

GENEVA AND THE GENESIS OF RELIGIOUS
TOLERANCE IN SIXTEENTH AND
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE
TWO FAMOUS VOLTAIC CASES:
CASE SERVET FROM GENEVA AND THE
CASE OF JEAN CALAS FROM TOULON¹

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Abstract: Religious tolerance is an issue extremely present in the life of humanity. Appeal to tolerance came out of the crisis of Reformation that was an unforeseen ramification of the turmoil of religious wars. Realization of the Protestant ways of tolerance showed its weak points by the instability of internal fractions, but also by unequal reference to the old Roman-Catholic confession, or to the new radical forms of Protestantism. Eighteenth-century Europe simply needed to escape the whirl of intolerance exercised in the previous centuries. At the same time, the state was gradually overshadowing the Church as well as implicitly reappraising the Church's relation with the state. The Church (Protestant and Roman Catholic) lost its allies and political supporters, but managed to preserve the Orthodoxy of previous centuries. The secularization of the Church and the evolution of contemporary society bringing about the rise of tolerant public conscience became more and more evident. Yet, the necessity of tacit tolerance did not produce a *de iure* declaration of tolerance, only in isolated situations, as were the cases of Transylvania (1568) and Poland. As for the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania, the understanding of the

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idea of tolerance was primarily connected by the relation of Catholicism to Protestantism and implicitly concerned with the political-religious influence of the House of Habsburg over territories belonging to the Crown. Tolerance was promulgated in the West by parliamentary decisions such as the *Act of Tolerance*, England, 1689, or the *Edict of Tolerance in France*, 1787, the *Edict of Tolerance in the Habsburg Empire*, 1781-82. Tolerance implicitly became a historical issue of philosophy and theology as well. The tolerance of the Church became also an external issue of the relationship between the state and religious community. In addition, the issue of tolerance appeared as an aspect of laic authority manifestation and obedience requested by the established church. Concordia or reciprocal tolerance were the terms by which Europe tried to adjust its turbulent confessional life. *Concordia* was deemed as a sort of *Respublica Christiana* of monolithic type, whereas the conservatory Catholic reaction referring to confessional diversity was aligned with the idea of *haereticis non est servanda fides*. Tolerance was widely debated in the 18th century. Four leading personalities: John Locke, Pierre Bayle, Voltaire and Rousseau were thoroughly preoccupied with defining the term and putting it into practice. At the same time, Jurieu promoted the idea of mutual tolerance („mutual pact”). In 1757 the issue of tolerance was not yet clearly defined. Distinct notions were under discussion: ecclesiastical tolerance (religious, theological) and the civil one. Different opinions on tolerance tried to influence political life. Diverse writings debated the subject: John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1667), *Of the Difference between Civil and Ecclesiastical Power* (1674), Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance* (1763). Two Voltarian cases played an important role within the evolution of the idea of tolerance. The first case is connected to Helvetic Geneva, which once was the Protestant model city of Jean Calvin. Jean Calvin did not allow straying away from his Orthodox Protestant principles. He considered the idea of freedom of conscience a novelty, an idea that could not be applied: a „tragic liberty”, as „sects” were gaining ground. The moment of Protestant tolerance took a bad turn by the condemnation and then burning of Michael Servet (1509-1553) at the stake. In the 18th century Voltaire regarded the moment of Servet’s burning at the stake as the major fault the Reformation produced, thereby affecting the idea of tolerance. The idea was previously valorized by Sébastien Castellion (1515-1563), a French humanist. Voltaire was obsessed with making an issue of incriminating rapports of Servet with Calvin, and by doing so, denouncing Protestant intolerance. Nevertheless, Geneva was a tolerant city, due especially to the presence of Rousseau and Voltaire, as a result of which the expectation of denouncing the burning at

the stake of Servet became the paradigm of European tolerance. The idea of tolerance enforced especially because of the Calas case which became known due to Voltaire, who with this occasion created his *Treatise on Tolerance*. By Voltaire's intervention, the Calas case became known as the catalyst of the national conscience of the French. He started a real crusade against religious fanaticism represented by the infamy of the Old Regime, which condemned and killed the Protestant merchant Calas without being proven guilty. The philosopher became the defender of Calas, the Calvinist merchant from Toulouse. Together with Rousseau they revealed and internationalized the subject, and by doing so, the intensity of arguments used in the debate on tolerance was memorable. Through Voltaire, the idea of tolerance, acclaimed and made international by the Calas case, became a symbol of liberty of conscience of man, an idea characteristic to the Age of Enlightenment. After long and protracted debates, the illuminist idea of civil and religious tolerance was born as a result of the above cases between 1760 and 1785.

Keywords: Voltaire, tolerance, Jean Calvin, Jean Calas, Geneva, Iosif Teleki, Jacob Ternet

General landmarks

Religious tolerance has been and is a problem with wide reverberations in the continent's life. In fact it is a difficult term to define². The need for tolerance arose simultaneously with the intolerant reactions (religious, ethnic, social, etc.) of society. Tolerance itself comprises several levels in and through which it manifests itself. First of all, there is tolerance that derives from freedom of conscience, this being the most basic segment of tolerance. The second element of tolerance is the dogmatic one, whereby each religion carries its share of religious truth, which is the product of modern ideology in which the state has no longer been involved in the life of the cults³. As for the context of communication concerning the intolerance and religious tolerance of the continent, we are particularly interested in the 17th and 18th centuries. These centuries were benchmarks both for the political systems through which the minimum

2 Paul Ricoeur, „Tolérance, intolérance, intolérable” in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, vol. 134, Paris, 1988, pp. 435-445.

3 Jean Bérenger, *Tolérance ou paix de religion en Europe centrale (1415-1792)*, Paris, 2000., pp. 1-2.

agreement necessary for the mutual toleration of Europe undergoing religious changes caused by the Reformation was achieved, as well as for the philosophical, then political, genesis of the term sought⁴.

It is obvious that European society was not prepared to accept the alert pace of political and religious changes of the 15th - 17th centuries. The century of the Reformation did not know the unconditional acceptance of the plurality of ideas, but sought the essence-truth of them⁵. The call for tolerance was born out of the crisis of the Reformation that was evolving in the vortex of the religious wars. The creation of the Protestant models of tolerance showed their vulnerability through the instability produced by the internal factions within it, but also by the unequal relation to the old Roman Catholic confession, or to the new radical forms of Protestantism⁶. The Counter-Reformation through its aims and methods succeeded in the South West of Europe as a disqualification of the Protestant adversary on the basis of introducing the idea of disloyalty to the king and impiety towards the dominant Roman-Catholic religion. The harsh measures that followed in France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Belgium showed how intolerant the world of Catholicism became in its sincere desire for restoration. Intolerance had shown its effects precisely where the state (the king, the prince) had coalesced with the Church. The idea of *jus circa sacra* thus overlapped with that *jus publicum*, which fully felt the degenerating effects of the confessional wars. Eighteenth-century Europe felt the need to get out of the vicious circle of intolerance. This implicitly meant a semi-abandonment of the Church in favor of the state, and implicitly a clarification of the Church-State relationship. This followed as a reaction to the increasingly striking Enlightenment philosophy of the time, but also as a result of some sharp and radical absolutist political decisions.

4 Pomeau René, „Un idée neuve au XVIIIe siècle, la tolérance” in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, vol. 134, Paris, 1988, pp. 195-206, Guy Sapin, *Naissance de la tolérance en Europe aux temps modernes*, ed. Didact Historire, Rennes, 1998, pp. 1-197, *Toleration in Enlightened Europe*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Roy Porter, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 1-270, *Tolérance et réforme, éléments pour une généalogie du Concept de tolérance*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1999, p. 1-202, Matthyas J. Fritsch, *Religiöse Toleranz im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Hamburg, 2002, pp. 1-409.

5 Georges Chantraine SJ, *La doctrine catholique de la tolérance au XVIe siècle in Naissance et affirmation de l'idée de tolérance XVIe et XVIIe siècle*, Université de Montpellier, 1988, pp. 1-18.

6 An interesting critical debate on the religious subject of tolerance see at Jean Delumeau, *La christianisme va-t-il mourir?*, Hachette, 1977.

The 18th century seems to be a time when the Church (Protestant and Catholic) lost its allies and political supporters, itself abandoning the Orthodoxy of previous centuries.

The secularization of the State-Church relationship and the evolution of society towards achieving a tolerant public conscience had by then become increasingly evident. The new heresy of the century appeared: the “philosophers”, who endangered the very position of the Church in society by their anti-clericalism⁷. Some of them considered the Church incapable of tolerance, even if there were discernible examples of it in another sense. The contrasts of the adaptation of a new idea of tolerance suggest differences of assimilation between the two parts (West and East) of the continent. These changes could not be achieved only by quantifying the general problems of ecclesiastical life, which existed, or were evolving at that time. For this reason, the shift, or the different understanding of tolerance, is evident between the periphery of the continent (Eastern and Central Europe) and the Western one (Protestant and Catholic). Quantifying the problems generated by religious intolerance in the Habsburg Empire, these were solved by sharp decisions of the enlightened despot, Joseph II, to the quasi-general dissatisfaction of Roman Catholicism⁸. In the West, intolerance was dampened by parliamentary political decisions: *Act of Tolerance*, Anglia, 1689, the *Tolerance Edict of France* 1787, the *Tolerance Edict* of the Habsburg Empire 1781-82, or the issue of religious tolerance remained adrift.

Two important cases, through which the idea of European tolerance was realized, or the Voltaire “affair” and Transylvania

The development of the idea of religious tolerance cannot be dissociated from the philosophical thinking through which filters passed the evaluation of the historical facts related to the solution of this European disability. On having to leave Paris, Voltaire (1694-1778) became a citizen of Geneva on the outskirts of the city directly across the border in

⁷ Robert Joly, *Origines et evolution de L'intolerance catholique*, Bruxelles, 1985, p. 94.

⁸ Peter F. Barton, *Im zeichen der Toleranz, aufsätze zur Toleranzgesetzgebung des 18. Jahrhunderts in der Reichen Joseph II, ihren Voraussetzungen und ihren Folgen*, Band VIII, Institut für protestantischer Kirchengeschichte, Wien, 1981 Cf. Peter F. Barton, „Toleranz und Toileranzpatente“ in *Donaumonarchie in Glaube und Toleranz, das theologische Erbe der Aufklärung*, ed. Trutz Rendtorff, Gütersloh, 1982, pp. 272-287.

France, and became deeply involved in cases related to the idea of religious tolerance and intolerance. The purpose of these “affairs” was the urgent need to unmask certain manifestations against the Enlightenment spirit. Voltaire’s first deal, to the annoyance of already enlightened Geneva, was to unearth the famous case of Michael Servet burned at the stake in Jean Calvin’s Geneva. The drama of the nomadic Protestant intellectual was meant to underline the French argument that the reformed French Huguenots are related to the memory of a sixteenth-century theologian severely damaged by the religious absolutism practiced in the city state of Geneva. Bringing the argument of intolerance into question, the guilt of a bygone century had easily been subsumed by the allegation of disloyalty to the monarch of France, for which French Protestantism had suffered numerous oppressions (dragonades). The accusation of a Protestant religious solidarity vitiated by the Servet case naturally served to clarify some historiographical aspects and implicitly led to unexpected support from a renowned philosopher, both for French Absolutism and for the desired religious uniformity of France. The evolution of Voltaic thinking, however, went from the criticism of Protestantism to attacking the rigidity and willful errors of the court of Toulouse, where the case of Jean Calas was consumed. Through this last case Voltaire exposed the balance between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and generated a major debate on the idea of tolerance. The two cases presented can be deemed as the evidence of the evolution of French philosophy, and the beginning of a new period in the religious life of the continent. Both cases are related to Voltaire and through him to Geneva.

These “affairs” taken up by Voltaire might seem far removed from the Transylvanian socio-political and religious reality. Eastern Europe, stuck in the Habsburg reform, experienced the triumphant Counter-Reform, which, assisted by power, seemed to recapture the old losses caused by the Reformation. Even though the power of Transylvanian Protestantism seemed to be diminished by constitutional artifices, the Reformed Enlightened nobility complied with the new demands and by its loyal attitude ensured its political survival. Count Joseph Teleki (1738-1796), whose professional and political career was an exceptional one, remains one of the outstanding personalities of Transylvanian Enlightenment. Being the student of Péter Bod in Ighiu in Alba County (1754), he later became a Comite, first member of the Reformed Church and custodian of the Habsburg crown. Its notability derives from the

Enlightenment spirituality itself, by which he promoted the necessity of spiritual enlightenment through the light of reason accompanied by religious tolerance. As a student he learned in Ighiu from the textbooks considered the most modern in Switzerland, edited by Protestants from Switzerland⁹. From this manual he became aware of the role and purpose of Jean Calvin's city. Some good years after his studies in Ighiu the young count proceeded to Basel (1759), where he wanted to deepen his university studies through the famous process of academic pilgrimage, being the private student of Daniel Bernoulli (1700-1782)¹⁰. No sooner had he settled in Basel than he left in a hurry for Geneva where he visited the successor of Jean Alphonse Turretini (1671-1737), Professor Jacob Vernet (1698-1789)¹¹, from whom he was informed about Voltaire. Professor Vernet was involved in disseminating the teachings of his predecessor whose memory kept him as a symbol of religious tolerance in Geneva. Being a person involved in the fierce debate between the city and Voltaire, who got rid of the allegedly false tolerance of the city, he nevertheless maintained balanced relations with him. Teleki was as interested as possible in the personality of the philosopher, but also in the debate about the idea of tolerance, which he also wanted to achieve in the Principality of Transylvania. This interest rushed him from Geneva to Ferney, a settlement close to Geneva (today Voltaire), but belonging to France, to meet Voltaire and talk to him. On 7 August 1759 he went to see Voltaire¹² together with the Reformed priest Strassburger of Geneva and a jeweller named Pallard. He was the first Transylvanian to meet the renowned philosopher. Voltaire, in the manner of the born physiocrat, received the two visitors while he was ploughing. Count Teleki just

9 We know two volumes from which he studied in Ighiu: the one by Johann Friedrich Stapfer, *Institutiones theologiae polemicae universae ordine scientifico*, Zürich, 1757, vol 1-5. And the volume of Jean Alphonse Turretini, *Cogitationes et dissertationes theologicae: Quibus principia religionis, cum naturalis, tum revelatae, adstruuntur & defenduntur; animique ad veritatis, pietatis, & pacis studium excitantur* (typis Barrillot & filii), Genève, 1737.

10 *La cour de Louis XV. Journal de voyage du comte J. Teleki* (ed. Gábor Tolnai, Bp., 1943)

11 Roney, John B.; Klauber, Martin I. The identity of Geneva: the Christian commonwealth, 1564-1864. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998. Cf. Jan David Sorkin, "Geneva: Jacob Vernet's "Middle Way"". *The religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna*, Princeton University Press, 2008. Cf. Jennifer Powel McNutt, Calvin meets Voltaire. The clergy of Geneva in the Age of Enlightenment, 1658-1798, Routledge, London, 2014.

12 F. Csanak Nóra, *A naplóiró Teleki József in Erdélyi Múzeum*, an 55, nr. 3-4, Cluj Napoca, 1993, pp. 26-28.

mentions in his memoirs that Voltaire showed them his private theater which he claimed to have been expelled from Geneva for. Teleki's work of maturity, however, reflected on the character and details of the meeting, not on Voltaire's ideas. In the difficult situation of Transylvanian Protestantism, Teleki wanted to find effective support through this meeting for the intolerance with which Protestantism was surrounded. This aid seemed to be supported by those Voltaire "businesses", which internationalized the subjects of religious intolerance even in relation to the Protestant city. But Teleki had become the harshest critic of the Naturalism and Deism promoted by Voltaire. His arguments show that Transylvanian Enlightenment, as well as East-European religious tolerance, were based *ab initio* on Christian theological foundations¹³. In this order, rationalism promoted by society could not lead to impiety and atheism, but to a better knowledge of God. Joseph Teleki's work written in Voltaire's counter-argument was a mature one attesting to the manner and methods by which Voltaire's ideas were spread in Transylvania, but also how they could be counteracted¹⁴. Thus we can conclude that the religious tolerance of the 18th century in Transylvania is not formulated against the Church, but is built on the Biblical and theological premises offered by it, while the idea of tolerance promoted by Voltaire was directed against the Church, as this is exemplified in the two cases below. Regardless of the different structure and premises of the genesis of tolerance in the 18th century, we can say that the debate on the need for tolerance was unanimous in the East and in the West. If Transylvania builds the need for religious tolerance on the basis of Christian identity and otherness, Voltaire sees the process as a struggle between secularized rationality and the Church, that is, the first of the debates promoted by him referring to the Reformed Church in Geneva itself.

The case of Michael Servet (1509-1553) from Calvinist Geneva

In the first case, Voltaire had harsh criticisms for the city of Geneva as a model state of the Reformation. Jean Calvin wanted to create a model Christian city in which he did not allow deviation from his Orthodox

13 F. Csanak Nóra, *Teleki József és az európai felvilágosodás. Teleki József Essai sur la foiblesse des esprits-forts címűművének célja és forrásai* in *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, Budapest, 79, nr. 4, 1975, pp. 433-445.

14 *Essai sur la foiblesse des esprits-forts* (Leyden, 1760, Amszterdam, 1762)

Protestant principles. The desired theocracy demanded sacrifice. In this effort to build a model city, of course, he also made mistakes. The history of the Reformation is not one of the intangible, infallible and uncondemnable saints¹⁵. Jean Calvin never developed an applied theory of tolerance, even if from the point of view of the theological system, he had an unbeatable logic, including for the Roman-Catholic world. From his point of view the message he held was that the divine truth and faith in Christ is one and indivisible¹⁶. During his time in Geneva he had dogmatic-spiritual problems with those who invoked concord (Francois Bauduin) and religious tolerance (Castellion)¹⁷. Bauduin accused him of inflexibility, because he did not recognize that freedom is the key (license) of coexistence of religions¹⁸. The Reformers in Geneva considered the idea of freedom of conscience a novelty, or a non-applicable idea: "tragic freedom", since the "sects" were gaining ground¹⁹ on its account²⁰. Calvin, through the approved Ordinances, after his return from exile to Strasbourg, in 1541, fixed the religious status of the city and made a mixed Consistory of laity and clergy. The city state functioned offering the eminent position to the priest in the Consistory. From this position he attended the trial of Servet, who escaped from the hand of the Viennese inquisition and was at a reformed job in Geneva on 13 August 1553, where he was recognized²¹. It is widely debated whether the power given to Calvin by the Consistory and his desire to remove the Spanish Antitrinitarian Servet²², or the will of the Genevians, had

15 Daniel Bergère, „Calvin et Servet la légende et la réalité ou Calvin et Servet Chronique d'un dérapage ou Calvin et „l'affaire" Servet in *La revue réformée*, nr. 250, 2009/3, 2009, p. 12.

16 Mario Turchetti, „Religious Concord and Political Tolerance in Sixteenth and Seventeenth century France" in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXII, No. 1, 1991, London, p. 19.

17 Mario Turchetti, „Calvin face aux tenants de la concorde (Moyenneurs) et aux partisans de la tolerance (Castellionistes)" in *Calvin et ses contemporains*, (ed) Olivier Millet, Droz, Geneve, 1998, pp. 43-56.

18 Mario Turchetti, *Réforme et tolérance un binôme polysémique in Tolérance et Réforme, éléments pour une généalogie du concept de tolérances*, Harmattan, Paris, 1999, p. 19.

19 On the propagation in Central and South-East European reform of Antitrinitarianism see, Stanislav Kot, „L'Influence de Michel Servet sur le mouvement antitrinitarien en Pologne et en Transylvanie" in *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sebastien Castellion*, Haarlem, 1953, p 72-115 and about the influence of Castellion's thinking see „Son influence" in Charles Émile Delarmoeau, *Sébastien Castellion, Apôtre de la Tolérance et de la Liberté de Conscience*, Neuschatel, 1964, pp. 131-139.

20 Theodor Beza, *Responsio ad Balduini Eccebolii convicia*, Genevae, J. Crespin, 1565, p. 118.

21 Vincent Schmid, *Michael Servet Du bûcher à la liberté de conscience*, Paris, 2008, p. 99.

22 „L'esprit de Méditerranée" in Vincent Schmid, *Michael Servet Du bûcher à la liberté de conscience*, Paris, 2008, pp. 11-22.

led to the negative turn in Protestant history²³. Servet's trial, like many other persecuted and executed personalities, would not have remained in history if it had not been problematic, even for Calvin himself²⁴.

The moment of Protestant tolerance displayed by Calvin at the beginning of the Reformation, when he was cast out of Paris, thus took a dramatic turn by sentencing and later burning the nomadic intellectual, Michael Servet²⁵. By this, Calvin, according to the Orthodox Protestant theology, considered his heresy worthy of capital punishment,²⁶ a fact which he pointed out to the Reformer and his friend Guillaume Farrel²⁷. In the acceptance of Catholic and Protestant theology Servet was considered a complete and complex heretic. He repudiated Rome, Wittenberg, Geneva and the Reformation in Zurich, rejected the baptism of children, the problem of the humanity of Christ, the original sin, the conventional concept of prophecy, the Holy Trinity²⁸. The drama of Servet and Calvin, however, is not personal, it reflected the thinking of two divergent worlds, but often complementary in intolerance: the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation²⁹. Servet's case can be considered one of the most important since both the philosophers in Geneva, that is, Voltaire³⁰ and Rousseau, as well as the opponents of the Reformation, through Cardinal

23 Joseph Lecler, *Historire de la Tolérance au siècle de la réforme*, ed. Aubier, Paris, 1955, p. 310-311.

24 Etienne Barilier, „Avant propos” in Sebastien Castellion, *Contre le libelle de Calvin après la mort de Michel Servet*, Éditions Zoé, 1998, p. 9.

25 About Servet's bio-bibliography see Rolaind H. Bainton, *Hérétique et Martyr 1553-1953*, Droz, Genève, 1953, pp. 1-148, Jerome Friedman, *Michale Servetus. A Case Study in Total Heresy*, Genève, Droz, 1978, pp. 1-149.

26 Joseph Lecler, *Historire de la Tolérance au siècle de la réforme*, ed. Aubier, Paris, 1955, p. 319.

27 He asserted that if Servet should come to Geneva, „he will not leave here alive” in Daniel Bergère, „Calvin et Servet la légende et la réalité ou Calvin et Servet Chronique d'un dérapage ou Calvin et „l'affaire” Servet” in *La revue réformée*, nr. 250 din 2009/3, april 2009, pp. 11-30, p. 23.

28 See the volume of Jerome Friedman, *Michael Servetus. A Case Study in Total Heresy*, Genève, Droz, 1978, p. 133 which deals in a complex way with the problem of the theology practiced by Servet: in comparison with the traditional theology of Calvin, Luther and the Roman Catholic one.

29 In judging heresy and doctrinal errors there seem to be several compatibilities between the Protestant and Catholic approaches. See in Etienne Barilier, „Avant propos” in Castellion, *Contre le libelle*, 1998, p. 8.

30 Voltaire often used socianism and Servet's case in his controversy with those in Geneva in „Mutual Disenchantment: Voltaire and the Genevans, 1755-1762” in Geoffrey, Adams, *The Huguenots and French Opinion, 1685-1787, The Enlightenment Debate on Toleration*, Ontario, 1991, 136. Cf. Voltaire, *Poème sur la loi naturelle (1752)*, Ouvres, ed. Molard, Paris 1877-1885, vol IX, p. 453.

Bossuet³¹ used the time of Servet's burning at the stake as the major defect that the Reformation produced³². The burning of Michael Servet because of his Antitrinitarian beliefs was explored in particular by Jean Calvin's enemy, Sébastien Castellion (1515-1563), a French Protestant humanist³³ who was also accused of heresy³⁴.

Consequently, the idea of tolerance promoted by Protestantism became feeble and criticizable. The most vehement of the contemporaries were the Antitrinitarians, who, of course, had lost an eminent personality of Antitrinitarianism³⁵. Protestant historiography assigned him an important space through Mosheim in *Anderweitiger Versuch einer Vollständiger und unpartheyischen Ketzergeschichte*³⁶. He sought to present *theologia consensus* in this case³⁷ which was inspired by Sebastian Franck, the idea becoming highly appreciated in Turretini's Enlightenment Geneva. It re-evaluated Calvinist Orthodoxy in an enlightened and conciliatory confessionalism specific of the 18th century.

For the Enlightenment, the much disputed Servet case became current in the winter of 1757, when Voltaire summoned 12 reformed ministers to Lausanne, near Geneva, to discuss openly about the burning of Servet by Calvin, since *L'Essai sur l'histoire générale* had caused a huge scandal in Geneva in 1756. Voltaire, like many cases in which he was involved, developed the case between Servet and Calvin as a "business"³⁸.

31 Even if he was talking about the „poison of tolerance“ (warning 6) in „La tolerance“ in *XIII Colloque de l'Institut de Recherches sur les Civilisations de l'Occident moderne*, Sorbonne-Paris, 1986, p. 81.

32 Bayle tried an explanation of the gesture of the Consistory in Geneva, considering it a remnant of medieval old Catholicism, see in Robert Joly, *Origines et evolution de L'intolerance catholique*, Bruxelles, 1985, p. 88-89.

33 For the most successful monograph on Castellio see at Hans R. Guggisberg, *Sebastien Castellio 1515-1563, Humanist and Defender of Religious Toleration in a Confessional Age*, Ashgate, 2002, p. 1-303. Biographical data and text collection at Hans R. Guggisberg, *Religiöse Toleranz, Dokumente zur Geschichte einer Forderung*, ed. Froman-Holzbloog, Regensburg, 1984, p. 86-88. Castellio was recognized as an advocate of tolerance in the 16th century by Richard Tuck, „Scepticism and toleration in the seventeenth century“ in *Justifying Toleration, Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Mendus, New York, 1988, p. 21.

34 Because of the violation of the authority of the Holy Scripture, vezi Daniel Bergère, „Calvin et Servet la légende et la réalité ou Calvin et Servet Chronique d'un dérapage ou Calvin et „l'affaire“ Servet“ in *La revue réformée*, nr. 250, 2009/3, april 2009, p. 27.

35 For example Lellio Sozzini in *Apologia pro M. Serveto din 1554* see in Joseph Lecler, *Historire de la Tolérance au siècle de la réforme*, ed. Aubier, Paris, 1955, p. 348.

36 Helmstedt, 1748.

37 Guggisberg, *Sebastien Castellio*, 2002, p. 270.

38 Bergère, *Calvin et Servet*, pp. 11-30.

In *Essai sur le moirs* he claimed that behind Calvin's denunciation and the Vienna Inquisition was Calvin himself³⁹. In *Encyclopedie*, Geneva was described as the first free and tolerant city in Europe, especially because of the presence of Rousseau and Voltaire, with the only condition having to get rid of the ignorance of the past as a result of which Michael Servet was executed⁴⁰ in order to fully meet its standard displayed by the Calvinist Reformation: *Post tenebras lux*. In Bayle's *Critical and Historical Dictionary*, Castellion⁴¹, Jean Calvin's opponent, became an emblematic personality for the 17th century, even though the author considers Castellion's argument unfit for the Enlightenment, having minimal sympathy for him⁴².

As far as civil and religious ecclesiastical tolerance was concerned, the Servet case was deemed by Voltaire as the only one to be clarified. He never ceased to demand this since he was convinced that the sins of the "Pope of Geneva" cried for a collective penance⁴³. In the demonstration and argumentation of the Geneva chapter in the *Encyclopedia* the philosophers borrowed Bossuet's argument, claiming that Unitarianism was a natural consequence of Luther and Calvin's Reformation, which angered those in Geneva⁴⁴. For Voltaire, the city's liberalism did not mean much, since it generally considered Calvinism as outdated, corrupt, enemy of culture and art, represented by "imbecile fanatics" with a black cloak. Voltaire's bleak vision, in the first place, derived from the Servet case⁴⁵. In 1758 leaving his property in *La Délices* for the vicinity of the other French property across the border (the border was on the outskirts of the city) at Ferney, Voltaire obsessively dealt with the Servet case which he developed into a real "business"⁴⁶ against "Jesuit Presbyterians"⁴⁷. The

39 *Ibidem*, p. 23.

40 Jean Sgard, „Les spectacles ou de limites de la Tolerance” in *Voltaire –Rousseau et la Tolérance...*, p. 84.

41 See „Castalion”, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, ed. Slatkine, 1969, vol. 4, pp. 526b-541b.

42 Guggisberg, *Sebastien Castellio*, 2002, p. 270.

43 Adams Geoffrey, „Mutual Disenchantment: Voltaire and the Genevans, 1755-1762” in Adams Geoffrey, „*The Huguenots and French Opinion, 1685-1787, The Enlightenment Debate on Toleration*, Ontario, 1991, p. 137.

44 *Ibidem*, p. 141.

45 Voltaire, *L’Affaire Calas et autrea affaires, Traité sur le Tolérance*, ed. Jacques Van den Heuvel, Gallimard, Paris, 2006, p. 8.

46 Geoffrey, *Mutual Disenchantment*, 1991, p. 141.

47 Voltaire, *L’Affaire Calas et autrea affaires*, 2006, p. 8.

emergence of cases of religious persecution in France, due to the non-observance of the prohibition to profess the reformed religion, things seemed to change in Voltaire's case. After the indifference with which he treated the case of the Huguenot priest La Rochette, sentenced to death in Toulouse⁴⁸, Voltaire fully supported the Huguenot cause in the Calas case, carried out less than a month after the death of the minister concerned. This case also solves the conflict-ridden relationship between Voltaire and Geneva. It was a pact by which the old communication problems (Servet Case, Geneva Article in the *Encyclopedia*) could be resolved amicably. Servet's problem, however, involves interfaith debates to this day⁴⁹.

The case of Jean Calas in Toulouse

French Protestantism suffered a great deal after the withdrawal of the Edict of Nantes. Formulating its clandestinity as a life in the desert, the period after 1760 was considered "heroism in the desert", especially after the atrocities committed in Cevennes (Provence), as "the second period in the desert" of the existing French Protestant church. Between 1760 and 1785, the Enlightenment idea of religious tolerance was born after many years of procrastination and unrest, especially due to the Calas case⁵⁰. In the wake of the change of religious opinion from the 18th century the Calas case seems to be an anachronism. The case⁵¹ became known thanks to Voltaire who on this occasion also elaborated his *Tolerance Treaty*. The trial of the Protestant minister, Francois Rochette⁵² and the three glassmen, and later a Protestant merchant Jean Calas of

48 Voltaire intervened at Richelieu, but without enthusiasm and therefore without results. The Huguenot reverend La Rochette and three Protestant glaziers were executed for their religion on February 19, 1762, while they sang the Psalms of David. This case could not become an affair for Voltaire see *Ibidem*, p. 9.

49 See an entire indictment regarding the relationship between Geneva and Servet's fate, from the perspective of subsequent public perception in Valentine Zuber, *Les conflits de la tolérance Michel Servet entre mémoire et histoire*, Paris, 2004.

50 Bergeal Catherine, *Protestantisme et tolérance en France au XVIIIe siècle, de la révocation à la révolution 1658-1789*, ed. La Cause, Carrières sous Poissy, 1988, p. 98.

51 David D. Bien, *L'Affaire Calas, Hérésie, persécution, tolérance à Toulouse au 18e siècle*, Toulouse, 1987. Cf. Alex Coutet, *Jean Calas Roué vif et innocent*, ed. Editpro, Mialet, 2003, pp. 1-236.

52 David D Bien, „Rochette, les freres greniers et L'hysterie a caussade" in David D Bien, *L'Affaire Calas, Hérésie, persécution, tolérance à Toulouse au 18e siècle*, Toulouse, 1987, pp. 79-91.

Toulouse⁵³ showed that the anti-Protestant feelings of the Catholic majority and jealousy over the wealth of Protestant merchants could still be manipulated even if the indifference to religion became more and more prevalent in France. The son of Jean Calas, Marc Antoine was a young man who was preparing to become a lawyer, but he broke down due to the impossibility of having to profess his faith, and by declining to do so, he could not obtain the certificate of catholicity which went along with the compulsory conversion to the old faith. Because of this dilemma of conscience causing a spiritual conflict for him, he committed suicide. His funeral, however, was organized by the Roman Catholics and resembled the feast of a martyr not the funeral of a Protestant who ended his days. The parents were accused of homicide who with the help of the Protestant coreligionists presented a defense letter in 1762 that got truncated and declared counterfeit before the Toulouse Parliament where it caused a huge scandal. The Catholic clergy led by the priest Montezat presented a counter-letter to the judges by which he enumerated the fanatical nature of Lutheran and Calvinist Protestantism by calling on the example of Servet's burning⁵⁴. The religious intolerance displayed helped the two cases, later Voltaire, to meet. Reinventing the theory of French Protestantism as fanatical, rebellious and sympathetic to the enemies of France, the tragedy of the merchant entered the public interest⁵⁵ through Voltaire's intervention. Through the philosopher the case became the catalyst of the French national consciousness⁵⁶, starting a true crusade against religious fanaticism embodied by the infamy of the Old Regime⁵⁷. Voltaire became the defender of the merchant from Toulouse prosecuted and exterminated for his alleged lethal aggression on his own child to prevent his conversion to Catholicism. Due to the fact that Voltaire became a true advocate of Calas's cause, a paradoxical alliance between the philosopher and the Protestants⁵⁸,

53 See the documents of the trial in Bergeal Catherine „Les affaires Calas et Sirven” in Bergeal Catherine, *Protestantisme et tolerance en France au XVIIIe siecle, de la revocation a la revolution 1658-1789*, La Cause, Carrières sous Poissy, 1988, p. 97-103.

54 Adams Geoffrey, „The Calas Affair: A Catalyst for the National Conscience” in Geoffrey, *The Huguenots and French Opinion*, 1991, 213.

55 Bien, *L’Affaire Calas*, p. 189.

56 Geoffrey *The Calas Affair*, pp. 211-228.

57 Voltaire, *L’Affaire Calas et autrea affaires*, 2006, p. 7.

58 David D Bien, „La tolerance par indifference” in Bien, *L’Affaire Calas*, 1987, p. 27.

Voltaire and Rousseau unveiled and internationalized the subject⁵⁹, which went beyond the boundaries of a simple conflict between the Counter-Reformation and a Huguenot merchant who did not accept the conversion certificate to Catholicism. Voltaire turned this event into a real “affair”, and by doing so, he meant to dismiss the Catholic intolerance of the time, while pursuing his own interest, of course. In his dispute⁶⁰ he tried and succeeded in rehabilitating an entire Protestant family, but also the cause of Protestantism in France. It is really not the content of the argument about tolerance, but especially the fervor and intensity of the arguments used in the tolerance debate is memorable⁶¹. Voltaire’s reaction was precipitated after he had realized that in Languedoc the religious conflicts were reactivated⁶². Through the typical case for the actions of the Counter-Reformation after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Voltaire signalled the sense of secularization of the modern world, more precisely, the need for free trade in which religion cannot be an obstacle. Parisian Jansenism became a much more feared enemy⁶³ for Voltaire than French Jesuitism which was adrift⁶⁴. Through the Calas affair Voltaire wanted to strike in with the political interests of the Jansenists. His decision to get involved in the Calas case was born difficult due to the bad relations he had with the Protestant Council of Geneva⁶⁵, but also because he had little information (or wasn’t interested) about the fate of his Huguenot fellow citizens⁶⁶. His deism and the fact that he was a supporter of *thèse royale* removed him from Calvinism. In the desire to civilize the “natives” he created a theater, which was

59 René Pomeau, „Voltaire et Rousseau devant L’affaire Calas”, in *Voltaire – Rousseau et la Tolérance*, pp. 59-75.

60 He calls the people of Toulouse superstitious, fanatical, and the Parliament and the courthouse were likened to the descendants of the wild Visigoths, who remained with the idea of Saint Bartholomew’s night, being true „Jansenist scoundrels in robes” see Voltaire, *L’Affaire Calas*, 2006, p. 12.

61 Guggisberg, *Religiöse Toleranz*, 1984, p. 255.

62 Pomeau, „Voltaire et Rousseau devant L’affaire Calas”, in Pomeau, *Voltaire*, p. 61.

63 See Voltaire’s criticism of the Jansenists which he called “canaille jansenistes et parlementaire” in Jacques van den Hauvel, „Voltaire et L’affaire Callais” in *Actualité du XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Faculté des lettres de Brest, 1981, p. 9.

64 D. G. Thompson, „The persecution of french Jesuits by the Parliament of Paris 1761-1771” in *Persecution and toleration*, ed. W. J. Sheils, ed. Blackwell, 1984, pp. 289-301.

65 Geoffrey, *Mutual Disenchantment*, 1991, pp. 135-145.

66 *Idem*, „The revocation attacked 1715-1760” in Geoffrey, *The Huguenots and French Opinion*, 1991, pp. 49-59.

forbidden in Geneva and he constantly attacked, along with D’Alambert, Calvin’s personality. In *Henriade* he pointed out that the transition to Catholicism of Henry IV, in fact, meant a concession made by tolerant French Calvinism in order to maintain the French monarchy⁶⁷. But the city was claiming the serious problems of the French Huguenots, a fact that Voltaire treated with carelessness and distance. The Calas case from this point of view was not a mere positioning between Calvinist Geneva, or Catholic Toulouse, nor between Protestant or Catholic public opinion, but the plea filed by a man judged unfairly because of his religious affiliation. Voltaire, re-evaluating the reports of the French police in *Anci me Regime*, showed that Calas’s trial was unfair, being the victim of the corrupt judicial system. The reconstruction of the death of Calas’s son is worthy of a police novel by which Voltaire comes to the idea, otherwise proven, that he committed suicide. As a result, Calas’s trial was held without any evidence, especially because of his declared Protestantism which also made it problematic. Voltaire’s maneuvers in the Royal Court rallying courtiers and ministers to solve the Calas case was a true diplomatic success⁶⁸, a mechanism that meant to dismantle the myths created by judges⁶⁹. Detailing the symptoms of intolerance and myth created around the Calas case, a victim of arbitrary power, he managed to create an excellent tragedy that revealed the intolerance of an entire political regime⁷⁰. As an example of religious tolerance, Voltaire persuaded Calas to take back his surviving son who in the meantime converted to Catholicism.

It is due to Voltaire that the idea of tolerance acclaimed and invoked by the Calas case became the individual’s voice of freedom of conscience, an idea specific to the Enlightenment. After Calas’s rehabilitation Voltaire spoke about the Calas case in his caustic manner: “It is the most beautiful act of my tragedy”⁷¹. The climax of the Calas case was the publication of the *Tolerance Treaty*⁷², but its effects can be seen in the French Tolerance Edict of 1778⁷³.

67 *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.

68 Hauvel, *Voltaire et L’affaire Calas*, p. 11.

69 Voltaire, *L’affaire Calas*, 2006, p. 14.

70 *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

71 Hauvel, *Voltaire*, 1981, p. 12.

72 *Ibidem*, p. 5. Cf. „Traité sur la Tolérance a l’occasion de la mort de Jean Calas”, 1763 in Voltaire, *L’affaire Calas et autrea affaires*, 2006, pp. 88-194.

73 Voltaire, *L’affaire Calas et autrea affaires*, 2006, p. 26.

The two cases of Voltaire and Geneva became European affairs. The debate on the idea of tolerance and intolerance *vis-à-vis* the Servet case and the Calas case represents unquestionable evidence of the evolution of eighteenth-century Voltaire thinking. Philosophical motivation promoted serious accusations to the world of narrow confessionality and outdated politics leading to surprising changes and attitudes for that time. Protestant Geneva pledged to change through Turretini, and Catholic France abandoned the intolerant policy towards Protestants with the appearance of the Edict of Tolerance. From Voltaire's point of view it was the only way they could become "free and tolerant".

The effects of the debate on the issue of religious tolerance are still present today. The ideas of religious freedom, equality and non-discrimination consistently demand a reshaping and adaptation of the idea of tolerance to the fluctuating human nature between refusal (orthodoxy, conservatism) and acceptance (liberalism, non-discrimination, civism). The concrete effects of the debate on religious tolerance in the world of Catholicism can be seen in the Catholic publications of the Second Vatican Council which has officially expressed itself in this issue⁷⁴. Thus, the issue of religious tolerance has not ceased to be topical even today.

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⁷⁴ « La Déclaration sur la liberté religieuse », 28 octobre 1965 *Actes du Concile Vatican II*, Paris, ed. Cerf, 1968, vol. III. pp. 167-190.

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