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John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture:
Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Tolerance
in Early Modern and "Early Enlightenment" Europe (review)

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(Review)

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John W. Marshall. *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Tolerance in Early Modern and "Early Enlightenment" Europe*.

Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 viii + 768 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$110. ISBN: 0-521-65114-X.

This book, focused on the last decades of the seventeenth century, is intended to be a thorough account of debates on religious tolerance and intolerance in England, Ireland, Holland, and France. In his attempt to charter a vast swath of early modern history, Marshall divides his material into three parts, "Catholic and Protestant Intolerance in the Later Seventeenth Century," "Justifications of Intolerance and the Emergence of Arguments for Toleration," and "The 'Early Enlightenment' Defence of Toleration and the 'Republic of Letters' in the 1680s and 1690s." Marshall's attitude is completely different from Valentine Zuber's. The latter, frustrated by the difficulty of defining the concept of toleration and the proliferation of studies on it, concentrated her inquiry on the self-serving praises lavished by historians and politicians of the Third Republic on emblematic figures such as Michael Servetus and Sebastian Castellio. The result was a fascinating book, well-written and well-researched, *Les conflits de la tolérance: Michel Servet entre mémoire et histoire* (2004), which obtained an accolade from M. Chevallier in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*. Yet Zuber's Gallic brilliance could not hide the basic fallacy of her project, founded on the wrong opinion that ideas can be taken out of their historical context and defined as if they were samples to be analyzed by a chemist.

Marshall's book is not marred by such a fallacy, due to the enduring influence of Descartes's rationalism on French culture, and perhaps to the reluctance to admit that Louis XIV's anti-Protestant policy prevented France from exploiting the full range of her intellectual assets. Keeping track of the actual theological disputes, without playing with metahistorical abstractions, Marshall traces the genesis of religious toleration. Its champions, John Locke, John Leclerc, and Pierre Bayle, as well as their antagonist Bossuet, are studied against their respective historical backgrounds. Marshall offers a well-balanced and richly-documented fresco of the arguments of the Catholic and Protestant writers, and concludes that the progress of toleration in Britain and Holland is to be measured by the attitudes toward Catholics, atheists, sexual libertines, and homosexuals. Locke and Bayle denied toleration to Catholics not on religious but on political grounds, because their allegiance to the pope was dangerous to the state. While Bayle admitted the possibility of a commonwealth of atheists, Locke, although tempted by the same idea, did not go as far, because he believed that the expectation of divine retribution or punishment was the foundation of civil society. Nobody advocated toleration of sexual libertinism, sodomy, and homosexuality in the late seventeenth century, when universal blame was bestowed on the Earl of Rochester.

The advocates of religious toleration paved the way for the republic of letters, the opposite of the "Universa Respublica Christiana" regularly mentioned in the decrees of the Inquisition. Under this aspect, Marshall's book is an important

contribution to a hot topic, as appears from recent publications such as *Les premiers siècles de la République européenne des Lettres* (2005), edited by M. Lion-Violet, and *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la République des Lettres: Études de réseaux de correspondances du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècles* (2005), edited by C. Berkvens-Stevelinck, H. Bots, and J. Häselser. At the same time, Marshall presents a strong case in favor of J. G. A. Pocock's and J. Israel's view of the Anglo-Dutch Enlightenment, which was the premise of the French one.

Given the huge number of primary sources involved, some bibliographical omissions are inevitable, but do not affect the validity of Marshall's book, which is stimulating and rewarding. Yet this reviewer cannot fail to notice a few weak points, which can be easily eliminated in a second edition. On the Catholic side, the author overlooks Malebranche — an important philosopher familiar to Locke and Bayle — who was accused of Manicheism by a censor of the Congregation of the Index, because he advocated a measure of religious tolerance. Topics such as the Copernican revolution or the Council of Trent are not addressed and, as a consequence, Marshall does not even mention Bruno, Campanella, Galileo, or Sarpi, who had many admirers beyond the Alps and gave ammunition to the Protestant offensive against the Catholic Church. Marshall notes that the late seventeenth century, although considered crucial to the rise of the Enlightenment by P. Hazard, has been rather neglected by scholars who preferred to concentrate on the late eighteenth century. If Marshall is alluding to English and American scholars whose works quite understandably constitute the biggest portion of the bibliography, he is probably right. Yet he should have informed his readers that French scholars have published a huge mass of studies that are not included in his bibliography: for instance, *Naissance et affirmation de l'idée de tolérance, XVI^e et XVIII^e siècle* (1987), edited by M. Peronnet, or *La Tolérance, Colloque international de Nantes* (1999), edited by G. Saupin, R. Fabre, and M. Launay. It is rather disappointing to see that Marshall left out *Regards sur la Hollande du siècle d'or* (1990) by the late Paul Dibon of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, who produced pioneering research on the republic of letters.

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