The Imaginary History of Religious Toleration

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My most vivid memory of Abraham Wasserstein comes from a Passover seder at the home of one of the editors of this volume. She had made the mistake of seating us together, and once the dinner had arrived we soon fell into deep conversation, oblivious of the other guests. It was very rude of us, but I like to think that our withdrawal went without notice, for the talk was riveting. The subject was religious toleration, a classic Wasserstein theme, and the lack of it among the religious communities in Jerusalem. I argued that genuine religious toleration was an anomaly not found even in his adopted country of England until recent times, and perhaps not even then. Professor Wasserstein was then launched into a comprehensive discussion of the subject from the ancient world until the Second World War, and I remember my astounded admiration for the breadth of his learning and experience. What follows is more or less my part in the discussion. I fear that the more interesting side of the conversation can only remain in the memories of those who had the privilege of knowing Abraham Wasserstein.

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The Victorian *Cassell's Illustrated History of England* in four lavishly illustrated folio volumes took as its theme the question of how England became the most advanced and enlightened nation on the Planet Earth, and possibly on other planets as well. But when they came to the question of the Anglican Church, their confidence faltered, and they perceived the unmistakable evidences of decay and decline. The authors were convinced that the main reason for the decline of the Anglican church was the fact that no outside influences were allowed to modify the sterile received doctrines of the past:

> A state church, once organised, can never undergo any change, except that which time ploughs upon it, in bringing it to the earth. Like those tabernacles and towers which bear its own name, amid the everlasting freshness and vitality of nature, it grows grey, and crumbles piecemeal to the dust. Around it the elements of free mind, the winds of discussion, the dews of pure and heartfelt sentiment, the fructifying seas of knowledge, nay, the very thunder and blackness of opposition, keep the whole world beautiful in perpetual youth; whilst over its walls creep grey lichens of age, humid mosses of superstitious

stagnation; the worm and the weather work faster than hands which dare not renew, lest they endanger, and the whole huge fabric stands a venerable ruin!

The failure of genuine religious toleration in England, and the consequent arid sterility of Anglican doctrine, they thought, was the chief cause of the decay of the English church in their own time, the opportunity for change having been missed in the first two centuries of Protestantism, in the early modern period.[1]

Perhaps these Victorian patriots expected too much. In the early modern period, religion was too important a matter to be left to the liberal indifference of mere toleration: to tolerate heresy was to condemn its champions to eternal damnation. As Richard Baxter told Parliament in 1654, 'Thousands might curse you for ever in Hell, if you grant such a liberty to all men to deceive them, and entice them thither'.[2] The desire to convert others, even the Jews, to a more acceptable form of Christianity was essentially an act of love, a rescue attempt on the brink of the abyss. Worst of all, to tolerate false doctrine in society was akin to allowing lethal weapons to remain in the hands of madmen: it threatened not only its champions, but inflicted eternal suffering on innocent people who might be led astray into heresy. Genuine toleration of all sects and religions was therefore essentially a criminal act with permanent and eternal consequences.

How is it, then, that we often think of the early modern period as the birthplace of religious toleration, the beginning of a process of enlightenment which gradually illuminated the dark corners of Europe? There certainly were some countries which tolerated religious minorities within their midst — England, Holland, and even France, for example – and one does hear the echo of certain apparent champions of religious liberty. But what I intend to argue is that when one looks more closely, we see that the reasons for tolerating dissenting groups are distinctly different from what we would call arguments for religious toleration in any modern sense of the word.

Let us look at some of the less trumpeted and more understandable reasons for tolerating minority sects and religions which do not appear in the imaginary history of religious toleration. Firstly, it should be recognized that in some cases, dissenting groups were tolerated not so much because of any material usefulness to the ruler, but because their protection formed part of an existing body of rights which no ruling power wished to relinquish voluntarily. The best example of this phenomenon is the protection which Charles V gave to the Jews in his role as emperor. 'Chamber serfdom' of the Jews was part of his legal arsenal, over and above its practical utility in enabling him to use this as an excuse for intervening in various local affairs. The Jews for their part were great Imperialists and prayed for the Emperor's victory over the Protestants in the 1540s: Josel of Rosheim even decreed that Charles V was an 'angel of the Lord'. In the

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1   *Cassell's Illustrated History of England*, rev. ed., London n.d., iii, 414.
2   Richard Baxter, *Humble Advice*, London 1655, 2.

Spanish kingdoms, however, Charles followed the traditional intolerant policies of his grandparents, Ferdinand and Isabella.[3]

A reverse example of a refusal to relinquish religious rights, this time of a *religious* authority insisting on its *political* rights long after the purely theological justification had passed, is the licensing of midwives which remained the province of the bishop of London until the beginning of the twentieth century, on the basis of the long-rejected theological necessity of teaching even midwives to baptise children in an emergency.[4]

Sometimes, we find that it appears that a particular ruler is emphasizing the needs of the society or the state above those of religion, utilizing so-called 'politique' arguments of practicality and usefulness, politics as the 'art of the possible'. Such rulers have a distinctly modern air about them, even someone like Charles V at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and in the Peace of Augsburg (1555). But I wonder if we can really separate the concepts of church and state during the early modern period, and whether the two apparent poles were not so blurred and indistinct during these centuries as to make the entire division almost fictional: Luther's 'Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms' makes it clear that God has provided for man in both the temporal and spiritual realms. In the temporal kingdom, man is subject to the sword in a society quite often based on force and fear, where public morality might even be found to be anti-Christian. God wants order imposed on Creation: this was His first recorded act, and even if this leads to a decimated Church and a defeatist, overly-tolerant attitude to unjust social structures, any order is better than none at all. This was Karl Barth's point in his famous denunciation of the Lutheran churches in 1939 for their failure to oppose Hitler.

Even an apparent formal separation of Church and State does not always free the state from religion: the Lutheran consistory (replacing as it did the Catholic ecclesiastical courts) was in theory the place where the two elements of Church and State met, where lawyers and divines discussed church affairs. In reality, very soon the prince had completely usurped control in these bodies, exercising as he did the deposed bishop's power to make appointments to them, packing the consistory with his own men. By the seventeenth century, religion needed to be freed from the state, not the other way around. In England, relations between Church and State were completely confused: the monarch was also the head of the Church, so to reject his religion was in a very real sense to reject the king

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3   For an overview, see S.W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews,* 2nd ed., New York 1969, xiv, 147-223, esp. 149-66; and J.I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750,* Oxford 1985.

4   See generally, D.S. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-Century England,* Leiden 1988, 51-2.

himself. Religious disloyalty implied political disloyalty by definition: a religious non-conformist was half a political traitor.

England had a state church, but also a church state, in that only Anglicans could elect members to Parliament and stand themselves, or hold civil office and participate in the government of their country with full political rights. The division between Church and Chapel is one which began in the early modern period and continues until our own time. Therefore even to speak in terms of a division between church and state in the early modern period is to encourage historical anachronism, and to give us the illusion of certain political rulers who supposedly recognized the distinctiveness of religious authority.

It certainly is true, however, that we sometimes encounter the latitudinarian case, stressing common doctrines and hoping for conversion by means of gentle persuasion. This was the point of the Apostle Paul: 'how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' (Romans 10:14). The existence of the latitudinarian argument is the most convincing evidence for what historians like to call 'religious toleration'. I would suggest, however, that this argument instead gives us the tool towards redefining the term 'religious toleration' itself.

Look at the titles of modern books on the subject, and then look at their early modern equivalents: where W.K. Jordan writes four volumes in the 1930s on *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*,[5] Henry Robinson 300 years earlier calls his *Liberty of Conscience*.[6] Herbert Butterfield in 1977 looks for 'Toleration in Early Modern Times',[7] while Leonard Busher in 1646 searches for *Religions Peace*.[8] The difference in terminology is more than semantic.[9]

Religion in the early modern period was too important a matter to be left to indifference: our more theological champions of the latitudinarian argument were not talking about religious toleration, but about something else: church unity, which is not quite the same thing. The division among the godly Protestant churches of Europe tormented a deeply religious man like Cromwell even more than the division among the working classes upsets the British Labour Party. As Cromwell wrote in 1648: 'I profess to thee I desire it in my heart, I have prayed for it, I have waited for the day to see union and right understanding between the godly people (Scots, English, Jews, Gentiles, Presbyterians, Independents,

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5   London 1932-1940.
6   London 1643.
7   *J.Hist.Ideas*, xxxviii, 1977, 573-84.
8   London 1646.
9   For some recent works, see O.P. Grell and B. Scribner (edd.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, Cambridge 1996; C. Berkvens-Stevelinck, J. Israel and G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes (edd.), *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, Leiden 1997.

Anabaptists, and all)'.[10] John Dury, Cromwell's unofficial ambassador on the Continent during the 1650s, spent years trying to draw up a document which might serve to unify the 'godly party' in Europe, but as soon as he would patch up a compromise with one splinter church, another sect would object to some secondary article in the revised agreement, and off he would go again, back to Zurich or Amsterdam.[11]

Cromwell himself had bigger plans, and connived at the readmission of the Jews to England in the hope of achieving their union with the godly English representatives of Christianity.[12] He and his agents also sought to make contact with the Karaites in eastern Europe, perceiving them as 'Protestant' Jews who based their faith on the Bible alone, unlike the 'Roman Catholic' Jews whose religion rested on the Hebrew equivalent of Church law, the Talmud. The hope was that the conversion of the Karaites to Protestantism would be the signal for the rest of the House of Israel to follow suit. Even the Jews may have had their plans for unity with certain radical Christian sects, if Richard Popkin is right in his understanding of the activities of Rabbi Nathan Shapira of Jerusalem. Furthermore, Spinoza (excommunicated 27 July 1656) did spend a good deal of his time in Quaker circles [1656-60], translating their works into Hebrew and discussing God: his first publication, in fact, was a Hebrew translation of a Quaker tract.[13]

For the fact of the matter is that any defenders of religious toleration (as opposed to church unity) that might be found in early modern Europe (if such did exist) would be very seriously out of step with even the most enlightened of European intellectuals and politicians. Church unity was a good thing, while religious toleration was something else, and was most certainly undesirable. As Alexander Ross, that great cataloguer of religions, put it in 1664, 'Diversity of *Religions* beget envy, malice, seditions, factions, rebellions, contempt of Superiours, treacheries, innovations, disobedience, and many more mischiefs, which pull down the heavy judgements of God upon that State or Kingdom, where

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10   W. C. Abbott, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell,* Cambridge, USA 1937-1947, i, 677.

11   Generally, see B. Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate', *Stud.Ch.Hist.*, xxi, 1984, 199-233.

12   See generally, D.S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655,* Oxford 1982; and idem, *The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850,* Oxford 1994.

13   R.H. Popkin, 'Spinoza, the Quakers and the Millenarians, 1656-1658', *Manuscrito* vi, 1982, 113-33; idem, 'Spinoza's Relations with the Quakers in Amsterdam', *Quaker History* lxxiii, 1984, 14-28; idem, 'Spinoza and Samuel Fisher', *Philosophia* xv, 1985, 219-36; *Spinoza's Earliest Publication?*, idem and M.A. Singer (ed.), Assen/Maastricht 1987.

contrary *Religions* are allowed'.[14] Even Roger Williams, famous champion of religious liberty, admitted that it was only *'State-necessity'* that compelled the States of *Holland* to a prudent permission of different Consciences, which ordinarily would not have occurred.[15] Williams so despaired of his fellow Christians that he eventually became a sort of religious hermit, the founder and sole member of a one-man church in Rhode Island, the asymptotic end point of religious diversity. Those foreign states which did permit a plurality of religions suffered from particular curses in retribution: France laboured under an arbitrary government; Holland was in the grip of dangerous democracy.

Understanding that the defenders of 'religious toleration' are really talking about church unity helps us to understand why groups like the Socinians were continuously persecuted. Those who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ could never be considered candidates for inclusion in any agreement ratifying church unity. Even the revised Agreement of the People in 1649, that Leveller document long enshrined as a cornerstone of religious toleration in England, supported the extension of liberty of conscience only to those 'who profess faith in God by Jesus Christ'. So too did William III's Toleration Act (1689) restrict toleration to Protestants alone. Its proper title was 'An Act for exempting their Majesties protestant subjects, dissenting from the church of England, from the penalties of certain laws', that is to say, exemption from penalties, without repealing a single penal law, and of course, providing that such dissenting Protestants took the new oaths of allegiance and subscribed to the old declaration against transubstantiation. Even the seventeenth clause of the Toleration Act expressly excluded from its benefits 'any person that shall deny in his preaching or writing the doctrine of the blessed Trinity'.[16]

The 550-600 Jews who lived in England during the Glorious Revolution found themselves caught in the trap set for the Unitarians/Socinians, and it was only after the House of Commons voted decisively (140:78) *not* to include them among the victims of the Blasphemy Act (1698), despite the fact that they denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, that the Anglo-Jewish community could once again feel secure.[17] William III's point of view is hardly surprising when we consider

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[14]   Alexander Ross, [*Pansebeia*]. *Or, A View of All Religions*, 4th ed., London 1664, 506.

[15]   Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody,* London 1652, sig. A4r.

[16]   The actual form of the oath made it quite clear who was to be excluded: 'I A.B. profess faith in God the father, and in Jesus Christ his eternal son, the true God, and in the holy spirit, one God blessed for evermore; and do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration'.

[17]   David S. Katz, 'The Jews of England and 1688', in O.P. Grell, J.I. Israel and N. Tyacke (edd.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, Oxford 1991, 217-49.

that even in the mid-nineteenth century in the USA, organizations like the National Reform Association, led by Supreme Court Justice William Strong from 1867 to 1873, initiated serious efforts on a national level to amend the Constitution of the United States to recognize the divinity of Christ and to enforce Sunday laws. William Dell, chaplain to the New Model Army, argued that 'unity is Christian, uniformity Antichristian': unitarians/Socinians did not fit into the first category: they were often placed in the second.[18]

Once we grasp that the so-called champions of religious toleration are actually talking about church unity and comprehension rather than complete freedom of worship for all sects and religions, then it seems to me that most of the general intellectual arguments in favour of religious toleration are revealed as polemical points rather than serious practical positions. Pico della Mirandola says that the truth can be found in different places, among the writings of the Arabs, the ideas of the Greeks, and the positions of the Jews, and he may have actually believed this. Most Protestants, however, found the truth in only one place, the Holy Scriptures, and denounced those who did not see the same shapes in the black and white letters on the page. The seemingly tolerationist and pacifist ideology of the Quakers after the Restoration was the fruit of an initial period of quite severe violence: if they had been allowed to seize power, their vague tolerationist sentiments would not have been at the forefront. In colonial Pennsylvania, Jews could not legally vote, hold public office, participate fully in business, or hold public worship.

Sometimes the pious patience displayed towards eccentric religious groups is a mere debating point. When the Anglican prays on Good Friday for the conversion of 'all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks', he is thinking rather of Baptists and Congregationalists than of more exotic non-conformists, and would compromise on toleration for them alone. The more extreme cases of non-belief simply make the point more strongly, and we should beware of such an imaginary parade of dissenters, especially because (as is often the case) 'dogs' are sandwiched in between the Turks and the Infidels.

The classic statement came from John Locke, who argued that

> neither Pagan nor Mahometan nor Jew should be excluded from the commonwealth because of his religion. The Gospel commands no such thing. The church, which judgeth not them that are without (I Corinthians 5:12-13), does not desire this. The commonwealth, which receives and accepts men as men provided they are honest, peaceful, and industrious, does not require it. Will you allow a Pagan to practise his trade in your country, but forbid him to pray to God or worship him? The Jews are permitted to have dwellings and private houses; why are they denied synagogues? Is their doctrine more false, their worship more abominable, or their combination more dangerous if they meet

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[18]   William Dell, *Several Sermons*, London 1652, 49.

in public rather than in their private houses? But if these things may be granted to Jews and Pagans, shall the condition of Christians in a Christian commonwealth be worse?[19]

As is readily seen, the Jews were introduced into these arguments along with Turks and Pagans as a sort of extreme case used to prove the validity of the general arguments. Locke was interested in non-conformists, not in Jews, who might nevertheless be the incidental beneficiaries of his tolerationalist point of view. The entire structure of the argument must be kept in mind before attributing genuine religious toleration in the period when the concept was still largely alien.

All that being said, however, it is only fair to say that the situation does change somewhat at the very end of our period, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, although it is clear that religious toleration is often used as a stick with which to beat the Established Church. We should look, for example, at John Toland (1670-1722), the Irish Deist, in his anonymous analysis of the reasons for naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland, 'Containing also, A Defence of the *Jews* against All vulgar Prejudices in all Countries'. In many ways this is a curious work, published at the end of 1714, probably in November. Apart from anything else, only two copies survive, which may or may not indicate a smaller than average circulation.[20] Toland's motives in writing the

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19   John Locke, *A Letter on Toleration*, R. Klibansky and J.W. Gough (ed. and trans.), Oxford 1968, 144-5.

20   [John Toland], *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland, On the same foot with all other Nations*, London 1714. It must have been published between 18 Oct. 1714 and 1 Dec. 1714, because a reply appeared at that time: [Anon.], *Confutation of the Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews,* London 1715. Cf. *The Monthly Catalogue* i, 1714, #VIII, 53. The two copies are at the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City; and Trinity College Dublin. A repr. can be found in P. Radin (ed.), *Pamphlets Relating to Jews in England in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, San Francisco, California State Library, Sutro Branch 1939: occ. paper, Eng. ser. #3. Generally, see G. Carabelli, *Tolandiana* Florence 1975, 188-9. S. Ettinger, 'Jews and Judaism as seen by the English Deists of the 18th Century' [Hebrew], *Zion* xxix, 1964, 182-207, argues that, apart from Toland, the Deists' conception of Jews and Judaism was so negative that we ought to see them as the link between ancient and classical anti-Judaism and modern anti-semitism. See also M. Wiener, 'John Toland and Judaism', *Heb. Union Coll. Ann.* xvi, 1941, 215-42 and I.E. Barzilay, 'John Toland's Borrowings from Simone Luzzatto', *Jew. Soc. Stud.* xxxi, 1969, 75-81, who argues that many of the ideas in Toland's work appeared in Luzzatto's Italian book published in 1638. See also F.E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism Through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, Mass. 1992); and his earlier study, 'Israel and the Enlightenment', *Daedalus,* 1982, 33-52, repr. in his *The Changing of the Gods*, London 1983, 105-34.

work are in themselves unclear. He had been in favour of the measure passed in 1709 which provided for the naturalization of foreign Protestants, and although this was repealed the following year, Toland was in a sense strengthening his case by exploiting the extreme example of the Jews. Nevertheless, Toland's quite detailed defence of the Jews and his use of Simone Luzzatto's *Discorso circa il stato de gl'Hebrei*, a Jewish apologetic work published at Venice in 1638, raises his own interest to a quite different order. Indeed, according to Toland himself, he planned 'in convenient time [to] publish the translation'. So it appears that Toland's interest in the Jews was genuine and not designed to fuel some other Deistic argument, nor to attack indirectly the validity of Christian revelation.[21]

Toland opens his plea with an address to the bishops and archbishops of Great Britain, noting that 'as by your Learning you further know how considerable a part of the *British* inhabitants are the undoubted offspring of the *Jews* (to which the old *Irish* can lay no claim)', and praying that 'as you are the advocates of the *Jews* at the Throne of Heaven, so you will be their friends and protectors in the *Brittish* Parliament.' Toland then proceeded to attack the question from every possible angle, religious, economic and social alike. Toland noted that Jews would never become embroiled in disputes between Protestant churches, being indifferent to such questions; that 'their having no Country of their own, to which they might retire, after having got Estates here', they would not drain England of her wealth; and that they would serve as brokers, bringing further trade and commerce to England. Toland explained that it was force of law and circumstance that prompted the Jews to turn to money-lending and other financial expedients: with freedom and security, he wrote, 'I doubt not, but they'll insensibly betake themselves to Building, Farming, and all sorts of Improvement like other people'. They might even become soldiers, as they were in ancient times, although Toland mused that if they joined the navy, there 'must indeed be an intermixture of other seamen, by reason of their *Sabbath*'. Toland rejected completely the notion of racial characteristics adhering to the Jews, especially the claim that Jews emitted a certain smell that even baptism could not wash away.[22]

Toland also provided a short history of the Jews in England, dwelling on their misfortunes under the Norman kings, and reminding his readers that after they were readmitted during Cromwell's reign, under King Charles II 'they were conniv'd at and tolerated, but not authoriz'd by Charter or Act of Parliament: nor

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21   Nevertheless, like the other Deists, Toland's views about the Jewish religion were as critical as his views about Christianity, and like most Christians, he saw the Talmud as a collection of nonsense. Toland also published a translation of La Crequiniere, *Agreement of the customs of the East-Indians, with those of the Jews,* London 1705.

22   Toland, *Reasons*, sig. A4v; 10-17, 19.

are they on any other terms than permission to this day, tho they have deserv'd much better by their obedience and affection to the Government, towards the support of which, their purses have been always open'. In Toland's eyes, the banishment of the Jews from England in 1290 was no less heinous than the expulsion of the Jews from Spain: 'they were both equally against the common good'.[23] Toland even advances a theory that a 'great number of 'em fled to Scotland, which is the reason so many in that part of the Island, have such a remarkable Aversion to pork and black-puddings to this day, not to insist on some other resemblances easily observable'. So pleased were the Jews to be readmitted into England, Toland claims, that they 'made extraordinary rejoicings every where, observing it as a sort of new AEra, keeping ever since an annual feast in commemoration of such a blessing.'[24] 'In a word,' Toland stated, 'they ought to be so naturaliz'd in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, as, like the *Quakers*, to be incapacitated in nothing, but where they incapacitate themselves'.[25]

Toland's motives may still be a subject for debate, but the specific arguments which he advances nevertheless give the impression of having thought about the problem beyond any immediate polemical advantage. While falling short of being a plea for unrestricted religious toleration for Jews, Toland's arguments look forward to the day when a person's place of residence in this world could be at least as important as his domicile in the next.

Despite the equivocal evidence of Toland at the very end of our period, I would argue, then, for the expurgation of the term 'champions of religious toleration' from our early modern historical vocabulary, and its replacement with 'champions of church unity'. Failing to do this will render us victims of Whig history of the most vulgar variety. Our champions are revealed to have very tarnished armour, for once that church unity was achieved, they rarely hesitated before unleashing the full force of the temporal kingdom against those recalcitrants who did not fall into step. Look at modern signs even in the USA today, without an official religion. During the early and mid-1980s, serious attempts were made to alter the First Amendment of the Constitution to allow for organized prayer in the public schools. Successful efforts were made to implement equal access legislation that would require public schools in the USA to allow religious clubs to meet on school premises, thus dividing children along sectarian lines. Note the Supreme Court decisions which permitted exclusively Christian symbols to be displayed at public expense.

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23 *Op. cit.*, 28-38. Toland especially admired 'Our second Josephus, the reverend Mons. Banage' (p. 27).

24 *Op. cit.*, 37-8. On this, Toland notes that he has 'a very handsom Poem that was penn'd on this subject by *Barrios*', called 'Epistle to *Kahal-Kados* (that is, the Holy Church) at *London*'.

25 *Op. cit.*, 45.

In the early modern period (and in some places, even in our own time) toleration in the generally accepted sense was only a *temporary* means on the way to the final goal of *church unity*. One might declare *Unam Sanctam* as much in the seventeenth century as in the fourteenth, but there is nothing so permanent as temporary. In places where church unity was *not* achieved, such as England, religious toleration remained in force, awaiting the distant day when all other sects and religions voluntarily relinquish their authority to the queen ... or to the messiah.

I began with one nineteenth-century quotation, so I will end with another. This time it is from the great Thomas Babington Macaulay's *History of England*, passing judgement on the framers of William III's very limited Toleration Act, which as we have seen, gave religious toleration only to Protestants:

> All that can be said in their defence is this; that they removed a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice; that they put an end, at once and for ever, without one division in either House of Parliament, without one riot in the streets, with scarcely one audible murmur even from the classes most deeply tainted with bigotry, to a persecution which had raged during four generations, which had broken innumerable hearts, which had made innumerable firesides desolate, which had filled the prisons with men of whom the world was not worthy, which had driven thousands of those honest, diligent and godfearing yeomen and artisans, who are the true strength of a nation, to seek a refuge beyond the ocean among the wigwams of red Indians and the lairs of panthers. Such a defence, however weak it may appear to some shallow speculators, will probably be thought complete by statesmen.[26]

Who are we to say that Macaulay was wrong?

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[26]   Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England*, Everyman ed., London 1906, ii. 446.