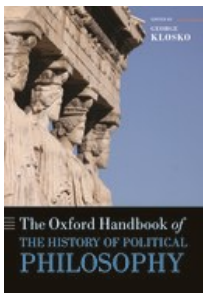

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CHAPTER

42 Religious Toleration

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Abstract

The fullest development of the concept of religious toleration in the West occurred in Christian Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The emergence and establishment of religious pluralism in modern societies, and most notably in the Western world, has been very largely the result of the evolution and gradual victory of the principle of religious toleration on a variety of grounds. Among the world's great monotheistic religions, Christianity has been the most intolerant. Early Christianity was intolerant of Judaism, from which it had to separate itself, and of ancient paganism, whose suppression it demanded. The New Testament recognized heresy as a danger to religious truth and the Christian communities. Heresy entailed the existence of its opposite, orthodoxy, which meant right thinking and true belief. Following World War II, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 named freedom of religion, conscience, and thought as basic human rights.

Keywords: Christianity, religious toleration, religious pluralism, Judaism, paganism, heresy, orthodoxy, freedom of religion, human rights

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THE fullest development of the concept of religious toleration in the West occurred in Christian Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, as the work of a line of Christian thinkers who were primarily occupied with the problem of toleration between differing Christian churches, sects, and individual believers and the relationship between the Christian state and religion.

Toleration, whether as a moral and intellectual attitude or as a practice, may extend to different domains and subjects, but in none has it been more significant and powerful than in religion. The emergence and establishment of religious pluralism in modern societies, and most notably in the Western world, has been very largely the result of the evolution and gradual victory of the principle of religious toleration on a variety of grounds. Historically, the importance of the development of religious toleration can hardly be overestimated not only in its effect upon religion but in its contribution to the formation of liberal polities and the achievement of freedom in realms other than religion such as freedom of thought in general.

The concept of religious toleration can be understood in two different but somewhat related ways. Some philosophers and political analysts prefer to conceive it restrictively to denote a policy of forbearance or indulgence according to which the adherents of a dominant or state religion permit, usually for reasons of political expediency, the existence of another and minority religion, despite their disapproval and rejection of the latter's teachings. From this point of view, toleration expresses a decision to coexist with and suffer the exercise of the faith that is tolerated. It is also implicit in such a situation that the regime or authority that grants the privilege of toleration to a dissident religious body has likewise the power to withdraw or cancel it. A second view of religious toleration identifies it more broadly with the gradual increase of freedom of religion in the direction of what has been called universal toleration—that is, the freedom of individuals to believe and worship in accord with their conscience without interference by the state. This freedom has often been characterized as liberty of conscience and has been considered by many people in
p. 690 recent times to be a natural ↳ or a human right. Today the concept of religious toleration is generally taken to mean religious freedom in its fullest sense rather than as a privilege granted under various limitations to a hitherto prohibited religious creed. It may be succinctly defined as the principle that society and the state should, as a matter of right, extend complete freedom of religious belief and expression to all their members and citizens irrespective of their faith, and should refrain from imposing any religious tests, doctrines, or form of worship or religious association upon them.

Among the world's great monotheistic religions, Christianity has been the most intolerant. Except for Christians and Jews, the peoples and nations of the Roman Empire were polytheistic. The religion of the Roman state required sacrifices to the Olympian gods and to the divine emperor, but, apart from these exceptions, Roman society adopted a policy of practical toleration that was hospitable to the existence of a variety of religious cults mainly of Eastern origin with large numbers of followers. Religious pluralism and toleration existed at a pragmatic level in the polytheistic Roman world and seem never to have been subjects of legal or philosophical debate. The intermittent outbreaks of persecution of Christians by the Roman government in the first three centuries of their existence were due principally to their refusal to participate in the idolatrous imperial cult and their rejection of Roman polytheism as a religion of demons. This persecution ceased following the embrace of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century. Under the latter and his imperial successors, the Christian Church and Roman state became closely joined. The Christian Roman Emperors took a dominant part in the rule of the Church, and Christianity during this period became the sole legal religion of the Roman Empire. From being a persecuted faith, it turned into a persecuting religion itself, supported by the Roman imperial government.

Christian intolerance was endorsed by many of the foremost Catholic thinkers and spiritual leaders of the patristic era and the Middle Ages. Early Christianity was intolerant of Judaism, from which it had to separate itself, and of ancient paganism, whose suppression it demanded. Medieval Christendom has been called a persecuting society because of the repression and violence it directed against heretics, Jews, and other stigmatized groups. Later, during the Protestant Reformation, which gave birth to new churches and sects, the foremost Protestant leaders did not hesitate to advocate the use of force to maintain religious orthodoxy and to silence both Catholics and sectarian dissenters from Protestant state churches. The fact that for many centuries Catholic and Protestant Christians of high standing rejected religious toleration between Christians, despite Jesus's preaching of non-violence and love of one's fellows, would be inexplicable had there not come into being from an early time in Christian history a widely accepted rationale and structure of argument in favor of coercion to enforce religious orthodoxy, unity, and conformity. This rationale constituted a Christian theory of persecution that remained dominant for centuries. Its main element was the concept and fear of heresy, which first appeared in the New Testament.

Hairesis, the Greek term from which the word "heresy" derives, commonly meant a choice of opinions and also referred without any negative connotation to the differing tenets of philosophical schools and sects. In
p. 691 the New Testament, however, the word ↳ acquired a pejorative meaning in some of the letters of the

apostles, where it referred to false opinions and theological errors propagated by wicked men who bred schism, disharmony, and division among Christians. Although the New Testament recognized heresy as a danger to religious truth and the Christian communities, it did not enjoin the forcible silencing or physical punishment of those who introduced heresies. Instead it recommended that such persons should be admonished and expelled from the religious community if they failed to heed these warnings.

Heresy entailed the existence of its opposite, orthodoxy, which meant right thinking and true belief. The theological differences and controversies that arose in the Christian Church between the second and fifth centuries gave rise to numerous doctrines that ecclesiastical authorities and general councils of the Church condemned as heretical. Orthodoxy was equated with scriptural and apostolic teaching, decrees of church councils, and official religious creeds that summarized orthodox belief. The foremost subject of dispute was the nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. The church council of Nicaea, summoned in 325 by the Christian Emperor Constantine and attended by more than 300 bishops, condemned and anathematized the influential Arian heresy denying the true divinity of Christ, and affirmed the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine that God was three persons in one substance, consisting of the Father, the coequal, coeternal divine Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Following the union of Christianity with the Roman state, imperial legislation proscribed heresy as a crime sometimes punishable by death. The church fathers wrote treatises describing and denouncing various heresies. It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of the emergence of the concept of heresy within the Christian religion as a means of thought control and the enforcement of orthodoxy. Heresy was a spiritual offense, and not simply an error but a false and sinful teaching that brought damnation upon those who embraced it. The Catholic Church taught that there was no salvation outside the Church; if detected and not recanted, heresy led to excommunication from the Church and hence to the loss of salvation and eternal punishment. The existence of heresy was seen as a danger to all Christians who might be contaminated by it. The heretic was defined as a person who obstinately refused correction and adhered to his error in willful opposition to the Church and religious truth as defined and declared by ecclesiastical authority. One of the greatest of Catholic thinkers, St Augustine (d. 430), made the most important contribution to the Christian theory of persecution by his justification of the use of force against heretics. Although at first opposed to coercion, he later reversed his position when dealing with the widespread Donatist heresy and its schismatic church in Roman Africa. While acknowledging that physical force was incapable of changing belief, he argued in a number of influential writings that threats and fear of punishment (the pedagogy of fear), plus coercive measures such as imprisonment and controlling what heretics were allowed to hear, read, and say, could make them receptive to a right way of thinking in which they would abandon their heresy and submit to the Catholic Church. Augustine considered the heretic a creature of pride and enemy of society, and explicitly distinguished between just and unjust persecution, the first being that which the church of Christ
p. 692 ↳ inflicts on the wicked, the second that which the wicked inflict on the church of Christ. He supported his view with two parables in the New Testament, the parable of the feast in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 14:21–3) and the parable of the tares or weeds in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 13:24–30), which he interpreted allegorically to justify religious persecution. Augustine never went so far as to propose the killing of heretics, but, while the parable of the tares seemed to teach that both good people and sinners should be left until the Last Judgment to receive their due, he took it to mean that the evil people should be uprooted when they are recognized and known. The two parables and the words "compel them to come in" (*compelle intrare*) in the parable of the feast, understood to mean the approval of compulsion against heretics, were to be frequently quoted and discussed in later centuries in arguments over toleration.

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church and secular governments created a large institutional machinery and body of legislation for the suppression of heresy. While some of the heresies that appeared in the medieval period were abstruse theological propositions, others, like the teachings of the Waldensians, Cathars, Lollards, and Hussites, led to the emergence of broad popular movements directly opposed to the

Church's doctrines, wealth, and power. In the early thirteenth century Pope Innocent III proclaimed a crusade against the Cathars, a sect that existed in large numbers in the south of France. Later in the same period, Pope Gregory IX and his successors established the papal inquisition, which grew into a powerful heresy-hunting organization with its own officials, courts, and legal procedure. In the late fifteenth century, inquisitions under royal control were established in Spain and Portugal, and later extended to most of the other states of the Spanish empire in Europe and the Americas. The main object of inquisitional tribunals was to obtain a confession from the accused, and they permitted the use of torture on uncooperative defendants. The penalties they inflicted included public penances, loss of property, and imprisonment; in the gravest cases, unrepentant heretics were handed over to the secular power for execution. Control of printing and book censorship became part of the apparatus dealing with heresy.

The Christian theory of persecution rested on premises that were almost universally accepted as unquestionable truths during the Middle Ages. St Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) was typical of many medieval thinkers in explaining that heretics deserved not only to be separated from the Church but to also to be shut off from the world by death. The Christian theory of persecution was concerned primarily with belief as a condition of mind rather than simply with external conformity. Its chief aim was to move the conscience and bring about a change of mind. If the convicted heretic were not to suffer death, he had to confess his error, perform penances, and recant his belief.

The Protestant Reformation initiated by Martin Luther's revolt against Catholicism introduced an era of confessional hatreds and religious conflicts, massacres, and wars of religion within and between states. The Catholic Church failed to prevent the spread of Protestantism, but its combat against Protestant heresy took thousands of lives and forced large numbers of people to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere in
p. 693 Europe and later in America. The mainstream Protestant churches, Lutheran, Zwinglian, ↳ Calvinist, and Anglican, that emerged in the sixteenth century were all intolerant and inclined to persecution. They hated Catholicism as a spiritual tyranny and idolatrous faith and were also intolerant toward one another. Protestant leaders and reformers generally accepted the Christian theory of persecution, and maintained that governments and the civil magistrate had an absolute duty to uphold religious orthodoxy against heretics and dissenters. Protestant authorities banned Catholic worship, abolished monasteries, killed priests and monks, and confiscated Catholic Church property. In his early days as a reformer, Luther (d. 1546) advocated mildness and persuasion in the treatment of heresy, but, after witnessing the religious and social disorders bred by the Reformation, he altered his view and demanded the forcible repression of religious rebels and heterodox beliefs. Calvin (d. 1564), the most eminent figure in Protestantism in the generation after Luther, was relentless in his hatred of heresy and opposition to those who disagreed with his teachings. Among European intellectuals, the Catholic humanist scholar, Erasmus (d. 1536), the most celebrated writer of the age, deplored the religious conflicts bred by the Reformation and favored moderation in the treatment of religious differences. His friend Sir Thomas More, on the other hand, whose famous pre-Reformation book *Utopia* (1516) had pictured an ideal society that allowed for religious pluralism, became a persecutor of Protestant heretics, whom he considered a deadly threat to Christian civilization. He died a Catholic martyr, executed in 1535 by Henry VIII for refusing to disavow the pope's supremacy over the English Church.

The sole exception to the approval of religious persecution in sixteenth-century Europe were a few Protestant fringe groups outside the mainstream Protestant churches, notably anabaptists, spiritualists, and Socinians or unitarians, who all belonged to what modern historians have called the Radical Reformation (see Michael Baylor, Chapter 14, this volume). These sects were voluntary religious societies with their own distinct beliefs, and all were victims of persecution, especially the anabaptists, hundreds of whom were put to death as heretics and religious rebels. Despite their conviction of their own rightness, however, they were all opposed to religious compulsion and to the union of religion and the state.

By its creation of new churches and sects, the Protestant Reformation compelled Western society and governments to address the novel and unwanted situation of lasting religious division and the challenge of confessional coexistence. By the same token, the question of religious toleration and freedom of conscience became for the first time in Western civilization an inescapable, hugely consequential problem affecting many thousands of human beings. The Protestant churches were nearly all state churches supported or ruled by royal, princely, or civic governments and to which all subjects were required to conform. Every Christian church claimed that it alone possessed the truth in religion, a condition that made the acceptance of religious coexistence and pluralism very difficult.

Between the later sixteenth-century and the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment, religious toleration was one of the dominant subjects of controversy in European thought and politics, producing a mass of writings by theologians, philosophers, clerical and lay authors, and political publicists in many countries.
p. 694 The main sites of ↳ this controversy in the seventeenth century were England, which in the mid-century experienced a revolution against the Anglican state church and Stuart monarchy, and the Dutch republic, which had emerged by 1600 as an independent Protestant state in consequence of the revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish rule and became in due course the most tolerant country in Europe. The authors on the side of toleration were nearly all unorthodox Protestants who believed that toleration and freedom of conscience were essential to the spiritual welfare of Christianity and the only road to religious peace. Some tended toward religious skepticism or a form of rational religion like deism or Socinianism. They frequently shared a common allegiance to a moralized or ethical Christianity that abhorred persecution, placed conduct above doctrine, and mandated toleration of differences. Amid the many notable writers who took part in the toleration controversy, I will briefly refer to a few of special importance whose arguments made a lasting contribution to the gradual shift in opinion that prepared the ground for the acceptance of religious coexistence and the attainment of freedom of religion at a later period.

Sebastian Castellio (d. 1563), a French Protestant humanist scholar, biblical translator, and professor of Greek in the Swiss university of Basle, was the first European thinker to mount a comprehensive attack against the Christian theory of persecution, directed in particular at the persecuting mentality of Calvin and Calvinism. In 1553 Calvin played a merciless central role in bringing about the trial and execution in Geneva of the unorthodox Spanish physician and theologian Michael Servetus, who was convicted of heresy as an antitrinitarian and anabaptist, and burned at the stake. In a subsequent book and other publications Calvin justified the killing of heretics, contending that heresy was an offense against God's honor and that civil authorities had an absolute duty to punish incorrigible heretics by death if necessary. Servetus's execution became a cause célèbre in European Protestantism. Castellio condemned it and religious persecution in a number of writings that became classics of tolerationist literature. The first and best known was his pseudonymous Latin work *Concerning Heretics and Whether they should be Persecuted* (1554). This book was structured in several parts, which mustered a range of arguments in favor of toleration and pronounced a severe and eloquent indictment of religious persecution as totally evil and contrary to the will of Christ, a merciful and loving savior. Castellio deplored "the license of judgment" that reigned in his day and wrongfully spilled the blood of those who were called heretics. Interrogating the meaning of heresy, he deconstructed the concept, reducing its significance to no more than a difference of opinion on controverted points of religion. Heretics, he therefore explained, were not persons of whose errors one could be certain, but simply people with whom one disagreed in religion, as was evident from the fact that almost all sects looked upon the rest as heretics. He introduced a strain of skepticism into all of his writings in pointing out that many things in the Bible were unclear and impossible to understand with any certainty; hence Christians showed their ignorance when they persecuted each other over obscure doctrines like baptism, free will, and communion, for, if the matters in dispute were as obvious as the proposition that there is only
p. 695 one God, Christians would all easily ↳ agree. He denied that secular rulers had any authority over spiritual offenses like heresy or infidelity, and, citing the parable of the tares, urged princes to beware of killing or burning anyone for faith and religion, "which above all else should be free." Rejecting all arguments for

persecution based on the Bible, he pointed out that neither Christ nor the apostles ever used carnal or worldly weapons. He denied that force could change belief and criticized the burning of books and silencing of heretics. It was because religion was not left free, he maintained, that error and spiritual tyranny were able to establish their dominion. In *Concerning Heretics* and other works, he expressed a keen respect for the subjective religious conviction of the individual conscience, which ought to render it immune from any kind of coercion. A formidable controversialist and believer in intellectual freedom, he criticized on both rational and Christian grounds Calvin's intolerance of difference and refusal of free and equal debate in favor of the forcible repression and killing of those with whom he disagreed. One of Castellio's most memorable statements was his comment upon Calvin's claim to be a defender of true doctrine: "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine, it is to kill a man. When the Genevans killed Servetus, they did not defend a doctrine, they killed a man." Among his final writings on behalf of religious toleration and freedom of conscience was *Advice to a Desolate France* (1562), addressed to his country then falling into a religious civil war. He found the basic cause of the war to lie in the forcing of conscience by Catholics and Protestants alike, and counseled all of the parties to cease persecution and allow everyone who accepted Christ to serve God in accord with their own beliefs. His last work, left unfinished, was a remarkable epistemological treatise, *The Art of Doubting*, a defense of both toleration and reason in religion, which validated doubt and discussed the question of when to doubt and when to believe. Castellio was one of the greatest and most courageous thinkers in the toleration controversy. His work was not forgotten and exerted a considerable influence upon a number of writers who argued for toleration in the century and a half following his death.

Another outstanding champion of religious toleration was Roger Williams (d. 1683), an English Puritan cleric dissatisfied with the Anglican Church who emigrated to Massachusetts in 1631 to become minister of the church in Boston. His religious radicalism and belief in autonomous separatist churches quickly made him a thorn in the side of the Puritan theocracy that governed the Massachusetts Bay colony. Expelled from the latter in 1635, he moved south to found Providence and the colony of Rhode Island as a home of religious freedom. A religious sectarian, he was especially sympathetic to the Baptists but was apparently never a member of a Baptist church. He was noted for his friendly and equitable relations with the native Indian tribes near whom he dwelt and whose language he learned.

In 1644, while on a mission to England on behalf of the Rhode Island colony, he published *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*, one of the major English works of the seventeenth century in favor of religious freedom. Written in the form of a dialogue between Truth and Peace and steeped in the Bible as its principal source, it was aimed particularly at the regime of intolerance in Massachusetts and its spokesman the Revd John
p. 696 Cotton, but its propositions pertained to religious freedom in general and derived ↳ from principles that Williams regarded as inviolable truths. His fundamental argument, based on an interpretation of Christian history, was that Christ's coming marked the end of the theocratic type of Jewish kingdom, which united civil and religious authority as described in the Old Testament, and opened a new epoch of complete separation between the political and the religious–spiritual domains, so that henceforth Christian magistrates and civil governments were prohibited by Christ from exercising any power over the Church and religion. From this thesis he drew a number of conclusions that removed religion from any connection or subordination to political authority and treated it as entirely a matter of personal belief dictated by conscience. Williams pronounced the union of the state and church a calamity for Christianity, commenting that "the unknowing zeal" of Constantine and other Christian Roman Emperors had done greater harm to Christ's crown and kingdom than "the raging fury of the most bloody Neroes." He condemned the doctrine of persecution, which he accused of always falling heaviest on the most godly people. The Church in his view was a voluntary private society of spiritual persons that governed itself and was separate from the world and the civil order. One of his most frequent metaphors, which he related to the Gospel's parable of the tares, was his comparison between the church as a garden and the world as a field. He complained of those who tried to extend the field of the world into the garden of the church, and was probably the first to speak of "the wall of separation" that must divide the two, a phrase later used frequently in American legal and

constitutional discussion of the relationship between church and state. Williams was an advocate of universal toleration and freedom of religion for all denominations and faiths, including Islam, Judaism, and even Catholicism, the last of which, in the view of many Protestant writers, should be denied toleration because it was itself intolerant. The civil or political order existed only for secular ends, Williams held, and in light of Christ's ordinance it could have no power over "spiritual and Soul-causes." The peace of the city or state, he consistently argued, depended on a civil type of union, and could therefore remain safe and unbroken amidst religious diversity. Recognizing that Christians might differ about fundamentals and that there was no authoritative judge to decide these controversies, he insisted on the supremacy of the individual conscience in determining religious belief. He undermined the traditional meaning of heresy, pointing out that what one person took as heresy was conscientious conviction to another. Williams was one of the earliest of European thinkers to advance a systematic case chiefly on religious grounds for the complete separation of church and state in a Christian society. His primary reason for holding this position was the harm religious persecution did to religion and to the small number of true Christians, whose consciences should be left free from all compulsion. For him universal toleration was identical with religious freedom and the bloody tenet of persecution contrary to humanity and the law of Christ. He constantly insisted on the purely secular character of the civil order by denying it any authority over religion and conceived the Church as simply one type of voluntary association among many others in the same
p. 697 society. One of the main outcomes of his argument was to demonstrate that religious pluralism and ↳ differences were fully compatible with a common political citizenship and the political unity of the state.

Many other notable seventeenth-century thinkers could be discussed here. These include the Jewish philosopher Baruch or Benedict de Spinoza, whose *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670), a work of political theory and biblical criticism, advanced a powerful plea for the recognition by the state of both freedom of religion and freedom of thought in general. The Frenchman Pierre Bayle, and the Englishman John Locke, were profoundly affected by the reign of persecution in their own countries; in England the government and state church's persecution of Protestant dissenters in the reigns of Charles II and James II; in France the cruel mistreatment and forced conversion of Protestants by the Catholic monarch Louis XIV. This ruler's revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes, which in 1598 for the maintenance of peace had granted freedom of worship under various restrictions to the French Calvinist Reformed churches, was an event of European significance that caused thousands of French Protestants to seek refuge in Protestant countries. At the time of the Revocation, Locke and Bayle were both exiles living in Holland and witnessed its grievous effects in the stream of Protestant refugees fleeing France. Bayle's main work on toleration was his *Philosophical Commentary on these Words of Jesus: Compel them to Come in* (1686), a condemnation of the use of force in religion, defense of the rights of conscience, and critique of St Augustine's recommendation of the coercion of heretics. No more acute analysis of the wrongfulness and unreason of persecution has ever been written. Locke's Latin *Letter on Toleration* (1689), anonymously published in the same year as his political work *Two Treatises on Government*, was in some respects a distillation and synthesis of many of the preceding arguments advanced in support of religious pluralism and freedom. Locke claimed that religious toleration was the chief mark of a true church, and running through his work was an ethical condemnation of persecution founded on the view that the essence of the Christian faith lay in love, charity, and goodwill. His basic approach to the problem of toleration, however, was the distinction he sought to clarify describing "the true bounds between the church and commonwealth," and the very different ends of religion and of civil government. He went on to explain that civil government was concerned solely with the goods of human life in this world, whereas religion concerned the future life and the care of the soul. The jurisdiction of the civil power was accordingly limited to securing subjects in such civil goods as life, liberty, and property, for which compulsion was a necessary means. Religion, on the other hand, pertained only to the individual, who was incapable of abandoning his personal interest in his salvation by adopting under compulsion the faith prescribed by the ruler or some other person. God, Locke held, had not given anyone authority to compel the faith of others, nor could mankind give such authority to the civil magistrate. Not only was it impossible to force people to believe, but the religious doctrines that were imposed by princes or

a country's laws might not be the true religion. Locke thus placed the entire responsibility for the destiny of the soul on the personal religious faith of each individual. Mere external conformity without the full inward
p. 698 persuasion of faith was hypocrisy and contempt of God; hence every religious person must work out ↳ his faith for himself in all sincerity and as the nearest he could come to the truth. By emphasizing the primacy of subjective conscientious conviction in everything to do with religion, Locke took away the magistrate's power over religion. In keeping with this view, he defined the Church as a free and voluntary society of people who joined in worship in the way they believed was acceptable to God for their salvation. No church could have power over other churches, or depend on the government to enforce its teachings, or invoke any sanctions against its own members other than exhortations, appeals to conscience, and ultimately expulsion. Locke would have withheld toleration from doctrines harmful to society and good morals and likewise from Catholics, because they were intolerant themselves and owed allegiance to the pope, a foreign sovereign. He would also have denied toleration to atheists, on the weak ground that no promises or oaths could obligate persons who did not believe in God. It is quite clear that Locke equated toleration with religious freedom and regarded the latter as an inherent right of individuals and subjects, which Christian rulers and governments were obliged to respect. In analyzing the problem of toleration primarily in light of the difference between the purposes of religion and of government, he followed a line of argument that was to be of great significance in the ultimate establishment of religious freedom as a right of citizens in Western society.

During the eighteenth century, religious freedom was increasingly conceived as a natural right. Among its most effective advocates were the celebrated French writer and satirist Voltaire and, in America, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom of 1786. The last war of religion in Europe was the Thirty Years War, 1618–48, which, beginning in Germany as a conflict between Protestant and Catholic rulers, evolved into a secular conflict of European great and lesser powers whose alignment was not determined by their religion. The treaties of Westphalia that concluded this war recognized the coexistence of Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist states in Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, required subjects to conform to the religion of their prince, but permitted them to practice their faith in private if it differed from the state religion. In England, the Toleration Act of 1689, a legislative landmark passed after the Revolution of 1688 that deposed James II, ratified religious pluralism by permitting freedom of worship to Protestant dissenters from the Anglican Church, including notably Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, while withholding it from Catholics and disbelievers in the Trinity. In the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Maryland, founded by Catholics, and Pennsylvania, founded by Quakers, ordained toleration for all Christians as part of their law. The French Revolution affirmed the natural right of freedom of religious opinion and granted equal citizenship to Jews. The first amendment in the bill of rights added in 1791 to the new United States Constitution prohibited the federal congress from establishing a state religion and proclaimed the right of free exercise of religion along with the rights of freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. The progress of the principle of toleration and religious freedom between the age of the Reformation and the late eighteenth century encountered many obstacles. This progress, although due to a variety of factors including the widespread recognition of the benefits of
p. 699 religious ↳ peace, could not have occurred without the arduous efforts of a large number of writers and thinkers to discredit the Christian theory of persecution and demonstrate the moral, spiritual, intellectual, political, and other advantages of religious coexistence and pluralism. It would be altogether mistaken, however, to suppose that the early advocates of religious freedom wished to reduce religion to a purely private and individual concern without any public role in society or politics. Nearly all of them took it for granted that the Christian faith was vital to public well-being and the regulation of morals and conduct, and that human life and government were subject to God's providence.

The modern era, following the revolutions of the eighteenth century, saw the gradual expansion of the principle of religious toleration in Western society as part of the emergence of liberal ideas and polities and the growth of parliamentary and representative government. In Britain the penal laws against Catholicism

were repealed in 1829. In Europe as a whole, despite the persistence of anti-Semitism, the emancipation of the Jews from a ghetto existence to equal rights of citizenship occurred in a number of countries in the nineteenth century, although not in czarist Russia. The one great institution that continued to held out against religious toleration and freedom was the Roman Catholic Church. The first Vatican Council of 1870 pronounced a wholesale condemnation of liberalism and toleration. It was not until the second Vatican Council in 1965 that the Catholic Church finally embraced the doctrine of freedom of religion by its authoritative Declaration on Religious Freedom. Together with political freedom, freedom of religious choice and opinion, including atheism and the spurning of all religion, has become one of the most cherished freedoms in Western society. Following the Second World War, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 named freedom of religion, conscience, and thought as basic human rights. We have good reason, moreover, to hope that the richness of the tradition of religious tolerance and freedom developed in the modern West since the sixteenth century contains the moral and intellectual resources that will enable the defeat of different forms of religious extremism, while assuring religious freedom to peaceable and tolerant people.

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