected Documents of Interest on the Case of the Desecration of the Abbeville Crucifix, which Occurred on 9th August 1765, 1776**

Louis-Alexandre Devérité published numerous political pamphlets during his life as a lawyer and printer in the town of Abbeville. His foreword to the Collected Documents of Interest on the Case of the Desecration of the Abbeville Crucifix, which occurred on 9th August 1765, and of the Death of the Chevalier de La Barre, addresses the question of sacrilege. As the title of Devérité's pamphlet indicates, this was a case involving the vandalisation of a crucifix in Abbeville. A witchhunt ensued, and two young men, the Chevalier de la Barre and Gaillard d'Etallonde, were convicted – on scant evidence – of blasphemy, the latter in absentia as he had managed to escape. The Chevalier de la Barre was condemned to be tortured, beheaded, and burned along with a copy of Voltaire's Dictionnaire philosophique, which had come out the year before (see p. 75) and which, it was alleged, La Barre had been stockpiling. His extreme youth (he was only twenty), the severity of his punishment, and also the dignity with which he underwent it caused European-wide revulsion. Devérité writes here in the guise of an English publisher so as to evade censorship.

We believe we are able to say with some certainty that the horror and indignation, justified or not, which the vast majority of Europe continues to express today towards the verdict condemning the two youths responsible to the flames, are also widely felt in Abbeville itself, among all the right-minded, enlightened and honest folk of this large town.

It would be wrong, then, to think that the town in which the Chevalier de la Barre perished was at this time bereft of knowledge and philosophy. Athens was lacking in neither when the herms** were desecrated, and it may be that on close inspection there is no case more greatly resembling the Abbeville crucifix than that of the Athenian herms, notwithstanding, of

* Louis-Alexandre Devérité, *Recueil intéressant, sur l'affaire de la mutilation du Crucifix d'Abbeville, arrivée le 9 Août 1765, et sur la mort du chevalier de La Barre pour servir de supplément aux Causes celebres*, London: 1776, pp. 3-15.

** As Devérité goes on to explain, the herms were sculptures placed outside the entrances of houses for protection and good luck.

course, the truth which resides in the objects of Catholic worship. We will explain it here so that our readers can make the same comparison.

One night, the herms, square figures made from stone which were commonly placed at the entrance to a house, were all either destroyed or defaced. The extent of the sacrilege sent Athens into turmoil. Vengeance was vigorously pursued, and statements were even taken from foreigners and slaves whose evidence was not ordinarily admissible, yet still it was not possible to penetrate the mystery which veiled those responsible for the attack. The enemies of Alcibiades, though, took advantage of the situation in order to destroy him. One of the agitators, a certain Androcles, persuaded some little-known craftsmen to claim that sometime previously a group of young libertines had, while inebriated, profaned the sacred mysteries, and that Alcibiades, who was amongst them, had harshly and sarcastically insulted the Gods and those who worshipped them. And so investigations were conducted into the dissolute life of the young Athenian; this was then taken as proof of his crime against the herms, and he was summoned before the magistrates. One of the accomplices, named Andocides, confessed to the crime and was pardoned. But as both the offended Gods and people alike must have a victim, all those whom Andocides had accused of impiety were sentenced to death, and Alcibiades himself – a disciple of Socrates and a general in the army – was forced into exile in Sparta, so as to escape his sentence.

Thus, as in Athens, so in Abbeville: the same occurrence. The desecration of statues – the perpetrators of which have never been discovered – has given rise to other forms of inquiry and prosecution. In Abbeville as in Athens, endless depositions were received. In both towns, both regions, both centuries alike, these led to further allegations of impiety in other forms, also supposedly committed in a state of inebriation. They were punishable by torture. Lastly, in Abbeville as in Athens, personal grievance greatly influenced the verdict. Like Alcibiades, de la Barre was condemned out of hatred, for it would seem that even the most singular crimes recur at different points in history and are part of the same universal laws which move all Nature.

While we Englishmen are rightly admonished for the massacres in Ireland, and for so many other barbarous acts – no lesser perhaps than those acts of fanatical barbarity committed by other nations – we can nonetheless take pride in having seen our island lit up by the daystar of philosophy since first it shone on us, unobscured by those dark clouds that have moved over France and Greece. Certainly, it was in France that the great

Montesquieu once said: 'The Deity must be honoured, never avenged'. But it is in England that this light shall endure, and where that other maxim, of Cicero: *Deorum injuriae, Diis curae* (insults to the gods must be dealt with by the gods) will remain engraved in the hearts of our magistrates and recorded in all our Law Books, under the heading LÈSE MAJESTÉ, which holds such an important place in the Judicial Code of our neighbouring countries.

Translators' note:

It is interesting to note that two pairs of terms used in the first two paragraphs ('horror and indignation'; 'knowledge and philosophy') also feature in a letter written by David Hume ten years earlier in the same city where Devérité's work was supposedly published: London.

We have heard lately very strange stories from France, which excite *horror* in every one, and give me a sensible concern. You conjecture that I mean the atrocious punishment of the Chevalier De la Barre by the parliament of Paris, on account of some youthful levities. Some of my friends as are not over favourable to France, insult me on this occasion; and surely, if our accounts be true, nothing can do less honour to the country. It is strange, that such cruelty should be found among a people so celebrated for humanity, and so much bigotry amid so much *knowledge* and *philosophy*. I am pleased to hear, that the *indignation* was as general in Paris as it is in all foreign countries.

Hume to the Marquise de Barbentane, 29 August 1766,
in *The Letters of David Hume*

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1776 edition:
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56848012/f2.image>



36. Anon., *The Private and Public Life of the Posterior Marquis de Villette, Retroactive Citizen, 1791**

In July 1750, two gay men were discovered carrying out 'an act of gross indecency' and were sentenced to death. These were the last executions carried out in France for this reason alone. Yet texts demanding the right for freedom of sexual orientation did circulate, at first in secret and then in plain sight during the Revolution. They are often fairly crude, as the following suggestive and burlesque example shows. The source text uses the letter 'Q', which is a pun on the word 'cul', meaning arse; the translators have swapped it for 'Rs', meaning the same thing...

Villette, driven by a passion for cheek, stands up with an enthusiasm worthy of a more distinguished topic, a topic which should not even be thought of in a free state: 'For how much longer will we tolerate the aristocracy expanding its empire into the smallest of matters?

For too long now our necks have been tied to their leash. Either every individual must have presidency in turn or presidency itself must be completely abolished. Consequently, I denounce to you the As, which have occupied first position amongst their fellow letters since the invention of the alphabet, despite the fact that all letters merit this position in every regard. Therefore I demand that it is the turn of the Rs to take presidency. If I may say so, I hope that you are just enough to consider my motion and hope not to have denounced in vain a violation which has prevailed, alas, for too long'.

Although this motion would have seemed laughable to a number of Jacobites, as there were many among them who were unwaveringly fond of the Rs, the motion was taken to a vote, and it was decided by a very large majority that the Rs would in turn take presidency.

* Anon., *Vie privée et publique du ci-derrrière marquis de Villette, citoyen rétroactif*, Paris: c.1791 (l'an III de la liberté), in Patrick Cardon, ed., *Les Enfants de Sodome à l'Assemblée nationale*, Lille: QuestionDeGenre/GKC, 2005, Appendix.

37. Three aphorisms from Diderot, *Philosophical Thoughts*, XII; Marivaux, *The French Spectator*; and Pierre Jean George Cabanis (1757-1808), *On Sympathy*, 1802*



Portrait of Pierre Cabanis by Ambroise Tardieu: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pierre-Jean-Georges_Cabanis.jpg

Yes I support the view that superstition is more harmful to God than atheism.

Diderot

Any man could say, be good and virtuous to me, and I will say in turn, treat me the same way, and thus our voices will resound in a chorus of echoes.

Marivaux

* Denis Diderot, *Pensées philosophiques*, in his *Œuvres philosophiques et dramatiques de M. Diderot*, Amsterdam: 1772, p. 12; Pierre Marivaux, *Le Spectateur français*, in his *Œuvres complètes de Marivaux*, Paris: Cabanis, 1830; George Cabanis, *De la sympathie*, in his *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, Paris: 1802, II, p. 498.

Moral sympathy consists in the ability to share the ideas and affections of others, and in the desire to make others share our own ideas and affections.

Cabanis

Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Diderot's, *Pensées philosophiques*, 1772 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=okzdOUUTXvUC&pg=PA12>



Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Marivaux's, *Le Spectateur français*, in *Œuvres complète*, 1830 edition: <https://books.google.fr/books?id=LcvwAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA209&lpg=PA209>



Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Cabanis's, *De la sympathie*, in *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, 1802 edition: <https://books.google.fr/books?id=dcPJAAAACAAJ&pg=PA498>



38. Leandro Fernández de Moratín (1760-1828), 'A Philanthropic Congregation', 1811*



*Leandro Fernández de Moratín, the most famous Spanish dramatist of his time, published in 1811 an account of the auto-da-fé of 1610 in the village of Logroño.** His commentary presents an ironic satire of the Inquisition and its cruelty.*

Has the world ever known a more pious court than this? It had no rest until it had imprisoned, tortured, exiled, dispossessed, oppressed, excommunicated, flogged, hanged and burned all the wretched individuals that it had in its power. If they happened to perish in their dungeons, it would condemn their effigy instead, and it would burn their bones, and their forenames, and surnames and the name of their homeland, and inscribe them in great capital letters at the entrances to churches, so that they might be read by all those who could read [...]. Let us not speak, then, of a tribunal, but rather of a philanthropic congregation.

* Leandro Fernández de Moratín, *Proceso a la brujería. En torno al Auto de Fe de los brujos de Zugarramurdi*, Logroño: 1610, in his *Comentarios de L. Fernández de Moratín bajo el pseudónimo de Ginés de Pasadilla*, ed. De Manuel Fernández Nieto, Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 1989, p. 178, n. 8.

** Portrait of Fernández de Moratín by Francisco Goya (1824): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Goya_-_Portrait_of_the_Poet_Moratín_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

39. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws**

Montesquieu relays here the supposed speech of a Jewish man on learning that an eighteen-year-old Jewish girl was due to be burned at the stake by the Inquisition in Lisbon. Montesquieu claims that he found the speech in a book by someone else: needless to say, he wrote it himself.

You complain, said the author to the Inquisitors, that the Emperor of Japan condemns all the Christians in his lands to death over a slow fire, but what he would say to you is that ‘We treat you, who do not hold the same beliefs as we do, as you yourselves treat those who do not hold the same beliefs as you. The only thing you can really complain about is your own weakness, in that it prevents you from exterminating us and allows us to exterminate you’.

But the truth is that you are much more cruel than that emperor. You put us to death, we who do not hold the same beliefs as you, for the reason that we don’t hold every single belief you do. The religion we follow is the same one you know was once beloved of God: we believe that God still loves it. And you believe that he doesn’t. Because you believe this, you put to death by sword and fire anyone who mistakenly but excusably does believe that God still loves what he once loved.

But if you are cruel with respect to us, you are much worse to our children: you burn them just because they follow the visions inspired in them by those whom natural law and the laws of all people everywhere have taught them to respect like gods.

You deprive yourself of the advantage given you by the way in which the Muslim religion was established. When they boast of the numbers of their faithful, you tell them that they won them by force, and that they spread their religion by the sword: why therefore do you found yours on fire and flame?

When you seek to bring us over to your side, we raise some doubts about the source that you glory in descending from. You reply that your religion is new but that it is divine, and you prove it by citing the persecution inflicted

* Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, Paris: P. Didot, 1803, Book 25, ch. 13.

on you by the pagans and by the blood of your martyrs. But now it is you who are taking on the role of the Diocletians, and you are making us take on yours.

We urge you, not in the name of the almighty God whom we both serve but in the name of Christ whom you tell us took on human form in order to provide an example to follow, we urge you to behave to us as he himself would have done had he still been on earth. You want us to be Christians, but you won't be Christian yourselves.

But if you don't want to be Christian, please at least be human: treat us as you would if you had only had the faint glimmers of justice that nature kindles in us, as if you had no religion to guide you, and no revelation to illuminate your understanding.

If heaven loves you enough to show you the truth, then it has shown you great grace: but is it right for the children who have received an inheritance from their father to hate those who have inherited nothing?

If you have been given the truth, do not prevent us from seeing it by the way in which you are showing it to us. What characterises truth is the way it triumphs over hearts and minds, and not this impotence you display when you try and force us to acknowledge it through torture.

If you are reasonable, you should not put us to death, because we are not trying to deceive you. If your Christ is the son of God, we hope that he will compensate us for not having wanted to profane his mysteries; and we believe that the God whom we both serve will not punish us for having been killed because of our religion, one which he once gave us, and which we believe he still gives us.

You live in a century when natural understanding is more vigorous than it has ever been, when philosophy has enlightened minds, when the morality of your Gospel has become better known, when the respective rights humans have over each other and when the power which one conscience can have over another one have been more solidly grounded. If therefore you are incapable of abandoning your old prejudices, which, if you're not careful, will develop into your passions, you will have to accept that you are incorrigible, incapable of any enlightenment or instruction, and that the nation which gives authority to men such as you is indeed an unhappy one.

Would you like us to tell you what we think in all simplicity? You consider us more as your enemies than as the enemies of your religion,

given that if you loved your religion, you would not let it become corrupted by such basic ignorance.

And we have to warn you about something: if later ages ever dare say that during this century the Europeans were civilised, it will be you that people point to to prove that they were cruel and barbarous, and your reputation will be such that the whole century will be tarnished because of you, all your contemporaries hated.

Read the free original text online, 1758 edition:

http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/montesquieu/de_esprit_des_lois/de_esprit_des_lois_tdm.html



Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1772 edition:

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=bS0PAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA113>



40. Voltaire, 'On Universal Tolerance', 1763*

Voltaire's Treatise on Tolerance was published in 1763 in order to secure the rehabilitation of Jean Calas (see also p. 14). But in its final chapters, the philosopher broadens the scope of his thesis and calls for respect and fraternity between all men.

No great skill or studied eloquence is needed to prove that Christians must tolerate one another. I will go further: I say to you that we must regard all men as our brothers. What! My brother the Turk? My brother the Chinese? The Jew? The Siamese? Yes, of course; are we not all children of the same father, and creatures of the same God?

But these peoples despise us; but they treat us as idolaters! Very well! I shall tell them how wrong they are. It seems to me that I could at least shake the obstinate pride of an imam or a Buddhist monk if I spoke to them as follows:

'This small globe, which is but a speck, spins through space just like so many others; we are lost in this immensity. Man, about five feet tall, is surely nothing in the grand scheme of creation. One of these imperceptible beings says to some of its neighbours, in Arabia or in Kaffraria: 'Listen, there may be nine hundred million little ants like us on the earth, but because only my anthill is beloved of God, all the others are an eternal abomination in his eyes. My anthill alone will be blessed, and all the others will be eternally wretched'.'

Then they would stop me, and ask me who is the idiot spouting this stuff. I would be obliged to respond: 'It is you yourselves'. I would then try to calm them, but that would be rather difficult. [...]

It is true that these absurd horrors do not always sully the face of the Earth; but they have been frequent, and one could easily compile a volume far longer than the gospels which condemn them. Not only is it rather cruel in this short life to persecute those who do not think like us, but I do not know if it is not rather bold to proclaim their eternal damnation. It seems to me that it is hardly up to us, momentary atoms that we are, to predict in

* Voltaire, 'De la tolérance universelle', in his *Traité sur la tolérance*, 1763, ch. 22, p. 188.

this way the judgments of the Creator. Far be it from me to challenge that maxim, 'Outside the Church, there is no salvation', I respect it, and all that it teaches, but do we truly know all the ways of God and the full extent of his mercies? May we not have as much hope in Him as we have fear? Is it not enough to be faithful to the Church? Does each individual have to usurp the rights of God, and decide on the eternal fate of all men before He does? [...]

O followers of a merciful God! if you had a cruel heart; if, in loving Him whose entire law consisted of the words 'Love God and your neighbour', you had overloaded this pure and holy law with sophisms and incomprehensible disputes; if you had sparked discord, either over a new word, or else over a single letter of the alphabet; if you had ascribed eternal punishment to the omission of a few words, of a few ceremonies that other peoples could not have been aware of, I would say to you, shedding tears over the human race: 'Come with me to the day when all men will be judged, and when God will render unto each according to his deeds.

'I see all the dead from centuries past and from our own time compared in his presence. Are you really sure that our Creator and Father will say to the wise and virtuous Confucius, to the legislator Solon, to Pythagoras, to Zaleucus, to Socrates, to Plato, to the divine Antonines, to the good Trajan, to Titus, the delight and darling of the human race, to Epictetus, to so many other men, the models of mankind':

*Go, monsters, go and suffer punishments of infinite intensity and duration; may your torture be as eternal as I am! And you, my beloved, Jean Châtel, Ravaillac, Damiens, Cartouche, etc.,** who died following the prescribed rites, be seated on my right hand and share my dominion and happiness forever.*

* Confucius, Solon, Pythagoras, Zaleucus, Socrates, Plato, the Antonines (Marcus Aurelius and his father Antoninus Pius), Trajan, Titus, Epictetus are philosophers or legislators or statesmen or all three, and they are all great men from Antiquity. Confucius was Chinese; Solon, Pythagoras, Zaleucus, Socrates, Plato, and Epictetus were all Greek; Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Trajan, and Titus were all Roman emperors of the first and second centuries CE; the others, with the exception of Epictetus who lived at the same time as the Emperors, all flourished in the seventh to the fourth centuries BCE.

** Jean Châtel, Ravaillac, Damiens, Cartouche all suffered exceptionally harsh executions due to their 'exceptional' crimes. Châtel (1575-1594) attempted to assassinate Henri IV – the offending hand was cut off first; François Ravaillac (1578-1610) did assassinate him, and suffered the regicide's execution, which was to be pulled apart by four horses; Robert-François Damiens (1715-1757) attempted to assassinate Louis XV, and also suffered the regicide's execution; Louis-Dominique Garthausen (1693-1721), known as 'Cartouche', was a notorious highwayman, and was broken on the wheel.

'You recoil in horror at these words; and, once they have left my mouth, I no longer have anything to say to you'.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1763 edition:

[https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=WuVGAAAACAAJ&pg=PA188](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=WuVGAAAACAAJ&pg=PA188)



41. Three aphorisms from Diderot, *Philosophical Thoughts*; Marivaux, *The French Spectator*; and Voltaire, 'Fanaticisme', *Portable Philosophical Dictionary**

Being a non-believer is sometimes the vice of a fool, whereas being a believer can be the flaw of a clever man.

Diderot



A philosophers' dinner by Jean Huber** (c.1772): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Un_dîner_de_philosophes.Jean_Huber.jpg

My neighbour must be good to me, for if he were not, he knows it would be wrong; I must be good to him, because I know the same thing. Shame on anyone who breaks this fair contract.

Marivaux

* Denis Diderot, 'Pensée xxxii', in his *Œuvres philosophiques et dramatiques de M. Diderot*, Amsterdam: 1772; Marivaux, *Le Spectateur français*, in his *Œuvres complètes de Marivaux*, Paris: Cabanis, 1830; Voltaire, 'Fanaticisme', in his *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*, 1764, pp. 190-193.

** Voltaire has his hand up, Diderot is in profile. To Voltaire's right is d'Alembert. On Diderot's left is Marmontel. The person with his back to us may be Condorcet. Rousseau is notable by his absence: Voltaire and Rousseau detested each other.

There are no other remedies for this epidemic apart from the philosophical spirit which, if it is communicated from one person to the next, will finally mellow human behaviour and guard against the outbreak of evil; however, once the evil has taken hold, there is nothing to do but flee and wait until the air is clear once more. Laws and religion are not strong enough to cure this plague of the soul; religion, far from being a healthy remedy in this case, turns into poison within corrupted minds.

Voltaire

**Read the free original text online (facsimile)
of Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*, in *Œuvres
philosophiques*, 1772 edition:** [https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=SUJw-NMCZ_4C&pg=PA30](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SUJw-NMCZ_4C&pg=PA30)



**Read the free original text online (facsimile) of
Marivaux's *Le Spectateur français*, in *Œuvres
complète*, 1830 edition:** [https://books.google.fr/
books?id=1QI6AAAAcAAJ&pg=PA211](https://books.google.fr/books?id=1QI6AAAAcAAJ&pg=PA211)



**Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Voltaire's
Dictionnaire philosophique portatif, 1765 edition:** [https://
books.google.co.uk/books?id=SzYHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA191](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SzYHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA191)



42. Condorcet, *Anti-superstitious Almanack*, 1773-1774*

*For more than thirty years, from the first moment he encountered the members of the Academy of Sciences, the Encyclopédistes, and the philosophes, to when he wrote, in secret, his unfinished Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind, Condorcet (1743-1794) never stopped writing about how the accumulated moral knowledge and experience of the past could be used for the benefit of the future.***

Here he discusses the infamous Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, when Catholic soldiers slaughtered thousands of Protestants throughout France, and the more recent torture and execution of the twenty-year-old Chevalier de la Barre for sacrilege in 1766 (see p. 83). Condorcet addresses his future readers while also attacking his contemporaries.

It is now two hundred and one years since many thousands of citizens had their throats slit in the streets of the French capital, and since Admiral Coligny was assassinated in the name of God and King, he who first thought of turning France into a maritime power by founding colonies in the New World, and since the philosopher Ramus's body was dragged through the gutters, his crime to have been engaged in a scholarly dispute about Latin pronunciation. The King of France kept himself entertained by taking potshots from the windows of his Louvre palace at any of his subjects who might be trying to escape across the river, just as certain German princes still like shooting at a herd of wild animals in what they term ceremonial hunts. The ladies of the court sallied forth with their lovers to inspect the corpses of the victims and added abomination to atrocity by cracking jokes over their dead bodies. The main towns of France copied these horrors. Orange and Toulouse led the way. Eighteen villages in the Valdo were put to the sword and burned down by the local magistrates in response to an order they'd received.

* Nicolas de Condorcet, *Almanach anti-superstitieux*, ed. Anne-Marie Chouillet, Pierre Crépel, Henri Duranton, Université de Saint-Étienne: CNRS Éditions, 1992, pp. 109-110.

** Portrait of Condorcet by Jean-Baptiste Greuze: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolas_de_Condorcet.PNG

Two centuries have passed since those cruel events, but last century some dragoons sent to eradicate any remaining traces of the Protestant religion committed the same massacres all over again although this time the ministry termed them military executions. The soldier in charge, Baviile, so unworthy of the family name Lamoignon to which nowadays Malesherbes* brings so much honour, had just as many victims executed as those sacrificed by the Medici assassins, only he tortured them more cruelly, all within the official framework of the law and in the sacred name of justice. These murders were committed in the name of a prince who, in the rest of a reign lasting sixty years, had no other bloody act on his conscience. And this very century, under a government which is even less harsh, we have seen a young gentleman be condemned to be tortured, have his tongue cut out, his hand cut off and thrown into the fire. This by order of a handful of theology graduates who were convinced he was innocent and were as unconvinced as he by our empty superstitions but who had been accused by some priest or other of being atheists because of having the Jesuits expelled from France and so wanted to prove their Christian faith at the expense of the life and suffering of an innocent man. We have seen these same men punished for their arrogance and become the objects of sympathy on the part of the public, pitied by moronic flocks of courtiers, high society figures, and even philosophes and thinkers. Yet these men were monsters and they should have been crushed beneath the ruins of their disgusting tribunal. [...]

How clear it is that neither the passing of two centuries nor the progress of the human mind in any way protect us against the recurrence of such persecution. Persecution is to be feared for as long as priests and clerics have the same way of thinking and for as long as they are in charge of the morals and opinions of their populations. Let us see whether this way of thinking is indeed Christian, and if it is, let us not expect any peace or happiness on earth until, with shedding of blood, we have eradicated this superstition, the most ridiculous and the most absurd of all those which have brought shame on the earth.

* Guillaume-Chrétien de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (1721-94), known as Malesherbes, was a prominent lawyer and the government's chief censor during the publication of Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. When it was banned in 1759, he alerted Diderot early, and hid all his papers in his own house, telling Diderot that it was the safest place for them. Without his protection, the *Encyclopédie* would probably never have been completed. He was guillotined during the Revolution.

43. Montesquieu, *Persian Letters**

The outlook of Usbek, observer of customs in the Persian Letters, is enriched by his travels. In this letter to a friend in Venice, he offers critical comparisons of customs and dogmas – paying particular attention to religious intolerance.

Letter from Usbek to Rhedi, in Venice.

Here I see people who are constantly quarrelling about religion, but it seems to me that they are competing at the same time as to who shall be the least observant of its rules.

Not only are they not better Christians, they are not even better citizens than others, and it is this that I am struck by most: for, whatever religion one follows, its primary commandments are always to abide by the law, to love mankind, and to respect one's parents.

Indeed, is not the primary aim of a religious man to please the deity who established the religion that he practices? And is not the surest method of achieving this aim to observe the rules of society and the duties of humanity? No matter what the religion of your country, supposing there is one, you must believe that God loves mankind, since he established religion in order to make us happy; that if he loves mankind, we are sure to please him by loving them also, that is to say, by fulfilling towards each other all the duties of charity and humanity and by not violating the laws under which we live.

You are much more likely to please God by doing this than by conducting this or that rite: for rites do not have the slightest degree of goodness in themselves. They are only good in respect to God, assuming that he commanded them to be instituted in the first place. But this is the subject of great debate: one can easily be mistaken; for one must choose the rites of one religion from amongst those of two thousand others.

* Montesquieu, 'Lettre 35', in his *Lettres persanes*, Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1721, pp. 92-94. This is letter 35 in the first edition, but letter 46 in the revised edition, and in all modern editions.

A man once addressed this prayer to God every day: 'Lord, I do not understand the endless disputes that take place regarding Thee. I would like to serve Thee according to Thy will, but every man I consult would have me serve Thee according to his will. When I want to pray to Thee I do not know in which language I should address Thee. Nor do I know what position to assume: one person says that I must pray to Thee standing; another wants me to be sitting; a further person requires me to kneel. That's not all: there are some who claim that I must wash every morning with cold water; while others assert that Thou wilt regard me with horror if I do not have a small piece of my flesh cut away. The other day I was in a caravanserai, and it so happened that I ate a rabbit. Three men nearby made me tremble with fear: all three of them declared that I had grievously offended Thee, one said it was because this animal was unclean, another because it had been killed by suffocation, and the third because it wasn't fish. A Brahman who was passing by and who I chose to arbitrate, said to me, 'They are wrong: for it seems that you didn't kill this animal yourself'. 'But I did', said I. 'Ah, then you have committed an abominable crime, and may God never forgive you', he said to me in a stern voice, 'For how can you be sure that the soul of your father did not pass into this animal?' All these things, Lord, cast me into an inconceivable confusion: I cannot move my head without facing the risk of offending Thee; but I would like to please Thee and moreover to use my life, which I owe to Thee, to that end. I do not know if I am mistaken, but I believe that the best way to succeed in doing so is to live as a good citizen in the society in which Thou has decreed I should be born and as a good father in the family that Thou hast given me'.

From Paris, the 8th day of the Moon of Chahban, 1713.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1721 edition:

[https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=9ThiAAAACAAJ&pg=PA160](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9ThiAAAACAAJ&pg=PA160)



44. José Cadalso y Vázquez de Andrade (1741-1782), *Defence of the Spanish Nation against Persian Letter 78* *by Montesquieu, 1775**



*José Cadalso y Vázquez de Andrade, Spanish soldier and man of letters, was a prolific author across a range of genres – poetry, drama, and philosophy.** In this extract, from what is probably one of his first texts, he defends Spain against accusations levelled at it by Montesquieu in one of his famous Persian Letters. listing instead a series of French crimes committed in the name of religion. It was published secretly and anonymously, and this is how it ends:*

It was the Spanish who...? What? No. These monsters and those like them are not French and they are not Spanish. They come from a country of savages called fanatics, and it is an insult unworthy of a noble pen to blame a whole nation for the abuses of a few. Such men have existed in all places and in all times, in some centuries more than in others, according to whether ignorance or enlightenment has the upper hand.

Read the free original text online, 2002 edition:

http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/defensa-de-la-nacion-espanola-contra-la-carta-persiana-lxxviii-de-montesquieu--0/html/ff72e830-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html



* *Defensa de la nación española contra la carta persiana LXXVIII de Montesquieu en agravio de la religión, valor, ciencia y nobleza de los españoles*, ed. Guy Mercadier, Toulouse: Iberie Recherche, Université de Toulouse, 1970, p. 27, n. 20.

** Portrait of José Cadalso by unknown artist (1855): <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Josecadalso.jpg>

45. Nicolas-Edme Rétif, known as Rétif de la Bretonne, *Ninth Juvenal. The False Immorality of the Freedom of the Press, 1796**



*Rétif de la Bretonne composed, under the generic name Juvenals, several texts which criticised contemporary morality and institutions.** He devoted one of these to the freedom of the press, which he considered from several angles. In this extract he defends what we now call investigative journalism, but which sometime took the form of violent denunciation during the French Revolution. He aims to open up public debate as much as possible.*

Be absolutely certain, lawmakers of France, that in curbing the freedom of the press, honest citizens will gain nothing, whilst criminals will benefit. They are the ones being attacked in the press, and they are the ones who will furiously call on the full rigour of the law to defend themselves. To avoid wrongly attacking one innocent person out of a hundred or a thousand, you are protecting a thousand guilty ones, when to unmask them would be in the public interest. Instead of being restricted, press freedom should be extended, and all citizens be encouraged to make use of it. The accused party will be free to vindicate himself by the same means and to publish as many proofs of his innocence as he needs to.

It is clear therefore, having looked at both advantages and disadvantages, that it is the entire, absolute and unrestricted freedom of the press that must be upheld: firstly, because it is very useful, necessary even, to frighten villains by unmasking them; secondly, because it is easy to repel a libellous attack in print on the reputation of an honest man: if it appears in a newspaper, the journalist would be obliged to print any justification as soon as he received it; if it is on a poster or fly-bill, the defamed party

* Rétif de la Bretonne, *IXe Juvénale. Fausse immoralité de la liberté de la presse*, in his *Monsieur Nicolas*, VIII, part 16, 1796.

** Portrait of Nicolas-Edme Rétif by unknown artist (1785): <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NicolasRestifdeLaBretonne.jpg>

will respond in the same way, at the expense of his accuser, for the printer will always be obliged to print a second one straight away. [...] Fifthly, one should consider above all that with unrestricted freedom of the press, no ruler, administrator, or civil servant would ever be able to abuse the powers of his office, because anyone would be able to expose his misdoings. Should they have been falsely calumniated, he will successfully clear their name, and his accuser be publicly humiliated. If on the contrary the abuses of a public figure were revealed, this would be of great advantage to the state, which would be delivered from the rule of a bad administrator and preserved from the impudence of his intimidating associates! I repeat: absolute freedom of the press is the safeguard of public wellbeing, even if it were to be misused; no dishonest man would dare offer his services for public office, nor have the impudence to stay in one. [...]

What danger could there be in allowing a journalist the freedom to write whatever he wants today, so long as he humbly retracts, the very next day, any falsehoods he happened to have spread the day before, on pain of a fortnight in jail on bread and water, and with increasing penalties should he reoffend, up to and including death?

46. Condorcet, *Anti-superstitious Almanack**

Condorcet, in full rebellion, details the foul punishments set out for those convicted of blasphemy.

This is a record of Louis XIV's 1666 blasphemy laws. Blasphemers are condemned to different punishments according to the number of repeat offences. On the sixth offence the upper lip will be cut off, on the seventh the lower lip, then the whole tongue on the eighth. These punishments are only for minor cases of swearing or blasphemy; for gross blasphemy, which according to theology comes under the heading of unbelief, judges are given the right to arbitrarily inflict more severe punishments.

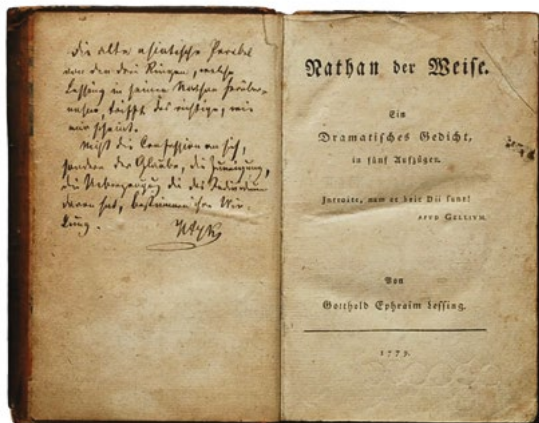
It is hard to decide what is more repellent about this edict – its cruelty, its stupidity, or the sheer ignorance it displays of the most elementary principles of jurisprudence.

What is even stranger is that in a compilation published in 1765 (note the date), and under the title of Penal Code, the author urges his reader to peruse the disgusting list of our laws against blasphemy so as to be righteously horrified by a crime which has become all too common and which is barely any longer prosecuted to the extent that it should be.

* Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-1794), *Almanach anti-superstitieux*, ed. Anne-Marie Chouillet, Pierre Crépel, and Henri Duranton, Université de Saint-Étienne/CNRS Éditions, 1992, pp. 1 and 14.

47. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), *Nathan the Wise*, 1779*

The German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was the son of a clergyman, and in *Nathan the Wise*, he defends religious toleration. In this extract, Nathan, who is Jewish, has been telling the Muslim Saladin the parable of the three rings. This is the story of a father who possesses a priceless opal ring and does not know how best to share it amongst his three sons. He decides to have two copies made. On his death, each son receives a ring and each, believing that he alone owns the original one, is ready to fight to prove his claim. Nathan says that when it comes to religion we would do well to remember the story of the rings. Saladin doesn't understand the point of the analogy, claiming that it is not difficult to tell Judaism, Christianity, and Islam apart. The French version of this was a translation by the poet Marie-Joseph Chénier, in which the misty opal becomes a sparkling diamond. We have not translated the translation: the acclaimed translator of Schiller, Francis Lamport, has gone back to the original and produced the following version for us, and we thank him.



Frontispiece of *Nathan the Wise*, 1779 edition: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lessing_Nathan_der_Weise_1779.jpg

* Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan der Weise*, 1779, Act III, scene vii.

[Jerusalem in 1192, during a brief truce between Sultan Saladin and the Crusaders. Saladin summons Nathan, the Jew renowned for his wisdom, and calls on him to declare which of the three great religions is *the* true one. Nathan replies with a parable:]

Long years ago, there lived a man in the East
Who owned a precious ring, inherited
From one he loved. It bore a stone, an opal,
That shimmered in a multitude of colours,
And had the wondrous power to win the love
Of God and man, for him who wore it in
Good faith. [...]

[The ring is handed down the generations, from father to favourite son, until it comes to a man who has three sons, all equally beloved. Unwilling to discriminate between them, he has two replicas made, so that each son severally receives one – which he of course believes to be the one and only true one. They quarrel, and the matter comes to court. The judge pronounces:]

[...] Unless you can produce your father
To testify before me, I dismiss
The case. What, do you think my occupation
Is solving riddles? Or do you think the one
True ring will speak out for itself? – But wait:
I hear the true ring has the wondrous power
To make its wearer loved by God and man;
That must decide! For surely the false rings
Will not do that. Now, which of you three brothers
Is most loved by the other two? Speak out!
Well, tell me! Have you not a word to say?
The rings have no effect, each one of you
Loves no one but himself? Then you are frauds,
Yourselves defrauded. And it seems your rings
Are counterfeit all three. The true one has
Gone missing, and your father had three made
To cover up the loss [...]

But if your father gave
Each one of you his ring, then let each one

Believe his is the true one. – It may be
 Your father wished to put an end to one
 Ring's tyranny within his house. And surely
 He loved you all, and all in equal measure,
 And did not wish to disadvantage two
 By favouring one. – Well, then! Let each of you
 Strive just to copy his unprejudiced
 And free affection! Let him seek to prove
 The power of the opal in his ring,
 And seek to aid that power with gentleness,
 Benevolence and fellow-feeling, and
 Humility before the will of God.
 And when these powers are made manifest
 Amongst your children's children's children, in
 A thousand thousand years, let them be called
 Before this seat once more. A wiser man
 Will then be sitting here, and will pronounce
 His verdict. Go! – So spoke the modest judge.
 saladin. God! God!

NATHAN. If, Sultan Saladin, you feel
 That you might be that wiser man –

SALADIN. I? I
 Am dust, am nothing! God!

NATHAN. What is it, Sultan?

SALADIN. Nathan! Your judge's thousand thousand years
 Are not yet past. His judgement seat is not
 For me. Leave me, dear Nathan, go – But be my friend.

48. Three aphorisms from Germaine de Staël (1766-1817), *Reflections on the French Revolution*, 1818; Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments*; and Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, 1782*

Those rights which are inalienable are equality before the law, freedom of the individual, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, equal access to all kinds of work, and taxation as agreed by the representatives of the people.

Germaine de Staël



Portrait of Madame de Staël by François Gérard (c.1810): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Madame_de_Staël.jpg

Do you want to prevent crime? Then ensure that Enlightenment goes hand in hand with freedom. The evils engendered by knowledge are inversely proportional to the extent to which any of it is actually disseminated, and the benefits directly proportional. A brazen imposter, never a man of the

* Germaine de Staël, *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, Liège: Latour, 1818, p. 281; Cesare Beccaria, *Dei Delitti e delle pene*, Parigi: Cazin, 1786, p. 54; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, '6e promenade', from the first (posthumous) edition of *Les Confessions de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, suivies des Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Geneva, II, p. 180.

people himself, will always be adored by the ignorant but derided by the enlightened.

Beccaria

It is strength and liberty which produce excellent men. Weakness and slavery have only ever produced wicked ones.

Rousseau

Read the free original text online (facsimile)
of de Staël's, *Considérations sur la Révolution*
française, 1818 edition: [https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=UmUGSyDc1C8C&pg=PA281](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=UmUGSyDc1C8C&pg=PA281)



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***Dei delitti e delle pene*, 1786 edition:** [https://books.google.fr/
books?id=Zb5CAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA101](https://books.google.fr/books?id=Zb5CAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA101)



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Les Confessions de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, suivies des
***Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, 1782 edition:** [https://books.
google.co.uk/books?id=zyQ6AAAAcAAJ&pg=RA1-PA180](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zyQ6AAAAcAAJ&pg=RA1-PA180)



49. Luis Gutiérrez (1771-1809), *Cornelia Bororquia, or the Inquisition's Victim, 1801**

Luis Gutiérrez was a defrocked Trinitarian, a writer, a journalist, and an all-round adventurer. He ceaselessly protested against the injustice and cruelty of the Inquisition. A supporter of the cause of Joseph Bonaparte, he plotted on his behalf and was caught, then executed.

Oh religion, religion! The benefits you have brought mankind are countless! Yet so are the evils! In your bosom the unhappy mortal finds shelter from vice, consolation in adversity, and support in times of affliction. Yet your veil can also be used to cover up wickedness, while rivers of blood flow in your name and the most appalling crimes are committed. Under your mandate, tyrants legitimise their arbitrary power, and with your weapons wars are declared, discord stirred up, and acts of revenge given free reign. You are the holy pretext that is used to justify the most horrific and shameful passions.

* Luis Gutiérrez, *Cornelia Bororquia, o la víctima de la Inquisición*, París: 1801, p. 139.

50. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Fraternal Harmonies', 1815*

The Harmonies of Nature is the last work by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who had found fame with Paul and Virginia (Paul et Virginie). For this writer, a philosopher of nature associated with the trend towards natural religion partly inspired by Rousseau, everything in the universe – whether plants, animals, or men – aspires to the union of opposites and to harmonious relations.

Disputes about religion and politics, which cause so many honest people to lose their lives, are often actually born of a love of the truth, combined with deep-seated personal ambition: for fanatics are driven only by the hope of great glory. [...]

In order to tell the truth, first one has to know what it is, and this is a difficult science. Error abounds on earth and plants its flag at the summits of high mountains, whilst the humble truth hides at the bottom of wells. Just look at religions, which are the axes on which all human societies turn. We know of at least five hundred, all different; each one claims to be the only one to have found truth, and accuses all the others of falsehood. The wise Indians are the only exception, and they say that God made twelve gates to heaven, through each of which he calls different nations to join him; however none of them wants to enter through a gate other than that through which his forefathers entered. But you are very illogical, if you think there is no gate other than that through which you came into the world, because that belief puts you at war with most of humanity. What then becomes of fraternal harmony, that fundamental law of nature? [...]

All peoples had their own god, and it was only by communicating with each other that they started to recognize that there was a universal God. It is not that each man did not have his own intuition of this, but rather that his pride led him to believe that the God of nature was only concerned with his country and even with his particular person. However, there are men, and a good number of them, to whom it would be dangerous to say this, if such truths were contrary to their interests. [...]

* Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Harmonies fraternelles', in his *Harmonies de la nature*, Paris: Méquignon-Marvis, 1815, III, pp. 111-112 and 114-116.

The truth, being thus the fruit of our research, is a good which belongs to us, it is the core of our souls, and man should not entrust it to tyrants any more than he would entrust his lamp to the wind, his purse to thieves or his wife to a friend.

However, we must not think that we on earth will ever reach the source of truth; we should think ourselves fortunate just to see some of its rays shining; such illumination seems to be spreading amongst men, as they communicate with one other and in proportion to their virtue. We have seen elsewhere the discoveries made by the Pythagoreans, the wisest of the Greeks. Knowledge of the truth is constantly increasing, because, in addition to universality and eternity, another of its characteristics is infinity.

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books?id=3DBTAAAcAAJ&pg=PA111](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3DBTAAAcAAJ&pg=PA111)



51. Diderot, *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*, 1772*

One year after the success of the explorer Bougainville's Voyage Around the World, published in 1771, Diderot wrote a 'supplement' comprising various fictional episodes. Here, as the French are about to leave the tropics, a Tahitian elder delivers a speech to the two peoples. The stick of wood he refers to is presumably a crucifix.

An old man is speaking, the father of a large family. When the Europeans first arrived, he did not appear in any way frightened, curious, or surprised, but looked on them with disdain. When they approached him, he turned his back on them and retreated to his hut. But his troubled silence betrayed his thoughts only too well, and inwardly he mourned his native land and the passing of its golden years. Upon Bougainville's departure, as the Tahitians thronged the shore, clinging to his garments and clasping his comrades in their arms, weeping, the old man solemnly stepped forward and said:

'Weep, unhappy Tahitians! Weep! Not, though, at the leaving of these cruel, ambitious men, but at their coming. For one day you will see them for who they are. One day they will return, brandishing in one hand that stick of wood which you see attached to this man's belt and, in the other, the blade which hangs from that man's side. They will come to put you in chains and to cut your throats; they will subject you to their every excess and vice. And one day you will serve under them, and you will be as base, corrupted, and as wretched as they. Yet – as my time draws near, I take comfort in the knowledge that I will not live to see the calamity I foretell. Oh Tahitians! Oh my friends! There is a way by which you might spare yourselves this grievous fate. But I would rather die than offer you this counsel. May they depart, and may they live'.

Then, turning to Bougainville, he continued: 'And you, leader of these brigands who obey your every command, quickly remove your vessel from our shores. We are innocent and contented; our happiness you can but disturb. We are guided by nature's purest instinct, and you have sought to erase its imprint from our souls. Here, all things are everyone's, yet you

* Denis Diderot, 'Le supplément au voyage de Bougainville', in *Correspondance Littéraire*, ed. Friedrich-Melchior Grimm, issues of September 1773, October 1773, March 1774, April 1774; first published openly in Denis Diderot, *Œuvres*, ed. Naigeon, Paris: chez Desray et Déterville, 1798, III, pp. 382-384.

have preached some or other distinction between 'yours' and 'mine'. Our wives and daughters belong to us all equally, and you have shared this privilege with us; but in doing so you have roused in them an unknown fury. In your arms, they have become deranged, and you have become enraged in theirs. They have formed a hatred for one another, and you have butchered each other over them; they have returned to us stained with your blood. We are free, yet in our earth you have buried the title deeds to our future enslavement. You are neither god nor demon; who, then, are you to make us your slaves? Orou! Since you understand the language of these men, tell us all, as you have told me, what they have written on that strip of metal: 'This land is ours'. Yours, you say? How so? Because you have set foot here? If one day a Tahitian were to arrive on your shores and carve into one of your stones or the bark of one of your trees: 'This land belongs to the people of Tahiti', what would you say then? So you are the stronger! What of it? When one of those worthless trinkets which are strewn about your vessel was taken, you cried out and wrought vengeance; and immediately you conceived a plan to plunder an entire Country. You are no slave, and would sooner die than become one; yet you wish to enslave us. You think then that Tahitians are incapable of dying in defence of their freedom? Well may you look to seize hold of him as you would a dumb beast – the Tahitian is your brother. You are both children of nature. What right do you have over him that he does not have over you? When you came, did we set upon you? Did we pillage your vessel? Did we make you our captive and leave you to the arrows of our enemies? Did we yoke you to our ploughs and put you to work in the fields like animals? No, we treated you in our own image. Let us alone with our ways; they are wiser and more honest than yours. We have no desire to trade what you call our ignorance for your useless enlightenment'.

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52. Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de Saint-Simon (1675-1755), *Memoirs, posthumous**

Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de Saint-Simon, retired to his estates to write his famous Memoirs. Here he returns to the tragic episode of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This edict, brought in by the peacemaker King Henri IV, in 1598, had heralded the end of thirty years of religious war in France, making it possible for Protestants (also known as Huguenots) to worship as they pleased. Louis XIV revoked it in 1685 and in so doing plunged France into a period of terrible repression, causing a wave of forced conversions and also a mass exodus of Protestants from France. What Saint-Simon writes here was not published until long after his death.



A spread from the autograph manuscript of *Mémoires de Louis, duc de Saint Simon*:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manuscrit_autographe_des_Mémoires_du_duc_de_Saint_Simon.jpg

The king had embraced piety of an utterly ignorant sort. Political strategy grafted itself onto this piety. People tried to curry favour by touching on his most sensitive points, that is, piety and power. The Huguenots were painted in the blackest colours: he was told they had a state within the state,

* Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, Paris: Hachette, 1858.

that it had descended into unbridled licentiousness after years of public disorder, rebellion, civil war, foreign alliances, and even open resistance to the kings his predecessors. They told him he'd be reduced to negotiating terms with them. [...]

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes without the slightest pretext or need of any sort, along with the various prohibitions rather than declarations which then followed it, were the fruits of this atrocious intriguing, and it depopulated a quarter of the kingdom, destroyed its trade, weakened it at every level, subjected it to the overt and public pillaging on the part of the dragoons, authorised sufferings and torture during the course of which many thousands of innocents of both sexes actually perished. It ruined a populous country, tore a world of families apart, set relatives against each other for gain, leaving the dispossessed to die of hunger. It forced our manufacturing trades to go abroad, enabling foreign states to flourish and thrive at the expense of ours and providing them with the wealth to build new towns. It showed the world the spectacle of a remarkable people suddenly outlawed, naked, fugitive, wandering blameless, seeking shelter far from home, sentencing noblemen, the wealthy, the aged, people often highly respected for their piety, knowledge, and virtue, people whose easy lives had made them weak and delicate, to the galleys, where they found themselves under the all too effective whip of the tribunal. And all because of their religion. As a crowning horror, it filled every corner of the kingdom with sacrilegious oaths of allegiance which struggled to be heard over the resounding screams of the unfortunate victims of error, with countless people sacrificing their conscience to save their belongings and their peace, paying for them with fake abjurations from which they were instantly dragged to worship what they didn't believe in the slightest, truly receiving the divine body of the Holiest of holies, whilst remaining convinced the whole time that it was only bread and that they should continue to abhor it. This was the general abomination to which flattery and cruelty together gave birth. From torture to abjuration and thence to communion was often the work of under twenty-four hours, and their tormentors were both their guides and their witnesses. [...]

The king was kept informed on all sides about the details of all this persecution and conversion. The numbers of those who had abjured and received communion were counted in their thousands: two thousand from one place, six thousand in another, all at once, in an instant. The king congratulated himself on his power and his piety. He thought he was

living at a time when the apostles were spreading the word, and that it was all thanks to himself. Bishops wrote panegyrics in his praise. Jesuits made their pulpits and missions resounded with it. The whole of France was filled with horror and disarray, yet never has so much triumph and joy been expressed, never has so much praise been voiced. The monarch was in no doubt about the sincerity of this host of conversions: the converters took great care to convince him of it and to sanctify it in advance. He swallowed this poison in deep draughts. He thought he was greater in the sight of men than he had ever been, and that he had made better progress in atoning for his sins and for his scandalous life, and approached closer to God. He heard nothing but praise, whilst all the time in their hearts the good true Catholics and the holy bishops wept and shuddered.

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53. Three aphorisms from Alexandre Deleyre (1726-1797), 'Fanaticism', from the *Encyclopédie*; Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797), *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 1789; and Voltaire, Letter to Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, 9 November 1764*



Frontispiece of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Olaudah_Equiano_-_The_interesting_Narrative_of_the_Life_of_Olaudah_Equiano_\(1789\),_frontispiece_-_BL.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Olaudah_Equiano_-_The_interesting_Narrative_of_the_Life_of_Olaudah_Equiano_(1789),_frontispiece_-_BL.jpg)

What is fanaticism, then? It is the result of a misled and misleading vision of the world and it takes advantage of those things which are sacred, subjugating religion to the whims of imagination and the excesses of passion.

Deleyre

* Alexandre Deleyre, 'Fanatisme', in the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772; Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, London: 1789, I; Voltaire, 'Lettre à Jean Le Rond d'Alembert', in his *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, edited by Beaumarchais, Paris: de l'imprimerie de la société littéraire typographique, 1784, LXVIII, p. 329.

But is not the slave trade entirely a war with the heart of man? And surely that which is begun by breaking down the barriers of virtue involves in its continuance destruction to every principle, and buries all sentiments in ruin!

Olaudah Equiano

Philosophers are the doctors of the souls that the fanatics are poisoning.

Voltaire

Read the entry for 'Fanaticism' on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (text): <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.5:530.encyclopedie0513>



Read the entry for 'Fanaticism' on the ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (facsimile): http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/extras/encpageturn.pl?V6/ENC_6-393.jpeg



Read the free original text online of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 1789 edition: https://history.hanover.edu/texts/Equiano/equiano_ch5_a.html



Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Voltaire's Letter to Jean Le Rond d'Alembert in *Œuvres complètes*, 1784 edition: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=yjs-AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA329>



54. Helvétius (1715-1771), *Essays on the Mind*, 1758*

*When it came out in 1758, Claude-Adrien Helvétius's book De l'esprit was immediately prosecuted by the censors for its bold ideas and for its materialism.** The book was burnt by the public executioner along with Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopédie. Helvétius was forced to recant, and he withdrew to his estate where he attempted to put his advanced social ideas into practice.*

Whether you cast your eyes to the north, to the south, to the east or west, everywhere you will see the sacred blade of religion held to the throats of women, children and the aged. You will see the earth smoking with the blood of the innocent sacrificed in the name of false gods or the Supreme Being, with on all sides the spectacle of the huge, horrible, and sickening mass grave of intolerance. But what man of virtue, what Christian, if his gentle heart is filled with the divine unction which emanates from the maxims of the Gospels, if he is sensitive to the cries of the wretched, and if ever he has wiped their tears, would not be moved to compassion for humanity, and would not try to found moral integrity, not so much on the honourable principles of religion, but on those which are less easy to abuse, such as those of self-interest?

Without contradicting the principles of our religion, these reasons would be enough to force men into the path of virtue. The pagan religion, by populating Olympus with scoundrels, was without doubt less suitable than ours for forming good and fair men. Yet, who could doubt that the early Romans were more virtuous than we? Who could deny that the police are responsible for disarming more thieves than religion ever has? Or that Italians, more devout than any Frenchman, and with rosary in hand, are nevertheless quicker to reach for the dagger or the poison bottle? Or that, in

* Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, Durand, 1758.

** Portrait of Helvétius by Louis-Michel van Loo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Adrien_Helvétius.png

times when piety is more fervent and the rule of law less strong, infinitely more crimes are committed than in those centuries when piety grows weaker and the rule of law more robust?

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55. Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740-1814), *Portrait of Paris*, 1781*

*Louis-Sébastien Mercier, playwright, novelist, and a great chronicler of his era, offers reflections on the customs of his contemporaries in Tableau de Paris.***

Religious freedom is entirely possible in Paris; never will you be held accountable for your beliefs. [...] A bishop was once asked: 'What are you complaining about? Have you ever seen a single act of sacrilege? Has a single philosopher ever disrupted even one catechism class? Have those who preach from the pulpit ever encountered a single heckler? They have always enjoyed the most gratifying right of all – that of never being interrupted or contradicted whatever they say'. And the bishop replied: 'If only God would permit the occasional sacrilege! At least then people would still be thinking about us, but now they can't even be bothered to show any disrespect'. [...]

Jews, Protestants, deists, atheists, Jansenists, equally culpable in the eyes of the Molinists, even *nothingists*, therefore, live just as they please; people don't even argue about religion anymore. It is an old trial, with a definitive ruling; and about time too, given that the enquiry has lasted centuries. [...] The Enlightenment has brought us this desirable calm, and fanaticism has been left to consume itself. We only hear talk of Jansenism and Molinism in a few insignificant households, where folly and hypocrisy reign supreme; and from a few women who, because they are unable to partake of earthly pleasures, take up these ancient arguments with the pillars of the parish, spiritual directors born of the common rabble, and almost indistinguishable from it.

Read the free original text online (facsimile), 1781 edition:

[https://books.google.co.uk/
books?id=J0kGAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA367](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=J0kGAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA367)



* Louis-Sébastien Mercier, 'à Hambourg et à Neuchâtel', *Tableau de Paris*, 1781, III, ch. 231, p. 367.

** Eighteenth-century portrait of Mercier: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Louis-SebastienMercier.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis-SebastienMercier.jpg)

56. Juan Pablo Forner (1756-1799), *In Praise of Spain and its Literary Merit*, 1786*

Juan Pablo Forner, a Spanish writer of the Enlightenment and a learned man, enthusiastically engaged in polemic, producing acid satires of his contemporaries. In this passage, he writes about the importance of his country's diverse cultural heritage, in particular the legacy of the Moors.

The Moors in Spain cultivated natural sciences and mathematics and had a particular interest in metaphysics and theology. The indigenous Christians knew nothing about any of these subjects, and it was a real lack. [...] This lack of knowledge softened the blow of having to deal with people of a different religion. Peace and harmony reigned at that time in the bosom of the Spanish church, consolidating the truth of religious dogma without devoting any time to the writing of polemical tracts, with the result that the scholars of the period, the prelates and ecclesiastics, confined their literary energies to illustrating civil or ecclesiastical history or to explaining religious dogma and morality, or even to understanding books written in Arabic so as to have access to the knowledge contained in them. Once the language of the scholars became widely known, the door was also opened for the mutual understanding of religious doctrines. And so even if religion and politics did divide the Spanish people into Christians and Muslims, learning could be adapted to the benefit of all and without danger to any, and in fact, while foreign universities were busy disrupting the processes of reason with their great reams of pointless and incomprehensible subtleties, Spain remained uninfected by scholasticism, producing instead, and particularly amongst the Saracens, skilled doctors, astronomers, geometers, algebrists, chemists, poets, and historians. Even amongst the Christians there were some men who rivalled them, adding to the previous list the study of their religion, treating it with ancestral decorum, and turning their

* Juan Pablo Forner, *Oración apologetica por la España y su mérito literario*, Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1786, pp. 59-60.

nation into the only place where knowledge and study was treated with the dignity they deserve.

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<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=65tTAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover>



57. Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian (1755-1794),
 'The Two Persians', 1792*

Fable-writing, as inspired by La Fontaine, remained common throughout the eighteenth century, and was often used as a tool for the critique of social or religious mores. Florian was a past master of the genre. The translation we reproduce here is by 'Sir Philip Perring, Bart' in 1896 (The Fables of Florian Done into English Verse). We thought readers might enjoy seeing how Sir Philip managed the rhyme scheme: Hilaire Belloc would have done it better: if only he had!

That scanty reason, vaunted so by man,
 Is nothing more than as a flambeau wan,
 Which casts around us, in our onward way,
 A fitful, feeble, melancholy ray:
 All else is darkness. Mortals, who would dare
 To pierce the gloom, travel they know not where;
 But not to profit by the gift so high,
 To quench one's spirit, and to blind one's eye,
 That were again egregious foolery.

In Persia were in days gone by
 Two brothers, who conformably
 To ancient law adored the sun.
 A waverer in his faith was one;
 Nothing so valued in his eyes
 As his own airy phantasies:
 He claimed in thought sublime to soar,
 To apprehend, and to explore,
 The essence of the Deity;
 For this, from morn till eve, did he
 Gaze at, with ever steadfast eye,
 The start of his idolatry.
 So mightily did he desire
 To explain the secret of its fire!

* Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian, 'Les Deux Persans', *Fables*, Paris: 1792, pp. 97-98.

He lost, poor fellow! Both his eyes,
And from that hour he did deny
The sun existed in the sky.

A credulous bigot was the other;
Frighted at what befell his brother,
He saw in him – to common lot! –
The abuse of misdirected thought,
And every effort used at once
To make himself a downright dunce!
The longest lane – it has an end;
Our worthy had not far to wend:
Poor fellow! All in solitude,
He soon was in contented mood;
But, lest he should offend the star,
Which sheds its light on us from far,
And towards it, even though by chance,
With eye of indiscretion glance,
He made a cave, and doomed his eyes
Never to see the sunny skies.

Rejoice, ye miserable men, in God's good gifts,
To comprehend whose nature Reason vainly drifts,
Who speaks unto our hearts, who everywhere is shown:
Without forecasting, what by man cannot be known,
Without rejecting gifts His hands with wisdom give,
Use we our powers more virtuous lives to live:
Virtue's the worthiest homage unto the most High:
The just alone is wise in God Almighty's eye.

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58. Three aphorisms from Rousseau, *Émile, or on Education*; Voltaire, Letter to the King of Prussia, 20 December 1740; and Jaucourt, 'Tolerance', censored article from the *Encyclopédie****

Whoever considers they ought to turn a blind eye to one thing will soon have to keep their eyes permanently shut: the first abuse we tolerate allows another one in, and from one thing to the next, the chain never stops until the rule of order and law has been completely overturned and dismissed.

Rousseau

Anyone who thinks that the time of these crimes is over is, in my view, too charitable about human nature. The same poison is still present although in a more diluted form. This pestilence which may seem to have been eradicated, erupts from time to time, breeding germs capable of infecting the whole world.

Voltaire

* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'éducation*, in his *Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Fourne, 1835; Voltaire, 'Lettre au roi de Prusse', in his *Chefs-d'oeuvres dramatiques*, 1816, Vol. II, pp. 268-277; Louis de Jaucourt, 'Tolérance', in the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1751-1772.

** Supposed to have appeared in Vol. 16, p. 393, but excised by its over-cautious publisher Le Breton. Information about the censored volume appears at <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/node/150>

To claim that God permits the use of violence to uphold or further the interests of truth, while truth is being simultaneously claimed on all sides, is tantamount to saying that the Supreme Being wants to blow up the entire human race.

Jaucourt

Read the free original text online (facsimile) of Rousseau's
Émile, ou de l'éducation, in *Collection complete des*
oeuvres, 1774 edition: [https://books.google.co.uk/](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=WoRZAAAACAAJ&pg=PA113)
[books?id=WoRZAAAACAAJ&pg=PA113](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=WoRZAAAACAAJ&pg=PA113)



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Letter to the King of Prussia, in *Chefs-d'oeuvres*
dramatiques, II, 1816 edition:
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[node/77](http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/node/77)



59. Voltaire, *On the Horrible Danger of Reading*, 1765*

Shocked by the edict against printing that was passed in Turkey in 1757, Voltaire chose to voice his outrage and satirise the edict through a farcical send-up. He imagines the legal document and all its rulings. Also targeted, of course, is the culture of censorship then prominent in France.

I, Joussouf-Cheribi, by the grace of God, mufti of the Holy Ottoman Empire, light of Lights, chosen amongst the Chosen, say to all the faithful here who will see the following, stupidity and benediction.

Since it has come to pass that Saïd-Effendi, former ambassador of the Sublime Porte to a small state called France, situated between Spain and Italy, has brought among us that pernicious practice of printing, having consulted upon this new-fangled concept our venerable brothers the qadis and imams of the imperial city of Istanbul, and especially the fakirs, known for their zeal against reason, it has been deemed good by Mohammed and by us to condemn, forbid, and render anathema the aforementioned infernal invention of the printing press, for the reasons set out below.

1. This means of communicating one's thoughts evidently leads to the dissipation of ignorance, which is the custodian and the safeguard of well-policed states.
2. It is a concern that, among the books brought from the West, there may be some on agriculture and on ways of improving the mechanical arts. Such works could, in the long run, God forbid, awaken the ingenuity of our farmers and our manufacturers, stimulate their industry, increase their wealth and one day inspire them with a certain elevation of the soul, a love for the public good, sentiments which are absolutely opposed to the holy doctrine.
3. It would eventually happen that we would have history books free from the miraculous that suspends the nation in blissful

* Voltaire, *De l'horrible danger de la lecture*, in his *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 1765.

ignorance. These books would unwisely explain what had been done that was good and what had been done that was bad, and would encourage fairness and patriotism. This is visibly contrary to the rights of our station.

4. Over the course of time, it might happen that some miserable philosophers, under the specious, but punishable pretext of enlightening mankind and making us better, would start teaching us dangerous virtues of which the population must forever remain ignorant.
5. They might, while increasing the respect they have for God, and while printing scandalously that He fills everywhere with His presence, diminish the number of pilgrims to Mecca, to the significant detriment of the salvation of those souls.
6. It would undoubtedly come to pass that, as a result of reading the works of those Western authors who have discussed infectious diseases and the ways in which to prevent them, we would be unhappy enough to safeguard ourselves from the plague, and this would be an enormous attack on the dictates of Providence.

For these and other reasons, for the edification of the faithful and for the good of their souls, we forbid them to ever read any book at all, under pain of eternal damnation. And, for fear that the diabolical temptation to educate themselves might take hold of them, we hereby ban fathers and mothers from teaching their children to read. And, to prevent all violations to our edict, we prohibit them expressly from thinking, under the same penalties; we enjoin all true believers to denounce to our officials anyone who strings together any four sentences from which a clear and distinct meaning can be inferred. Let us decree that, in all conversations, one must use terms that mean nothing, according to the ancient custom of the Sublime Porte.

And to prevent any such thought being smuggled into the sacred Imperial City, let us especially commit his Highness's First Physician to the cause, born in a bog in the north west of Europe; this physician who, having already killed four eminent members of the Ottoman family, has a stronger interest than anyone in preventing any introduction of knowledge into the country. Through these edicts, let us invest him with the power to

seize any idea that might present itself in writing or in speech at the gates of the city, and to bring us the aforementioned idea bound hand and foot, that we might inflict upon it whatever punishment it so please us.

Presented in our palace of ignorance, the seventh Moon of Muharem,
in the year 1143 of the Hegira.

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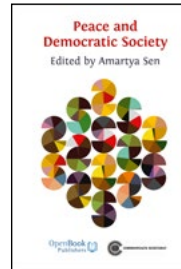
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Tolerance

The Beacon of the Enlightenment

Translated by Caroline Warman, the French students of Oxford and their tutors

Inspired by Voltaire's advice that a text needs to be concise to have real influence, this anthology contains fiery extracts by forty eighteenth-century authors, from the most famous philosophers of the age to those whose brilliant writings are less well-known. These passages are immensely diverse in style and topic, but all have in common a passionate commitment to equality, freedom, and tolerance. Each text resonates powerfully with the issues our world faces today. *Tolerance* was first published by the *Société française d'étude du dix-huitième siècle* (the French Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies) in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* assassinations in January 2015 as an act of solidarity and as a response to the surge of interest in Enlightenment values. With the support of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, it has now been translated by over 100 students and tutors of French at Oxford University.

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