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Tolerance and Religious Pluralism in Bayle

Abstract

For the philosopher of Rotterdam, religious coercion has two essential sources of illegitimacy: the linking of religious and ecclesiastical belief and the use of politics for religious purposes. Bayle responds to it, with his doctrine of freedom of conscience, on one hand and by means of the essential distinction between voluntary religious affiliation and political obligation, on the other hand. From my perspective, his doctrine of tolerance does not involve an atheist state, nor does it mean the rejection of the presence of religion in the public space or its displacement to the intimate sphere of the conscience. This paper proposes a reading of Baylean tolerance as a political doctrine that allows the articulation between freedom of conscience (individual), minority confessions (private associations), and official religion (established church). Thus, the Baylean theoretical model could be considered a proposal to provide a normative form to the practice of toleration present in the 17th-century Netherlands.

Keywords.

Pierre Bayle, tolerance, religious pluralism, freedom of conscience, Enlightenment

1. Introduction

Baylean tolerance is one of the most widely discussed aspects among specialists on the philosopher of Rotterdam, it being the subject that makes it possible to situate Bayle as one of the fathers of the Enlightenment. However, for Elisabeth Labrousse, freedom of conscience constitutes the essential nucleus of Bayle's doctrine, and tolerance is nothing more than its corollary. This freedom of conscience would be an extension and subjectivization of theses belonging to the Protestant tradition and so, according to this historian, Bayle "plus encore qu'entre Montaigne et Voltaire, c'est entre Calvin et Rousseau qu'il faut le placer." [1] However, despite being from a Protestant family, Bayle's relationship with his original religious community is marked by duality. Although he shows a strong solidarity with the exiles, victims of the French persecutions, he also ferociously criticizes both their ecclesiastical representatives and the theological doctrines defended by his fellow believers. We must not forget that, even if he begins his criticism of religion with Catholicism, he ends up including his own Protestant tradition. This is the reason that authors such as Gianluca Mori hold that there is a clear difference between Bayle's writings before and after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. According to this idea, the *Avis aux réfugiés* (1690) is the text in which Bayle offered his definitive doctrine, which is none other than the absolute incompatibility between tolerance and religion, according to Mori. In this sense, Jonathan Israel makes Bayle one of the fundamental authors of his radical Enlightenment, along with Spinoza, insofar as he understands Baylean tolerance to be a radical criticism of the link between morality and religion, which makes it possible for atheists and non-believers to benefit from it. In this same direction, Jean-Michel Gros maintains that individuals (not churches) are the only titleholders of the fundamental freedom of conscience, which can only be guaranteed in a secular state. For Walter Rex, while

[1] Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle Hétérodoxie et rigorisme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), 609-10.

Bayle, in his early writings, reinforces the idea of a universal ethics as the absolute criterion which makes it difficult to justify any religious violence (as the moral mandates of the Gospels coincide with those of the conscience), in his late writings, he has no option but to relativize this objective criterion in light of what he asserts regarding erroneous conscience. Thus, Bayle must pay the consequences of the defense of his doctrine and acknowledge that those who persecute others in the name of religion do so because their consciences indicate that this is what is right. The only way out is fideism, *faute de mieux.* For his part, John Christian Laursen translates the epistemological paradox Rex refers to into legal concepts: in Roman law, proof of deceitful intention *–dolus* or *mens rea–* is required to condemn the accused; if this cannot be proven, as Bayle holds in his doctrine of erroneous conscience, the inevitable consequence would be to exonerate them from all blame.[2] Other scholars such as Michael Hickson asserts that the refutations of theodicy in the *Dictionnaire* and his defense of tolerance should be linked, leading him to the opinion that Bayle's doctrine suffers no rupture at all, but that there is, rather, a clear continuity when we consider the concept that includes both of these issues: the problem of evil.[3]

I will defend in this paper that, in his doctrine of tolerance, Bayle proposed the dissociation of political legitimacy and religion, and he based this dissociation on the difference that he considered exists between the *obligatoriness* of the political link and the *voluntariness* involved in any religious affiliation. This consideration does not involve relocating religion to the intimacy of peoples' consciences, so much as locating religious confessions in the domestic or private associational sphere. Nor does it involve, *per se*, the appearance or defense of a secular state, as it is compatible with a state that adopts an official religion, as long as it is tolerant of confessional minorities, as we shall see. For my purposes, I will distinguish between a confessional state (State Church) and a state with an established church (with religious pluralism). I use the first concept to describe regimes that impose a specific religious faith on the population as a whole (the enforcement of religious uniformity), while the second concept describes systems in which an official, acknowledged religion exists (given privileges by the State), but there is no obligation for all of the inhabitants to adopt this religion.[4] Also, I consider that tolerance and freedom of conscience are not interchangeable doctrines.[5] Because of this, I hold that religious coercion has two sources of illegitimacy for Bayle, which he combats independently. He responds to ecclesiological-religious coercion with his doctrine of the freedom of conscience (invincible erroneous conscience), which provides the foundation for the voluntariness of religious association. Political-religious coercion is refuted using the distinction between the voluntariness of religious

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[2] John. C. Laursen," The necessity of conscience and the conscientious persecutor: The paradox of liberty and necessity in Bayle's theory of Toleration" in *Dal necessario al possibile. Determinismo et libertà nel pensiero anlglo-olandese del XVII secolo,* ed. Laura Simonutti (Milan: Angeli, 2001), 211-229.

[3] Walter Rex, *Essays on Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy* (Nijhoff: The Hague, 1965), 85; Gianluca Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 315; Michael W. Hickson, "Theodicy and Toleration in Bayle's Dictionary" *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 51/1 (2013): 49–73; Jean-Marie Gros, "Bayle: de la tolérance à la liberté de conscience" in *Les fondements philosophiques de la tolérance en France et en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: PUF, 2002), 295-311; Jonathan Israel, "Locke, Bayle and Spinoza: A Contest of Three Tolerations Doctrines", *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 146 ff.

[4] In a similar sense: M.E.H.N. Mout, "Limits and Debates: A Comparative View of Dutch Toleration in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries" in *The emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, eds. C. Berkevens-Stevelinck, J. Israel, G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes (Leyden: Brill, 1997), 37-48.

[5] Antony McKenna "Pierre Bayle: free thought and freedom of conscience", *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 14/1 (2012): 85-100; Fernando Bahr, "John Locke y Pierre Bayle: Sobre la libertad de conciencia", *Tópicos* 12 (2004): 43-64.

affiliation and the obligatoriness of political belonging, which is the basis of his doctrine of tolerance and which will occupy my attention in this article. To my way of thinking, Bayle proposes this distinction in order to avoid confusing the ties that unite the political community with the nexus that articulates the faithful in a religious community.

What I propose in this paper is an interpretation of Baylean tolerance as a political doctrine that allows the articulation between freedom of conscience (individual), minority religious confessions (as private associations), and public religion (acknowledged as official): a tolerant state with an established church. In this sense, the Bayle's doctrine of tolerance could be considered as a normative proposal of the practice of toleration present in the Netherlands in the 17th century, more than as a consequence of his ontology or his religious postulates.

2. The link between politics and orthodoxy as a source of religious violence

Bayle first approached the discussion of the disastrous political influence of religion in the *Critique Générale* of 1682, written as a response to the *Histoire du calvinisme* by the Jesuit Louis Maimbourg, in which Maimbourg defines the Calvinist tradition as seditious, violent, and heretical. According to the Jesuit, Calvinists commit, once again, many of the errors that have been purged by the Church throughout the centuries in its struggle against heresy. According to Bayle, however, having a different faith is not what incites people to violence; what leads directly to civil war is the practice of forced conversion that is so widely extended among Catholics. The same arguments are repeated in *La France toute catholique* (1684), where he holds that violence is inscribed at the very heart of the positive religions, based on their universalistic and proselytizing aspirations.[6] While it is true that throughout this book Bayle's harsh accusations are directed explicitly at the Catholic Church, described as a pillar of violence and deceit, the problem is more general: it is not the diversity of beliefs or heterodoxy that creates problems for the State, but rather clericalism, understood as the influence granted to positive religions and their leaders over the public sphere.[7] In order to keep the peace and defend his subjects, the king must be taught not to let himself be taken in by the churches and he must be shown that the call to forced conversion is not an evangelical mandate but rather a sectarian confessional interpretation. We must not fail to consider that, in his account, Bayle insists strongly on

[6] Bayle's texts are cited following the electronic edition of his complete works published by Garnier, following the *Oeuvres diverses de Mr Pierre Bayle* (La Haye, 1727–1731), 4 vol. edition. These works are cited using the initials of the work, followed by the volume in which it is found in the Oeuvres diverses (OD), and the page. CG: *Critique générale de l'Histoire du calvinisme de M. Maimbourg* (1682); PD: *Pensées diverses écrites à un Docteur de Sorbonne, à l'occasion de la comète* (1683); NRL: *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* (1684–1687); NLCG: *Nouvelles lettres de l'auteur de la Critique générale de l'Histoire du Calvinisme* (1685); FC: *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique* (1686); CP: *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ* (1686); Supplément*: Supplément au Commentaire Philosophique* (1688); *Réponse: Réponse d'un nouveau converti* (1689); Avis*: Avis aux Réfugiés* (1690); APD: *Adition aux Pensées diverses sur les Cometes* (1694); Réponse: *Réponse aux question d'un Provincial* (1703–1707). *The Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (DHC) is cited following the fifth edition published in 1740 by P. Brunel in Amsterdam, Leyde, the Hague, Utrecht; 4 vols. Some recent English editions: *Pierre Bayle. Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, ed. Michael Hickson (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016); "Reply of a New Convert", ed. John C. Laursen, *History of European Ideas* (2017): 1-27; "The Condition of Wholly Catholic France", eds. John C. Laursen and Charlotte Stanley, *History of European Ideas* 40 (2014): 312-59.

[7] FC, OD II 338.

exonerating Louis XIV of the consequences of his religious politics, to the point of describing the monarch as one more victim of the perfidy of the clergy.[8] The clergy are solely responsible for the massacres that devastated Europe.[9]

Months later, when he wrote the *Commentaire philosophique*, his accusations would be directed at Christianity in general. Bayle was no longer interested in discussing the greater or lesser consequences that the defense of the persecution of heretics leads to (the number of those affected by one group or another); rather, he moved his criticism over to the essence of religious coercion. The Augustinian principles of the obligation of the faithful and, therefore, of sovereigns, to force their fellow men to adopt a specific creed is based on the conviction that religious truth can be known in an objective way. However, according to Bayle, neither the Protestant church nor the Catholic Church have access to this truth: neither the path of examination, nor that of authority, allow us to know God's will in an indisputable fashion. And this statement covers both private people and uneducated people, and the clergy in general. The universality of the biases –our dependence on education, temperament, the passions– means that we are incapable of knowing the objective truth and that, therefore, we should change the focus of attention to the intention that any belief assumes. In effect, if we are only in a condition to know that which is true for us, putative truths,[10] what is really relevant should be the good or bad faith with which one believes. This is because what God requires is to respect the truth, *if we know it*, as it is absolutely impossible to act according to a truth that we do not know, or to stop doing so when error takes on the shape of truth in the eyes of our conscience.[11] Thus, invincible erroneous conscience is equally valid and has the same rights as supposedly accurate conscience, as what must be taken into account is the formal obligation to follow our consciences and not the material content to which they are applied.[12]

But then, what should be done with the intolerant? The doctrine of erroneous conscience leads Bayle to have to accept that, when the error is undefeatable, even those who defend religious coercion have the right to live according to their belief, which would make the case in favour of coercion. However, there is one way out and that is to separate religious belief and its public implantation. In this way, we leave the sphere of the doctrine of freedom of conscience and we enter the space of the theoretical and practical justification (based on the consequences) of the union of political obligation and religious affiliation. And so now we can ask ourselves, must they be indissolubly linked? I believe that when he argued about the rights of intolerant people (based on erroneous conscience) Bayle did not leave us with a paradox but rather indicates that the solution must come from the field of ecclesiology and theology as we move into political discussion. The difference between his analyses of 1686 and 1689 allows us to understand that the theological-political discussion came at two well-differentiated times in his writings: first, he carried out his vindication of the freedom of individual conscience, articulated against the religious monopoly of the churches. Second, he began to unlink religion

[8] FC, OD II 343.
[9] FC OD II, 351. Bayle did not only include here the clergy preaching to the flock, but also the priests who advise kings and princes. I am grateful to J.C. Laursen for highlighting this point.
[10] CP II-X, OD II 441.
[11] NLCG I, Lettre IX, OD II 2I9.
[12] CP I-V, OD II 379. See, John Kilcullen, "Bayle on the rights of conscience" in *Essays on Arnauld, Bayle, and Toleration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 54-105; Cristina Pitassi, "Religious freedom and strength of belief in Bayle", *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 14/1 (2012): 56-69; Antony McKenna, "Pierre Bayle: free thought and freedom of conscience", *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 14/1 (2012): 85-100; John C. Laursen, "The necessity of conscience", 211–228; M. García-Alonso, "Persian theology and the *Checkmate* of Christian theology: Bayle and the problem of evil" in *Visions of Persia in the Age of Enlightenment*, W. Mannies, J. C. Laursen y C. Masroori (eds), *Oxford Studies in the Enlightenment,* 2019 (forthcoming).

and politics by revising the public status of religious confessions. Both times can be articulated around two quite different historical events, as we know: the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and the Glorious Revolution (1688).

This is why, in the *Réponse d'un nouveau converti* of 1689, we can read that the debate focuses on the problem of sedition: "Ecrits séditieux ont été si souvent brûlez ici par la main du bourreau, et de ne vous servir d'autre principe que du leur, c'est qu'il n'y a point d'autre Souverain légitime que celui qui est orthodoxe."[13] In other words, it is the confusion between political obligation and religious affiliation that is at the root of the problem of Christian intolerance. The religion becomes good merely because it is officially recognized by the sovereign, not because it is intrinsically good, and any minority denomination becomes, for the same reason, seditious.[14] For the philosopher of Rotterdam, however, the situation of requiring the sovereign to uphold, simultaneously, his duties regarding civil peace and his obligations to orthodoxy, involving the persecution of supposed heretics, should be avoided.

> Il y a tel sentiment qui convient aux Souverains entant qu'ils sont hommes, et il y a tel autre sentiment qui leur convient entant qu'ils dominent. S'ils sont zélez pour la gloire de leur Etat, c'est entant que Souverains: s'ils sont zélez pour leur Religion, c'est entant qu'hommes, et ils peuvent même entant que Princes exercer ce zèle, mais c'est toûjours saufs les intérêts temporels de leur souveraineté (RQP II CXXI OD III 745).

To my mind, this assertion in favour of the separation between politics and religion involves the essential difference between the connection that is required of the individual in the two spaces: an obligatory connection in the case of politics, and a voluntary one in the case of religion. However, Mori considers Bayle's global criticism of religion throughout his work not only to involve separating political obligation from voluntary religious affiliation, but to only be coherent if it is understood from the position of a defence of a neutral or secular state.[15] In view of the problems of public order that are caused by calls to violence from religion, Mori believes it is logical to think that Bayle defended an atheist, secular, neutral state, in which the only reasonable option would be the defence of freedom of private conscience and a public sphere disconnected from any religious confessionalism. Or is there another possible interpretation that would link Baylean theory to the practice of his time, completely apart from the defence of an atheist state? This is what I shall now explore.

3. The distinction between political obligation and voluntary religious membership

In his edition of *Avis aux réfugiés*, Gianluca Mori points out that, even if Bayle passionately defends religious pluralism in the pages of the *Commentaire Philosophique* (CP II, 6, OD II 415), he absolutely rejects it years later[16], as can be seen in the *Addition aux pensées diverses*. Mori cites the following text to support his position: "et je ne sai si l'on auroit tort de soutenir que rien ne cause plus fréquemment les guerres civiles, et les révolutions d'Etat, que la diversité des Religions" (APD IV, OD III, 179). However, the text does not stop

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[13] Réponse, OD II 572.
[14] APD V, OD III 179.
[15] Gianluca Mori, "Introduction", *Avis aux réfugiés. Réponse d'un nouveau converti*, ed. Gianluca Mori (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), 56.
[16] Mori, "Introduction", 56. Also, Antony Mckenna. "Yearning for the homeland: Pierre Bayle and the Huguenot refugees", *Australian Journal of French Studies* XLIV (2007): 213- 226.

there, but continues and clarifies that what makes pluralism a problem is the defence of a State Church that is intolerant regarding the rest of the minority confessions:

> "Ce qu'il y a de vrai, c'est que chaque Souverain dans son païs regarde comme un ferme apui de sa puissance la Religion qu'il croit bonne, et qu'il autorise, mais qu'il ne tolere les autres que dans les cas de nécessité, et toûjours avec de grandes défiances" (APD IV, OD III, 179).

Similarly, in part IV of the *Reponse aux questions d'un Provincial*, published posthumously in 1707, Bayle holds that one can accept as without remedy and inevitable that confessional religion is the cause of problems in the public sphere and, at the same time, defend that tolerance and religious diversity could be useful from a political point of view.[17] It is true that two years earlier Bayle himself pointed out that, if it came in the end to imposing not one religion, but two officially acknowledged forms of worship, the downfall of the state would be equally inevitable. This is so, however, not due to the fact of confessional pluralism, but due to the connection between political obligation and affiliation to the confession of faith. What the sovereign needs in order to carry out his political task is not the acceptance of his creed (or of two creeds) but rather political loyalty, which, in Bayle's eyes, involves a double oath of fidelity: on one hand, it is necessary that the people promise obedience to his laws and, on the other, that they take an oath not to predicate sedition or, what amounts to the same thing, an oath of unconditional obedience to the sovereign[18]. This is why he considers it a barbarity to require the French kings to take an oath that forces them to renounce their promises to protect *all* their subjects, in favour of a clerical interpretation of politics that means that the king takes on a commitment to persecute Protestants. The confession of faith, whether it be a minority faith, or a faith acknowledged as public by the state, must be based on voluntary affiliation, and the sovereign can only demand political loyalty from his subjects; this is the basic norm for maintaining civil peace. This distinction, as we can see, does not require the removal of religion from the public sphere to the private sphere –much less its seclusion in one's *heart*– but rather implies the redefinition of the link between state and church, as religious affiliation goes from being required to being considered optional. I consider the Baylean doctrine of tolerance to refer to these political distinctions, and so it should not be confused with freedom of religious conscience. Freedom of conscience is indispensable for building a coherent civil tolerance because it justifies voluntary religious affiliation but at the same time tolerance is a political not a religious concept. In Bayle's words:

> C'est un Ministre Réfugié, nommé Mr. Huet. Il a déclaré rondement, qu'il ne parloit que de la *Tolérance Politique*, laissant les Sociniens pour ce qu'ils sont, et se gardant bien de se donner la peine de voir si on outre ou non leurs sentimens. Cette déclaration m'a bien plû; car autrement, on donne lieu de penser aux gens, que ceux qui écrivent pour le Tolérance, ne jugent pas que les erreurs, pour lesquelles ils la demandent, soient grieves: pensée qui peut convenir aux Partisans de la *Tolérance Ecclésiastique*; mais non de la *Tolérance Politique*, qui n'est que l'exemption des Loix Pénales. [19]

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[17] RQP IV1, OD III 1011.

[18] *Supplément* XXXI, OD II 560.

[19] Lettre à Mr Constant, 16/26 Juillet 1690 (Lettre CII, OD IV, 64I). *Correspondance de Pierre Bayle*, ed. Élisabeth Labrousse, Antony McKenna, Laurence Bergon, Hubert Bost, Wiep van Bunge, Edward James, Annie Leroux, Maria-Cristina Pitassi, Bruno Roche, Caroline Verdier, Fabienne Vial-Bonacci, and Ruth Whelan (Oxford: Voltaire Fondation, 1999–2017), 12 vols. Partially available online: http://bayle-correspondance.univ-st-etienne.fr/?lang=fr (accessed January 2019)

In his works, Bayle discusses at least three models of policy that could articulate this theoretical proposal: the toleration introduced in France with the Edict of Nantes in the reign of Henry IV, the doctrine of his mentor, Paets, and the religious policy of King James II of England. All are real examples, while being, at the same time, failures. The interest is how Bayle analyses those failures, given that he devotes many pages in his works to historical reconstruction and study of this models if we understand the *France toute Catholique* and the *Commentaire Philosophique* as his response to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by the Catholic king Louis XIV; and the *Réponse* and the *Avis aux réfugiés* as his response to the overthrow of the Catholic king James II by the Protestant William of Orange.

3.1. Models of religious policy

According to Bayle, one of the architects of the political articulation between official religion and confessional communities was Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital (1506-1573). In the article devoted to this chancellor in the *Dictionnaire*, he says that he was one of the best men of his time; Bayle indicates also that the chancellor is the hand behind the Edict of tolerance (*Edit de Janvier* or *Saint Germain* of 1562), and an indispensable step toward reaching the 1598 Edict of Nantes, which acknowledges broad religious rights for the Huguenots. Champion at all costs of royal sovereignty but, at the same time, critical when the king's edicts were unjust, Bayle points out his honesty and rectitude and compares him to the great Roman senators and Greek politicians. He even feels that he might have been a crypto-Huguenot, as he internally (*au fond de l'âme*) approved Protestant doctrine. For Bayle, he is an example of how to articulate political and religious obligations, as he always preferred peace to the defence of orthodoxy.[20] The proof, according to Bayle, is that if l'Hôpital treated the Protestants favourably, it was not for religious reasons but for political ones, with only the good of the state in mind.[21] In effect, according to l'Hôpital, the solution to the French religious conflict required the modification of the crown's sphere of action: its responsibility would be to maintain public order, not the unity of the faith, because religion is one thing and public order (*police*) another. The king should not even get involved in religious disciplinary issues. Neither doctrine (confession of faith) nor religious discipline are issues that concern the monarch, with the exception of the public disorders that can derive from these doctrines: "Le Roy ne veut point que vous entriez en dispute quelle religion est la meilleure; car il n'est pas ici question de *constituenda religione, sed de constituenda republica*; et plusieurs peuvent être *cives qui non erunt christiani*; même l'excommunié ne laisse pas d'être citoyen."[22]

The second political-religious model discussed by Bayle is that of his mentor Adriaan Paets (1631-1686), who was part of the diplomatic delegation that travelled to London in 1685 to witness the coronation of James II (1633-1701), at which time he wrote his famous letter to Bayle, in which he committed to writing his position regarding the need to separate religion from politics and to establish a doctrine of tolerance, similar to what the English king was putting into practice.[23] Paets' defense of the religious policy of the Stuart king did not

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[20] DHC *Hôpital* S.

[21] DHC *Hôpital* H.

[22] *Harangue du Chancelier Michel de l'Hôpital*, IV, 2, Paris, Didot, 1829. Accesible on line: https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=8qpUAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=es&pg=GBS.PA17 (acces January 2019).

[23] Adriaan van Paets, *De nuperis Angliæ motibus Epistola:* http://bayle-correspondance.univ-st-etienne.fr/?Lettre-466-a&lang=fr (acces January 2019). About the Bayle's relationship to his republican and arminian patron see Jacques Solé "Les débuts de la collaboration entre Adriaan van Paets, protecteur de Bayle à Rotterdam et le gouvernement de Louis XIV (1679-80)" in *De l'Humanisme aux Lumiéres, Bayle et le protestantisme,* eds. Antony Mckenna, Cristina Pitassi, Ruth Whelan (Oxford: Voltaire Fondation, 1996), 477-

stop at mere theory; rather, together with his Republican allies, he refused to sign any kind of treaty that was based exclusively on religious motives and that sought to favour the alliance of the Netherlands with the Protestant States, to the detriment of the relations that the Netherlands had with the English king. However, the policy of William III –named head of state (*stadtholder*) after the assassination of the De Witt brothers in August 1672– was profoundly anti-Catholic and defended both the nullity of commercial treaties with Catholic countries (the prohibition on importing merchandise) and the military alliance with the Protestant German states, with the objective of preparing the invasion of England. In November 1688, the invasion of England began; William III had met with Pierre Jurieu, who at that moment became the prophet of the Glorious Revolution.[24] On December 18, William III became the new King of England, defender of the *true* (Protestant) religion. There is no author who better exemplifies Calvinist intolerance and the nemesis of Bayle's theological-political model than his former mentor Pierre Jurieu and his ecclesiastical policy:

> Il n'y a point de Païs au monde où l'on supporte plus mal-aisement qu'en celui-ci, que les Ministres, sortant de leur Sphere, se mêlent d'affaires d'Etat, se veuillent rendre nécessaires, et aient toûjours quelque Procès d'Hérésie, ou de Controverse, à discuter avec le tiers ou le quart: semence continuelle de partialitez dans les Familles, Consistoires, et Synodes. Je vous laisse à juger sur ce pied-là de l'approbation où Mr. Jurieu peut être ici. (Lettre CXVI, OD IV 653).[25]

The last model Bayle includes refers to the figure of James II and analyses what his overthrow involved, in political terms (sedition). The Glorious Revolution is the great event that marks the turning point in Bayle's theological-political thinking and allows us to understand the reasons behind this second phase: the swing from the ecclesiological-religious discussion (freedom of conscience) to the political discussion (tolerance). As Mori has denounced, historians tend to analyse the influence of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes on Bayle's work, but they underestimate the influence of the Glorious Revolution.[26] In fact, according to Bayle, James II, even though he openly professed the Catholic religion, did not attempt to force the Protestants to give up their faith, which makes him a defender of freedom of conscience.[27] However, it is not his defence of freedom of conscience that makes James II relevant in Bayle's eyes, but the fact that his reign was a trial by fire for Protestants' political loyalty. In a framework different from the French one of the religious wars, the Protestants had a new opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to their sovereign, to prove that they could respect their oath of political fidelity, without questioning it for religious motives, without making it depend on the monarch's orthodoxy.[28] We can imagine his reaction when he received the news that his fellow believers had overthrown the king for reasons that were, precisely, religious ones. The *Avis aux réfugiés* reflects his state of mind perfectly and his rejection of doctrines that justify sedition.

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94. Also, Bart Leeuwenburgh, "Pierre Bayle in Dutch Politics" in *Libertinage et philosophie au XVIIe siècle: Protestants, hérétiques, libertins* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires Saint-Étienne, 2004), 91-113; Wiep Van Bunge, "Bayle's Presence in the Dutch Republic" in *From Bayle to the Batavian Revolution. Essays on Philosophy in the Eigteenth-Century Dutch Republic,* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[24] About the ecclesiological policy of William III: cf. Israel, *Ducht Republic,* 645 y ff.

[25] *Lettre à Minutoli*, 26 Mars1691 (Lettre CXVI, OD IV 653). About the intellectual Bayle's relationship with Jurieu see, M. van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[26] G. Mori, "Politique et religion dans l'oeuvre de Pierre Bayle", in *Pierre Bayle et le politique*, ed. Xavier Daverat and Antony McKenna (Honoré Champion: Paris, 2014), 85.

[27] NRL XII, OD I, 293.

[28] NRL XII, OD I, 294.

As we have seen, Bayle's texts directly mention l'Hôpital, Paets, and James II. However, we might think that Bayle must also have been aware of the real practice of toleration in his host country. Because of this, his concrete proposal of a state that was tolerant toward religious minorities cannot be comprehended without taking into account existing practices. According to the thesis of historians Jo Spaans and Benjamin Kaplan, the practices and procedures of toleration in the Netherlands were managed by specific legal and practical means.[29] Although I use Spaans and Kaplan as a source, I am not dealing with the incubation of toleration as a practice in this article, but rather with Bayle's theoretical proposal, so I will provide nuance to this statement to apply it to our case, as follows: I understand Bayle's political tolerance as a normative proposal to the toleration practices which are, at the same time, inscribed in a doctrinal discussion about the relationship between religion and politics that goes beyond the context of the philosopher from Rotterdam, even if his doctrine is based on this context.

4. The practice of tolerance in the Netherlands[30]

It could be said that the origin of the Reformation in the Netherlands was a political act, not a religious one. Also, the confessionalisation of the provinces –understood as the formation of a cultural identity based on religion– was a long slow process that did not happen simultaneously with the conformity of the magistrates to Protestant political-ecclesiological doctrines.[31] In contrast to what happened in Calvin's Geneva,[32] where the process was also a political one, in the Netherlands the existence of an official Church (the Gomarist or the orthodox Calvinist church) did not mean a State Church. Indeed, the Calvinist Church was in charge of keeping watch over respect for orthodoxy and so had the authority to require the faithful to conform to the Confession of Faith and to the Dordrecht Synod, in order to reinforce orthodoxy and promote peace, all under the protection of the magistrates.[33] However, the control of this orthodoxy was not applied to non-Calvinists. Being a member of the religious community or not and adopting a specific confession of faith constituted a voluntary act, it was not a political mandate. Therefore, confessional diversity was a fact in the Netherlands in Bayle's times. For instance, in Haarlem religious minorities made up nearly 20% of the population, the calvinist religion nearly 40%, and the rest (almost half of the population) did not belong to any church.[34] We

[29] Jo Spaans, "Religious Policies in the Seventeenth-century Dutch Republic", in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (eds.), Cambridge 2002, p. 72-86. Also, Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by faith. Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in the Early Modern Europe,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2007.

[30] I want to thank Jo Spaans for her comments.

[31] Jörg Deventer, 'Confessionalisation': A useful theoretical concept for the study of religion, politics, and society in early modern East-Central Europe? *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 11:3 (2004): 403-425; Jo Spaans, "Catholicism and Resistance to the Reformation in the Netherlands", in *Reformation, Revolution and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555-1585*, eds. Philip Benedict, Guido Marnef, Henk van Nierop, Marc Venard (Amsterdam: Royal Anetherlands Academy, 1999), 149-163; Mout, "Limits and Debates", 37-48.

[32] M. García-Alonso, "Calvin and the Ecclesiastical Power of Jurisdiction", *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 10/2 (2008), p. 137–155; Idem, "Le pouvoir disciplinaire chez Calvin", *Renaissance et Réforme/Renaissance and Reformation*, 33 (2010), p. 29-49.

[33] *Déclaration de Rotterdam* in *"L'Affaire Bayle". La Bataille entre Pierre Byle et Pierre Jurieu devant le consistoire de l'Église wallone de Rotterdam*, eds. Antony McKenna and Hubert Bost (Lyon: Saint-Etienne, Institut Claude Longeon, 2006), 12.

[34] Joo Spaans, "Unity and diversity as a theme in Early Modern Dutch Religious History: an interpretation", *Studies in Church History* 32 (1996): 221- 234. Also, Israel, *Dutch Republic,* 637 ff. Also, James Tracy,

must not, however, conclude from these data that a majority of the population was atheist or tolerant. Not believing in a specific set of dogmas and not believing in God are quite different issues. We might think, rather, that these were undecided people who did not quite manage to grasp the subtle differences between the different confessions of faith, which could be irrelevant to the everyday citizen without substantive theological training.

In Bayle's times, therefore, the Netherlands followed the model of the state with an established church,[35] in the sense that the state had a public (Calvinist) religion to which it was not obligatory to belong and no one could be required to attend Calvinist services. This state was tolerant of religious minorities, not a pluriconfessional state, because there was only one politically acknowledged official religion. According to Spaans, the formula that made it possible to articulate the coexistence between the official religion and the religious minorities in the Netherlands had been found in Roman law: the *collegia illicita.*[36] In Roman law, the *collegia* were set up as associations that had official permission to carry out specific activities –for example, permits given to artisans and merchants to meet, organize, and regulate their practices– and that, later, evolved into the figure of *corpora*, created and regulated by the state. Theodor Mommsen, in his work *De collegiis et sodaliciis Romanorum* (1843), was the first to link these legal figures with religion's associations. Following in his steps, the founder of Christian archaeology, Giovanni De Rossi, defended the connection between the *collegia funeraticia* and the official (political) tolerance that Christian communities enjoyed in antiquity: he held that the Christians' ability to celebrate their own funerals had to involve the legal acknowledgement of their association. Some, however, indicate that it continue to be difficult to prove this association at a time in which Christianity demanded its exemption from common law.[37] This difficulty does not apply to Spaans's proposal, as her hypothesis does not attempt to link the Roman *collegia* and the Christian religion, but to show that the objective of the recovery of this institution in the 17th century was to create independently-regulated religious associations, whose public restriction was that they were directed exclusively toward worship, being forbidden to organize activities or acquire any possessions beyond the limits of this objective. Acknowledged as *collegia illicita*, these churches do not only hold a legal status (and can therefore buy property), but they are also easy to spot for the public. The Portughese Synagogue or the Lutheran Church at the Spui in Amsterdam were very visible buildings, impossible to mistake for a *schuilkerk*. These latter were clandestine churches, where the confessional minorities were allowed to have their liturgies in private, mainly in the homes of the most eminent or wealthy faithful.[38] One of the most famous in Amsterdam was the Catholic *Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder* (Our Lord in the Attic). Although these religious communities had no legal right to own property, they should nonetheless defray the expenses of their ministers, as well as maintaining their places of worship.

'Erasmus, Coornhert and the Acceptance of Religious Diversity in the Body Politic: A Low Countries Tradition?" in *The emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, 49-62.

[35] The Reformed Church had the monopoly of public religious life but was never legal established, though: Kaplan, *Divided by faith,* 178.

[36] Jo Spaans, "Religious Policies in the Seventeenth-century Dutch Republic", in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, eds, Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 72-86. *Auslauf* –go out of the city of residence to attend the worship– was a practical arrangement not a legal one: see Kaplan, *Divided by faith,* 161 ff.

[37] Jonathan S. Perry, *The Roman Collegia: The Modern Evolution of an Ancient Concept* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006), 42 ff.

[38] Kaplan, *Divided by faith,* p. 174 ff. Also, Steven Mullaney, Angela Vanhaelen, Josepht Ward, "Religion inside out. Dutch House Churches and the Making of Publics in the Dutch Republic" in *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, ed. Bromwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin (NY-London: Routledge, 2010), 25-36.

Also, the magistrates carried out social policies that obliged each church to take care of its own poor. The social elite were not very prone to encouraging the poor to form part of their religious community as this involved taking charge of their maintenance; they had to accept only a quota of poor people that would not put the community finances at risk. But what happened when the poor did not participate in their liturgical rites or had been excommunicated for religious reasons? Should the religious communities keep taking care of them? The magistrates are the ones who mediated in those conflicts, which continued to be, in essence, ecclesiastical. It was the economic elites that ended up carrying the greatest load in the management of these associations and in vigilance over their customs. It is not surprising that these elites had a special interest in not endangering their interests in the city and, therefore, worked to adapt their believers to the *status quo*. The more anonymous their moves and the less visible their habits and ceremonials, the more tolerance they got for the part of the Calvinists, who basically ignored them (tolerate them).[39]

Another tolerance-inspired formula was based on *comprehension*: admitting people with a variety of beliefs to membership in a single church. Comprehension did not involve though accepting the existence of multiple churches, i.e., *tolerance*. Hubert Duifhuis's church in Utrecht is an instance of the comprehension formula. All these practices did not imply that the religious privileges that the official religion held were eliminated: only Calvinists were authorized to publicly practice their religion, have properties and fund their priests. On the other hand, the public role of the religion added political privileges to religious prerogatives, as only the Calvinists could hold public offices. The Catholics were not only dispossessed of their monasteries and their churches, but they were prohibited from having any kind of political participation once the Netherlands became independent from Spain. Nevertheless, even though the new state created evident inequalities between the faithful of the official religion and the rest of the minorities tolerated, in the 17th century there was no massive conversion to the publicly acknowledged creed. And in practice, in order to hold a magistracy or public office, it was enough to be a sympathizer with the Reformed faith; it was not necessary to sign a confession of faith or the official creed. In other words, thanks to the creation of the legal figure of the sympathizer (*liefhebber*), the participation of non-Calvinists in politics was allowed.[40] The need to fill public offices with capable men was one of the motives that drove measures of this sort. Among the faithful of the new faith, there were not enough men with the capacity and training to take public offices, so they counted on all the qualified people to fill the places of secretaries, civil magistrates, professors, and even directors of orphanages. Similarly, mixed marriages between Catholic economic elites (excluded from politics for religious reasons) and Protestant families that occupied the most relevant magistracies were common.

I have previously asserted that the doctrine of tolerance designed by Bayle could be considered as a proposal to provide a normative form to the practices of toleration present in the Netherlands in the 17th century, a way to give them a theoretic frame. It is true that the fact that a legal form of religious association was articulated made the *de iure* acknowledgement of the *de facto* existing confessional diversity possible in the United Provinces and provided levels of religious freedom that were not at all usual in 17th century Europe.[41] However, it is important to notice that the tension between the philosophical theories of tolerance, on the one hand, and the religious policies of European states, on the other, never disappeared, as Bayle would have wanted. As Kaplan has showed for the majority of the population, religious toleration was a pragmatic move,

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[39] Jo Spaans, "Violent Dreams, Peaceful coexistence. On the Absence of Religious Violence in the Dutch Republic", *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 18 (2003): 149-166.

[40] Spaans, "Violent Dreams, Peaceful coexistence", 11.

[41] Nevertheless, while the States had an official religion, the communities were bi or multiconfessional: Kaplan, *Divided by faith,* p. 204 ff.

the acceptance of unpleasant realities, not a positive virtue that embraces diversity (doctrine of tolerance).[42] Nevertheless, as can be seen, the practice of toleration in the United Provinces during the 17th century fits the Baylean proposal fairly well. His criticism of clericalism did not involve the defence of a secular state but was compatible with a doctrine of tolerance that articulates public religion, confessional association (private but communal), and freedom of conscience (individual or domestic).[43] If this is the case, how should we understand the philosopher of Rotterdam's appeal to the Spinozistic king, the appeal upon which Mori and Gros build part of their argument in defence of a neutral, secular Baylean state?

5. The meaning of the Spinozistic king

> Effectivement si le Roi de France et tous ses autres Sujets n'avoient eu nulle Religion, ils se seroient peu souciez que les Huguenots en eussent une, pourvû qu'au reste ils les eussent vûs affectionnez à l'Etat, et parfaitement soûmis aux loix civiles (RQP III, 20 OD III 954).

It is well known that the philosophical function that Bayle uses the discussion of an atheist state for is, first of all, to bring out the essence of the socio-political connection, with the objective of unlinking this connection from religion and thus proving the legitimacy of political obligation independently of religious affiliation. But when we continue reading the text in which Bayle mentions the Spinozistic sovereign, we realize that the objective of the example is also to demonstrate that a fundamental norm of Christian theology, both Catholic and Protestant, is obedience to sovereigns *as long as* they are orthodox. This and none other is the justification for Christian sedition, as I mentioned earlier. Bayle puts the reason that explains his appeal to the Spinozistic king in the mouth of the Chinese, who are atheist rulers:

> Quelle raison avez-vous de dire que la soûmission des Chretiens aux ordres de notre Empereur est plus assûrée que celle de tous les autres Chinois? […] Nous avons en Europe beaucoup d'exemples de Rois attaquez par une partie du peuple, dépouillez de leur Souveraineté, chassez, décapitez, assassinez, le plus souvent pour des intérêts de Réligion. […] Cela nous fait juger, diroient les Chinois, que la Religion Chretienne est si ambiguë sur cet article, que la liberté qu'elle laisse aux hommes de dégrader les Souverains, n'est pas moins grande que celle dont on jouïssoit anciennement dans Athenes, et dans Rome sous le Paganisme. (RQP III, 21, OD III 958-959)

In my view, these examples are brought in to show that a State Church is always a seedbed of sedition but, as we have seen, a state with an established or official church (with religious pluralism) is not a State Church, so these examples do not mean that Bayle defends the model of the atheist sovereign or secular state. What he does is to prove that there are historically concrete atheist societies whose mere existence demonstrates that there is no need to link the obedience due to the sovereign to affiliation with his religiosity. Atheist sovereigns do not fear to be overthrown or faced with sedition for religious reasons because their subjects' loyalty does not depend on the interpretation offered of their orthodoxy. As I have been saying: political obedience is the only kind of obedience that can be demanded of any member of a state, while affiliation with the established church creed (if it exists, which is not the case in an atheist state) is solely voluntary.

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[42] Ibid. p. 8.

[43] In the *Treaty of Osnabrück* §19 (1648) this three Bayle's demands are present: http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=4542 (accessed January 2019).

From my perspective, Bayle does not appeal only to philosophical examples to prove the validity of his theoretical principles. It is known that he used the biographies of Epicurus and Spinoza to challenge the doctrine of the necessary link between religious belief and moral behaviour and that, in the *Dictionnaire*, oriental examples are offered for many of the Spinozistic theses, examples that Bayle was familiar with from the *Description du Royaume de Siam* (1691) written by the French ambassador in Siam, Simon de la Loubère (DHC Spinoza X). In this same direction, the text of the French doctor François Bernier, *Mémoires du sieur Bernier sur l'empire du grand Mogol* (1670-1671), is used to show that Spinozistic doctrines about the soul of the world and the uniqueness of substance and its identity with God are abundantly widespread in the world (DHC Spinoza A). Similarly, travel books are full of accounts of societies without God that allow Bayle to analyse the political and moral functioning of an atheist state, laying the foundations for the discussion about the role of the sovereignty as the secular arm of the religious confessions. In this sense, China is the country to which Bayle devotes the most attention and it is omnipresent in the *Supplément*. It is true that he also refers to America and Africa, but only sporadically and never as repeatedly as he does to the Chinese example, which is the paradigm for analysing the theological problem of atheism and the political discussion of tolerance[44]. His information comes from the writings of Jesuit missionaries such as Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam des Pères Jesuites* (1686), and Charles Le Gobien, *Histoire de l'Edit de l'Empereur de la Chine* (1698).[45] Evidently, the fact that he quotes these authors does not mean that he accepts their evaluations of the country, its customs, and its politics. Thus, commenting on Le Gobien's statement that rates the Chinese edict of tolerance positively, the philosopher from Rotterdam points out that before they gave religious freedom in their territories, the Chinese must have been prudent enough to inform themselves about the Christian doctrines regarding forced conversion and sedition (DHC Milton O).[46] The decision of the Japanese –whose practices and customs Bayle is familiar with from the accounts of the *Journal des Sçavants* (1665-1792)– was wiser, as they excluded them in the name of political tolerance. In effect, in Japan multiple sects exist and the only ones that they do not accept are the Christian ones because, as Bayle said, of their political doctrines (DHC Japon E).

6. Conclusion

As I have tried to demonstrate, Baylean political tolerance does not imply an atheist state, as Mori holds. But in contrast to the thesis of Labrousse, even though the State does not *have* to be atheist, it certainly *can* be so. And this possibility does not refer solely to the order of what is conceivable –what could have been on the level of ideas but never took shape in reality– but rather refers to the sphere of history, as Bayle proves with multiple examples from China. This is an important nuance, as it means that the political community must not base its legitimacy on any religion at all and that, for the same reason, the only obligatory link that unites the subjects of any sovereignty is an exclusively political link. At the same time, I have asserted that Bayle's proposal does not imply a rejection of the presence of religion in the public space or its removal to the intimate sphere of the conscience, but that it means understanding that belonging to a religious community is voluntary, it should not be required for the State. The end sought by this principle would not be to unlink religion from the State, as there were still countries with an official religion that seemed good in the eyes of Bayle, as I have previously discussed. Rather, it serves two objectives. The first is a political objective, because unlinking political legitimacy and orthodoxy should serve to prevent sedition and contribute to civil peace. The second

[44] Sergio Zoli, "Pierre Bayle e la Cina", in *Studi francesi* 33 (1989), p. 467-472, p. 468.
[45] Juliette Charnley, *The influence of travel literature on the works of Pierre Bayle with particular reference to the dictionnaire historique et critique*, Durham theses, Durham University, 1990. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/6574 (accessed January 2019).
[46] Also, CP I, 5 OD II 378.

objective, no less important, is a religious one because, if religious affiliation is voluntary, this serves to prevent the appearance of the State Church, and should facilitate the worship practices of the minorities, organized as private associations.

For Bayle, respecting minorities' religious rights does not just mean defending freedom of conscience, that is, stating that they are allowed to believe in their *heart* (a place that is, at any rate, immune to all coercion because it is accessible only to God); it could involve authorizing semipublic worship. It is as important try to avoid making the confessional minorities worship illegally, as the Jewish *marranos* did in Spain or the Huguenots in France,[47] as it is to avoid religious coercion by the State. Both measures go against the clergy's monopoly on religious belief, evidently; both will be viable if they are upheld by a strong sovereignty, an inescapable condition for tolerance. In contrast to what Labrousse defends, I believe that freedom of conscience is the *conditio sine qua non* for establishing a community of people who profess a faith (that means, it is the reason for the voluntariness of religious association) and it is, therefore, indispensable for considering religious pluralism a positive virtue. But it is the indivisible sovereignty that constitutes the *conditio sine qua non* for tolerance, insofar as the political ruler is the only one who can (and should) demand loyalty from all of the inhabitants of the State.[48] Both processes are articulated as two different moments in his work but constitute a coherent framework. [49]

Nevertheless, saying that Bayle's proposal did not involve the defense of a secular or atheist state does not close off this path of interpretation to his contemporary readers or, later, to the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, who could well have understood his philosophy in a more radical way, as Jonathan Israel has documented in his works.[50] After all, the readings offered later about their ideas are as interesting as the original proposals of our great thinkers, as they show paths that the author could have taken but did not, because of an oversight, a flawed perception of the problem, a conscious ideological legitimation of the *status quo*, or simply because of personals political preferences. [51] Let us not mistake the further development of his ideas with the author's own proposal.

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[47] Calvin denounced this dissimulation as Nicodemism. See, Carlos Eire, "Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10/1 (1979): 45-70.

[48] Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle*, 536-37. Also, Jean Baubérot, "Tolérance, Liberté, Laïcité. Pierre Bayle et nous" in *Le Rayonnement de Bayle*, ed. Philippe de Robert (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010), 181-6. See, M. García-Alonso, «Bayle's political doctrine: a proposal to articulate tolerance and sovereignty", *History of European Ideas* (2016), p. 1-14.

[49] In a different sens, see: Rainer Forst, "Pierre Bayle's Reflexive Theory of Toleration", in *Toleration and its Limits*, ed. M.S. Williams and J. Waldron, (New York: New York UP, 2008), 78-113.

[50] Cf. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (2001); *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (2006) and *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (2011), edited by Oxford University Press. And, Idem, *A Revolution of the Mind*, *Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[51] John C. Laursen, "Baylean Liberalism: Tolerance Requires Nontolerance" in *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment*, ed. John C. Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 197-215

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