must get rid of all our prejudices when we read ancient
authors and travel in distant nations. Nature is the same
everywhere and customs are everywhere different.¹

N.B. One day I met in Amsterdam a rabbi who was full of
this chapter. 'Ah! my friend,' said he, 'how deeply we are
indebted to you! You have made known all the sublimity of
the Mosaic law, Ezekiel's lunch, his fine left-handed attitudes;
Oholah and Oholibah are admirable; they are types, brother,
types who symbolize the fact that the Jewish people will one
day master the whole earth. But why have you left out so
many more things that are pretty well as astonishing? Why
didn't you show the lord saying to the wise Hosea, in the
second line of the first chapter: 'Hosea, take unto thee a wife
of whoredom, and beget upon her sons of whoredom.'
These are his very words. Hosea took the young lady, had a
boy by her, then a girl, and then another boy. And this was
a symbol, and the symbol lasted for three years.

"That's not all," says the lord in the third chapter, "go
and take a woman who is not only debauched, but also an
adulteress." Hosea obeyed; but it cost him fifteen crowns and
one and a half measures of barley, for you know that there
was very little wheat in the promised land. But do you know
what all this means? 'No,' I replied. 'Nor do I,' said the
rabbi.

A sober scholar approached and told us that they are
ingenious fictions full of charm. 'Ah, sir,' answered a very
well-read young man, 'if you want fictions, believe me,
prefere those of Homer, Virgil and Ovid. Those who like
the prophesies of Ezekiel deserve to lunch with him.'

Fables

Are not the most ancient fables obviously allegorical? Acc-
ording to our method of reckoning the eras is not the oldest
fable we know that reported in the ninth chapter of the book of
Judges? A king of the trees was to be chosen. The olive tree
did not want to abandon the care of its oil, nor the fig tree

¹. The rest of this section was added in one of the 1763 editions.

that of its figs, nor the vine that of its wine, nor the other
trees that of their fruits. The thistle, which was good for
nothing, made itself king, because it had thorns and could do
harm.

Is not the ancient fable of Venus, in the form reported by
Hesiod, an allegory of all nature? The generative parts fell
from the ethereal regions on to the shore of the sea. Venus
was born from this precious foam. Her first name was that of
the lover of generation. Could there be a more obvious
image? This Venus is the goddess of beauty; beauty ceases
to be lovable if not accompanied by the graces; beauty causes
love; love has features that pierce the heart; it wears a blind-
fold that hides the defects of the things we love. Wisdom,
under the name of Minerva, is conceived in the brain of the
master of the gods. The soul of man is a divine fire shown by
Minerva to Prometheus, who uses this divine fire to animate
man.

It is impossible not to recognize in these fables a vivid pic-
ture of all nature. Most other fables are either the corruption
of ancient tales or caprices of the imagination. The ancient
fables are like our modern stories: there are moral ones,
which are charming; others are insipid.

The fables of the ingenious peoples of antiquity were
crudely imitated by crude peoples: witness those of Bacchus,
Hercules, Prometheus, Pandora, and so many others. They
amused the ancient world. The barbarians, who heard them
talked about confusedly, merged them into their savage
mythology; and then they dared to say: 'It is we who in-
vented them.' Alas! wretched peoples, unknown and un-
knowing, who knew not a single art, whether agreeable or
useful, to whom not even the name of geometry ever pen-
etrated, can you say that you ever invented anything? You
were neither able to discover any truths nor to lie cleverly.

Fanatisme: Fanaticism

Fanaticism is to superstition what delirium is to fever, and
what fury is to anger. The man who has ecstasies and visions,
who takes dream for realities, and his imaginings for prophecies, is an enthusiast. The man who backs his madness with murder is a fanatic. John Diaz, living in retirement at Nuremberg, was firmly convinced that the pope was the Antichrist of the Apocalypse and bore the sign of the beast. He was only an enthusiast, but his brother Bartholomew Diaz, who departed from Rome piously to assassinate his brother, and who in fact killed him for love of god, was one of the most abominable fanatics superstition has ever succeeded in shaping.

Polyeuctes, who went to the temple on a solemn occasion to overthrow and smash the statues and ornaments, was a less horrible fanatic than Diaz, but no less stupid. The assassins of duke François de Guise, of William, prince of Orange, of king Henry III and king Henry IV, and so many others, were execrations suffering from the same madness as Diaz.

The most detestable example of fanaticism is that of the bourgeois of Paris who hastened in saint Bartholomew's night to assassinate, butcher, throw out of the windows, cut in pieces their fellow citizens who did not go to mass.

There are cold-blooded fanatics: these are the judges who condemn to death those guilty of no other crime than that of not thinking like them; and those judges are all the guiltier, all the worthier of the execution of mankind, because it would seem that they could have listened to reason, not being in a state of fury like the Clements, the Châtels, the Ravaillacs, the Géards, the Damiens.

Once fanaticism has cankered a brain, the disease is almost incurable. I have seen convulsionaries who, talking about the miracles of saint Paris, gradually became excited despite themselves: their eyes blazed, their limbs trembled, passion disfigured their faces, and they would have killed anyone who contradicted them.

There is no other remedy for this epidemic illness than the spirit of free thought, which, spreading little by little, finally softens men's customs, and prevents the renewal of the disease. For as soon as this evil makes any progress we must flee and wait for the air to become pure again. Laws and religion do not suffice against the pest of the soul. Religion, far from being a beneficial food in such cases, turns into poison in infected brains. These wretches always remember the example of Ehud, who assassinated king Eglon; of Judith, who cut off the head of Holofernes while in bed with him; of Samuel, who chopped king Agag to pieces. They do not realize that these examples, respectable in antiquity, are now abominable. They draw their rage from the very religion that condemns it.

Laws are also quite impotent against these attacks of fury: it is as if you read a cabinet decree to a lunatic. These people are convinced that the saint who possesses them is above the law, that their enthusiasm is the only law to which they need attend.

How can you answer a man who tells you that he would rather obey god than men, and who is therefore sure to deserve heaven in cutting your throat?

Fanatics are usually guided by rascals, who put the dagger into their hands. They resemble that old man of the mountain who, it is said, made imbeciles taste the joys of paradise, and who promised them an eternity of the pleasures of which he had given them a foretaste, on condition that they murdered all those he would name. There is only one religion in the world that has never been sullied by fanaticism, that of the Chinese scholars. The philosophical sects were not only free from this pest, they were its remedy. For the effect of philosophy is to make the soul tranquil, and fanaticism is incompatible with tranquillity. If our holy religion has so often been corrupted by this infernal fury, the folly of mankind must be blamed.
Théiste: Theist

The theist is a man firmly convinced of the existence of a supreme being as good as he is powerful, who has created all extended, vegetating, sentient and thinking beings, who perpetuates their species, who punishes crimes without cruelty, and benevolently rewards virtuous behaviour.

The theist does not know how god punishes, how he encourages, how he forgives, for he is not rash enough to flatter himself that he knows how god acts, but he knows that god does act and that he is just. The difficulties presented by the idea of providence do not shake him in his faith because they are only great difficulties and not proofs against the idea. He submits to this providence although he perceives only some of its effects and appearances, and, judging the things he does not see by those he does see, he thinks that this providence extends to all places and times.

United in this principle with the rest of the universe, he does not embrace any of the sects, which all contradict each other. His religion is the most ancient and the most widespread, for the simple worship of one god preceded all the world’s systems. He speaks a language all peoples understand though they do not understand one another. He has brothers from Peking to Cayenne, counting all wise men as his brothers. He holds that religion consists neither in the opinions of an unintelligible metaphysic nor in a vain apparatus, but in worship and justice. To do good, that is his cult. To submit to god, that is his doctrine. The Mohammedan cries out to him: ‘Take care if you don’t make the pilgrimage to Mecca!’ ‘Woe to you,’ he is told by a Recollet, ‘if you don’t make the journey to our lady of Loretto!’ He laughs at Loretto and Mecca, but he helps the poor and he defends the oppressed.


Théologien: Theologian

I once knew a true theologian. He had mastered the oriental languages, and was as well informed as possible about the rites of the ancient nations. He knew the Brahmans, the Chaldeans, the fire-worshippers, the Sabæans, the Syrians, the Egyptians as well as the Jews. He was familiar with the variant texts of the Bible. For thirty years he had tried to reconcile the gospels, and bring the fathers into union. He investigated the precise date of composition of the creed attributed to the apostles, and that given out under the name of Athanasius; how the sacraments were instituted one after the other; what the difference was between the synaxis and the mass; how the Christian church was divided after its birth into different parties, and how the dominant group stigmatized all others as heretics. He sounded the depths of the politics which always took part in these quarrels; and he distinguished between expediency and wisdom, between the pride that seeks to subjugate the minds of men and the desire to enlighten oneself, between zeal and fanaticism.

The difficulty of organizing in his head so many things whose nature is to be confused, and to throw a little light into so many dark clouds, often disheartened him, but as these researches were his professional duties, he devoted himself to them in spite of his disgust. He finally attained to knowledge unknown to most of his colleagues. The more truly learned he became, the more he doubted all he knew. So long as he lived he was tolerant, and as he died he confessed that he had uselessly worn out his life.

Tolérance: Toleration

What is toleration? It is the prerogative of humanity. We are all steeped in weaknesses and errors: let us forgive one another’s follies, it is the first law of nature.

The Parsee, the Hindu, the Jew, the Mohammedan, the
prevail than the Athanasians and the Eusebians tore each other to pieces. Since then, and to this day, the Christian church has streamed with blood.

I admit that the Jewish people were very barbarous. It butchered without pity all the inhabitants of a wretched little country to which it had no more right than it has to Paris or London. Nevertheless when Naaman was cured of his leprosy by plunging seven times into the Jordan, when, as an acknowledgement to Elisha, who had taught him this secret, he told him that he would worship the god of the Jews out of gratitude, he reserved to himself the right to worship also his king’s god, he asked Elisha’s permission to do so, and the prophet did not hesitate to give it to him. The Jews worshipped their god, but they were never surprised that each people had its own. They thought it proper that Chemosh should give a certain district to the Moabites, provided that god gave them one also. Jacob did not hesitate to marry the daughter of an idolator. Laban had his god as Jacob had his. Here we have examples of toleration among the most intolerant and the most cruel people of all antiquity. We have imitated it in its absurd frenzies, and not in its forbearance.

It is clear that every individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he does not agree with him, is a monster. This is obvious enough. But the government, the magistrates, the princes, how should they behave to those who have a different form of worship? If they are powerful foreigners it is certain that a prince will contract an alliance with them. François I, most Christian, joined with the Moslems against Charles V, most Catholic. François II gave money to the German Lutherans to help them in their rebellion against the emperor; but he started off according to custom by burning the Lutherans in his own country. He subsidized them in Saxony for political reasons, he burned them for political reasons in Paris. But what happened? Persecutions make proselytes: France was soon full of new Protestants. At first

1. These were the epithets applied to the kings of France and Spain respectively: ‘roi très chrétien’ and ‘roi très catholique’.
They submitted to being hanged, and then they took to hanging in their turn. Civil wars followed, then the saint Bartholomew, and this corner of the world was soon worse than everything the ancients and the moderns have ever said about hell.

Senseless people, who have never been able to offer up a true worship to the god who made you! Wretches, who have never allowed yourselves to be guided by the examples of the Saviour, the educated Chinese, the Parsees, and all wise men! Monsters, who need superstitions as the gizzards of the avens need carrion! I have already told you, and I have nothing else to tell you: if you have two religions in your midst they will cut each other's throats; if you have thirty, they will live in peace. Look at the Grand Turk: he governs Parsees, Hindus, Greek Christians, Nestorians, Roman Catholics. The first man who tries to make trouble is impaled, and everybody is peaceful.

II

If all religions the Christian is undoubtedly that which should instil the greatest toleration, although so far the Christians have been the most intolerant of all men.

Jesus having deigned to be born in poverty and a low condition, like his brothers, never condescended to practise the art of writing. The Jews had a legal system written down in the greatest detail, and we do not have a single line from the hand of Jesus. The apostles disagreed on a number of points. Saint Peter and saint Barnabas ate forbidden meat with new Christians who were foreigners, and abstained with Jewish Christians. Saint Paul reproached them for this conduct, and his same Pharisee saint Paul, disciple of the Pharisee Gamaliel, his same saint Paul who had furiously persecuted the Christians, and who, having broken with Gamaliel, himself became Christian, nevertheless after that sacrificed in the temple of Jerusalem during his apostolate. For a week he publicly observed all the ceremonies of the Jewish law he had renounced. He even added superfluous devotions and purifications. He Judaized completely. For a week the greatest

Theonbas and Judas had called themselves messiahs before Jesus. Dositheus, Simon, Menander called themselves messiahs after Jesus. A score of sects existed in Judea by the first century of the church, even before the name of Christian was known. The contemplative gnostics, the Dositheans, the Corinthians existed before the disciples of Jesus had taken the name of Christians. There were soon thirty gospels, each of which belonged to a different community, and by the end of the first century thirty sects of Christians could be counted in Asia Minor, Syria, Alexandria, and even in Rome.

All these sects, despised by the Roman government and hidden by their obscurity, nevertheless persecuted each other, which is all they could do in their abject condition. They were nearly all composed of the scum of the people.

When at last a few Christians embraced the dogmas of Plato and injected a little philosophy into their religions, which they separated from Judaism, they gradually grew in importance, though still divided into several sects. There has never been a single moment when the Christian church was united. It had its birth in the midst of the divisions of the Jews, Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Judaites, disciples of John, Therapeutes. It was divided in its cradle, it was divided even in the persecutions it occasionally suffered under the first emperors. A martyr was often regarded by his brothers as an apostate, and the Carpocratian Christian expired under the sword of the Roman executioner, excommunicated by the Ebionite Christian, which Ebionite was anathematized by the Sabellian.

This horrible discord, which has lasted for so many centuries, is a most striking lesson that we should mutually forgive our errors. Dissension is the great evil of mankind, and toleration is its only remedy.

There is nobody who does not agree with this truth, whether he meditates calmly in his study, or whether he peacefully examines the truth with his friends. Why then do the same men who in private approve forbearance, bene-
Toleration: Tolerant

the Quakers have sleeves without buttons; and all are dressed in the same way.

Jesus Christ did not baptize any of his apostles; the Quakers are not baptized.

It would be easy to press the parallel further. It would be still easier to show how the Christian religion of today differs from the religion practised by Jesus. Jesus was a Jew, and we are not Jews. Jesus abstained from pork because it is unclean, and from rabbit because it ruminates and does not have a cloven foot; we boldly eat pork because to us it is not unclean, and we eat rabbit which has a cloven foot and does not ruminant.

Jesus was circumcised, and we keep our foreskins. Jesus ate the paschal lamb with lettuce, he kept the feast of tabernacles, and we do not. He observed the sabbath, and we have changed it. He sacrificed, and we do not sacrifice.

Jesus always concealed the mystery of his incarnation and his status. He did not say that he was God's equal. Saint Paul says expressly in his Epistle to the Hebrews that God created Jesus lower than the angels. And in spite of all the words of Saint Paul the council of Nicaea acknowledged Jesus to be God.

Jesus gave the pope neither the marches of Ancona nor the duchy of Spoleto; and yet the pope possesses them by divine right.

Jesus did not make a sacrament of marriage and the diaconate; and with us the diaconate and marriage are sacraments.

If we look at the matter at all closely we see that the catholic, apostolic and Roman religion is the opposite of the religion of Jesus in all its ceremonies and in all its dogmas.

But then must we all Judaize because Jesus Judaized all his life?

If it were permissible to reason consistently in matters of religion, it would be clear that we should all become Jews because our saviour Jesus Christ was born a Jew, lived a Jew, and died a Jew, and because he said expressly that he accomplished, that he fulfilled the Jewish religion. But it is even clearer that we should tolerate each other because we are...
all weak, inconsistent, subject to mutability and to error. Would a reed laid into the mud by the wind say to a neighbouring reed bent in the opposite direction: 'Creep in my fashion, wretch, or I shall petition to have you torn up and burned?'

Torture

Although there are few articles on jurisprudence in these respectable alphabetical reflections, a word must nevertheless be said about torture, otherwise named the question. It is a strange way to question one. Yet it was not invented by the merely curious. It would appear that this part of our legislation owes its first origin to a highwayman. Most of these gentlemen are still in the habit of squeezing thumbs, burning the feet of those who refuse to tell them where they have put their money, and questioning them by means of other torments.

The conquerors, having succeeded these thieves, found this invention of the greatest utility. They put it into practice when they suspected that some vile plot was being hatched against them, as, for instance, that of being free, a crime of divine and human _lèse-majesté_. The accomplices had to be known; and to arrive at this knowledge those who were suspected were made to suffer a thousand deaths, because according to the jurisprudence of these first heroes anyone suspected of having had so much as a disrespectful thought about them was worthy of death. And once a man has thus deserved death it matters little whether appalling torments are added for a few days or even several weeks. All this even had something of the divine about it. Providence sometimes tortures us by means of the stone, gravel, goot, scurvy, leprosy, pox great and small, griping of the bowels, nervous convulsions, and other executants of the vengeance of providence.

Now since the first despot were images of divinity, as all their courtiers freely admitted, they imitated it so far as they could.

What is very strange is that the Jewish books never men-
When the chenatier de La Barre, grandson of a lieutenant-general, a very intelligent and promising young man, but with all the thoughtlessness of wild youth, was convicted of singing impious songs and even of passing a procession of Capuchins without taking his hat off, the judges of Abbeville, people comparable to Roman senators, ordered not only that his tongue be torn out, his hand cut off, and his body burned on a slow fire, but they also put him to the torture, to discover exactly how many songs he had sung, and how many processions he had watched with his hat on.¹

This adventure did not occur in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, but in the eighteenth. Foreign nations judge France by her theatre, her novels, her charming verse, the girls of her opera, whose morals are very agreeable, the dancers of her opera, who are graceful, by Mlle Clairon, who declaims verse ravishingly. They do not know that there is no nation more cruel at bottom than the French.

In 1700 the Russians were regarded as barbarians. We are now only in 1769, and an empress has just given this vast state laws that would have done honour to Minos, to Numa, and to Solon if they had had enough intelligence to compose them. The most remarkable of them is universal toleration, the second is the abolition of torture. Justice and humanity guided her pen, she has reformed everything. Woe to a nation which, long civilized, is still led by atrocious ancient practices! ‘Why should we change our jurisprudence?’ it asks. ‘Europe uses our cooks, our tailors, our wig-makers; therefore our laws are good.’

¹. The whole article ‘Torture’ was added by Voltaire in the 1769 edition of the Dictionnaire philosophique; primarily, I believe, to enable him to print these comments on the La Barre case. None of the victims of injustice for whom he worked so hard and so long, not even Calas and Stiven, lustrous Voltaire so deeply as this; and it is not irrelevant to note that his copy of the first edition of the Dictionnaire philosophique was burned with La Barre.

Transubstantiation: Transubstantiation

The Protestants, and most of all Protestant philosophers, regard transubstantiation as the uttermost limit of monkish impudence and lay imbecility. They are quite unrestrained about this belief, which they call monstrous. They do not even think that a single sensible man could embrace it seriously after reflection. It is, they say, so absurd, so opposed to all the laws of physics, so self-contradictory that not even god could perform this operation, because it is in effect to annihilate god to suppose that he does contradictory things. Not only a god in bread, but a god in place of bread; a hundred thousand crumbs become in a flash as many gods, this innumerable crowd of gods forming only one god; whiteness without a white body; roundness without a round body; wine changed into blood which has the taste of wine; bread changed into flesh and fibre which have the taste of bread: all this inspires so much horror and contempt in the enemies of the catholic, apostolic and Roman religion that this excess of horror and contempt has sometimes become rage.

Their horror increases when they are told that in Catholic countries one sees every day priests and monks who, leaving an insensuous bed and without so much as washing their hands soiled with impurities, manufacture gods by the hundred, eat and drink their god, shit and piss their god. But when they reflect that this superstition, a hundred times more absurd and more sacrilegious than all those of the Egyptians is worth an annual income of 15 to 20 million to an Italian priest, and the domination of a country extending 100 miles in length and width, they would all like to take up arms to drive out this priest who has seized the palace of the Caesars. I do not know whether I shall take part in the journey, for I love peace; but when they are settled in Rome, I shall certainly go to visit them.¹

¹. Voltaire added one of his fictitious attributions: ‘By M. Guillaume, Protestant minister.’