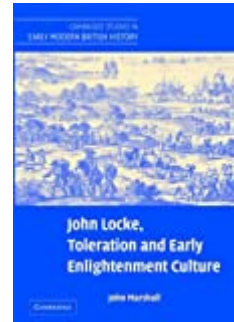




**John Marshall.** *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Toleration and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and Early Enlightenment Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. vii + 767 pp. \$110.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-65114-1.



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## The Anatomy of Toleration

Historians of religious toleration in the early modern period have hitherto been dependent on W. K. Jordan's four-volume *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (1932-1940) and Peter Zagorin's recent *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (2003). But Jordan focuses on England, whereas Marshall—rightly—sees toleration as a European phenomenon; and Zagorin ranges more widely from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century, while Marshall seeks to pursue a more limited “moment” in the 1680s and 1690s. Certainly the second half of the seventeenth century was a high point of persecution which seems to have given way in a number of countries to toleration. It was also a period in which there were multiple persecutions and tolerations, depending on the moment. In England the Anglican state's persecution of Nonconformity in the Clarendon Code flipped over into the united Protestant resistance to Catholicism under James, followed by the Glorious Revolution and the Toleration Act. Persecutors and advocates of toleration were often one and the same. Charles II, whose tolerant Declaration of Breda raised such hope in 1660, advocated restricting the franchise to Anglicans when he was King, but also issued the short-lived Decla-

ration of Indulgence in 1672, and died a Catholic. Similarly, James II was both an inflexible Catholic, intolerant of other religious views, and the author of the Declarations of Indulgence in 1687 and 1688; and Archbishop William Sancroft, who supported Anglican legislation against Dissent in the 1660s and 1670s, wooed Dissenters in 1688 to prevent the triumph of James II's Catholic policies. However insincerely, all three adopted the logic of toleration to pursue their own ends, suggesting perhaps that they recognized the internal inconsistencies of persecution.

John Marshall's ambitious and wide-ranging book sets itself a challenging task. Firstly, Marshall traces the impact of religious violence and considers representations of intolerance across France, Piedmont, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Britain. Marshall treats this intolerance as a backdrop to Locke's ideas of toleration, which justified resistance to rulers and extended rights to people—but only contingently. Marshall then considers the arguments for toleration, and shows the complexity of the multiple voices, some of which sought to justify intolerance as well as toleration. Above all those who ad-

vocated intolerance were preoccupied with heterodoxy and heresy and this impeded the growth of toleration, not just in religious matters but also in sexual mores and attitudes to those of other religions such as Muslim and Jews. By the 1680s and 1690s, however, Marshall claims that a small group of émigrés in the Netherlands developed ideas of universal religious toleration, the group included Locke and conceived an “early Enlightenment culture” which was complementary to the republic of letters which emerged at the same time. This early Enlightenment culture was in opposition to the Inquisition and drew on Christianity of the first three centuries as a precedent of tolerant Christianity. But there were limits to this early Enlightenment culture of toleration. As the works of Pierre Bayle and Gilbert Burnet show, Protestant tolerance did not comprehend Catholicism, nor did it embrace atheism or sexual libertinism.

This brief summary of Marshall’s argument does not capture the detail with which he clothes the discussion. It is clear that for much of the book England and France are comparable: in Restoration England the state persecuted Nonconformist Protestants and in France, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Catholic state did the same—though with greater ferocity. Here, perhaps, Marshall could have pursued the nature of Anglican persecution of Dissenters, which he seems to underestimate, as he does their strength of purpose and determination. The Dissenters of Taunton in Somerset, for example, were subject to the most determined onslaught by mayors, magistrates, militia, and bishops, but stubbornly retained both their sense of identity and their willingness to take to the streets to defend it.[1] As Mark Goldie asserts, “Restoration England was a persecuting society.”[2] Locke, himself a Somerset man, wrote his *Third Letter for Toleration* (1692) which censured the Anglican persecution of Dissent. However the widespread representations in England of French intolerance to Huguenots and Piedmontese persecution of Waldensians were clearly very powerful in constructing a Protestant identity. They fuelled Whig Exclusionism and inspired Locke’s ideas—Marshall is particularly effective in showing that Locke’s *Second Treatise* was a response to the Protestant fears of Catholicism. It is clear that some did not see the threat from divided Protestantism in England until nearly too late in 1688; indeed the scramble to reunite Anglicans and Dissenters in response to James’s Catholicizing policies was a “close run thing.” The fear of Catholicism and the presence in his army of large numbers of Huguenots and Waldensians helped William of Orange enormously in 1688 and encouraged all Protestants to welcome him.

The Glorious Revolution, which ushered in the Toleration Act of 1689 and the Blasphemy Act of 1698, established a new boundary for intolerance, a new pale beyond which opinion would not be tolerated. This was Trinitarianism. The Toleration Act permitted worship by Trinitarian Protestants and the Blasphemy Act imposed fines and imprisonment for repeated denial of the Trinity.[3] This adopted a Catholic idea that Protestantism would decline into Socinianism, Arianism, Deism, and Atheism. So the new limit of toleration was Trinitarian Protestantism, thus setting the agenda for the eighteenth-century debates on subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Salters’ Hall controversy, and the Feathers’ Tavern Petition. As Marshall points, toleration in England was more restricted than it was in the Netherlands.

The intellectual achievement of the advocates of toleration was to reach back to early Christianity to overturn medieval ideas of persecution. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation adopted Augustinian ideas of heresy and sedition, which led to compulsion and violent persecution such as the forcible conversion of Huguenots and the Inquisition in Spain. French Catholicism, in particular, anathemized heresy, but in England the Ranters held similar views and extended them to sexual and social libertinism. It is clear that Locke knew of, and had read, early proponents of toleration, such as Sebastian Castellio, and drew on their ideas in advocating tolerance. Tolerance towards Jews and Muslims is especially interesting, throwing up some of the divides in intolerant thinking. John Calvin and Martin Luther disagreed on the toleration of Jews and Muslims, the former favoring it, the latter opposing. Some Enlightenment thinkers chose a middle path, such as Burnet who preferred conversion of Jews, but would permit toleration to those who would not. Nevertheless in much of the seventeenth-century attitudes to both religions there was the suggestion that they were akin to atheism—in part because they were not Trinitarian. Catholic intolerance was also rooted in providentialism and the sense of a “true church” which held the line against Protestantism and the declension into atheism. But Catholic monarchs also equated heterodoxy with sedition and treason—those who were not Catholics were more prone to plots to overthrow the King. This was a view that began to influence Charles II and James following the Popish and Rye House Plots.

What Marshall suggests is that a cadre of early Enlightenment writers in Holland “universalized” toleration. They were led by Locke (and the *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689) and Bayle (*Philosophical Commentary*, English translation, 1708), who, though obscure in

the 1680s, “tower over their contemporaries” (p. 471). But they were not alone, other writers included Jacques Basnage, Adriaan Van Paets, Isaac Papin, Charles Le Cene, Jean Le Clerc, Philippus van Limborch, and Gilbert Burnet. Burnet was the man who exemplified the personal links that characterized this group, he knew and linked Locke with Dutch Arminians. Marshall describes at length the connections and networks of tolerationists, in part to support his assertion that toleration was part of the “republic of letters” and formed an “early Enlightenment culture.” This republic and culture was marked by the engagement of the University of Louvain and of a philosophic and scientific community, but it was also denoted by close friendships, extensive correspondence, publishing and book collecting, mutual support and the use of Cicero’s “republican” models of civility and conversation. Recent scholarship by Margaret Jacob, Roger Chartier, Dan Gordon, Dena Goodman and Barbara Shapiro has emphasized that criticism, enquiry, curiosity conversation, civility, and humanity were important elements in the Enlightenment, and these features are claimed by Marshall for this movement in Holland.

The advocates of toleration may have grappled with religious ideas principally, but they also debated issues of resistance to civil authority, the treatment of heretics, and “natural” phenomenon, such as comets. As Benjamin Hoadly was later to assert, sincerity of judgment was also central to these ideas. There was also an emphasis on an understanding of humanity. This drew Locke and others to the idea that conformity could not be imposed nor consciences shackled, that Christianity was principally a religion of gentleness and equity, and that sincerity of belief implied not just that some would sincerely be led into error, but that sincerity would lead to variety in beliefs. The consequence of this view was that only stubborn atheism and shameless immorality risked God’s vengeance on whole societies.

In such a big book there is much to admire and criticize. Perhaps my greatest reservation is for the claims made for an “early Enlightenment culture” in the “republic of letters.” Marshall commits a good deal of space to these ideas, but in the end he is only partially convincing. I suspect Marshall is right, but his case is couched in circumstantial terms rather than anything else. Nevertheless this book is a *tour de force*. It synthesizes a wide range of the latest scholarship, and Marshall displays a penetrating and incisive understanding of English, Dutch, French, and Italian sources. More importantly, Marshall also dispels any doubt that—in tandem with the “long eighteenth century”—there is now emerging evidence for a “long Enlightenment” stretching from before 1660 to the nineteenth century. Finally, for those historians of religion and the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, Marshall traces to their roots many debates: the concern about resistance to rulers, sincerity of conscience (and therefore of error), the fear of compulsion in matters of faith, and the horror of anti-Trinitarianism. Marshall is to be congratulated on an important study that identifies and anatomizes the intellectual history of one of the most significant moments in early modern European history.

#### Notes

[1]. See William Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment, 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton* (Oxford: Peter Lang, forthcoming).

[2]. M. Goldie, “The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England,” in *Persecution and Toleration*, ed. W. Shiels (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 331.

[3]. For an example of the action of the tolerant Anglican state to Unitarianism, see William Gibson, “The Persecution of Thomas Emlyn, 1703-05,” *The Journal of Church and State* (forthcoming, 2007).

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