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# Voltaire's Convincement

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## *Abstract*

The aim of this essay is to trace the evolution of Voltaire's perspective toward Quakers and Quakerism during the course of his life. The record begins when in 1726 he was forced into exile and chose to go to England. In the course of his three-year stay there, he wrote letters to his friend—letters which were published in 1733 in English under the title 'Letters Concerning the English Nation' and in French with the title 'Lettres Philosophiques'. Four of the 25 letters are devoted to Quakerism. We endeavour to depict, through his writing, Voltaire's changing attitude toward Quakerism from one of mild disdain, through ambivalence and finally to outright admiration. This unfolding begins with a summary of his letters on Quakers and proceeds to a description of French attitudes toward Quakerism in the early 18th century. The essay culminates in an account of miscellaneous reactions to Voltaire's letters and eventually to what we feel was his 'convincement', as this is reflected in his later writings.

*Key Words:* Voltaire, Letters, Quakerism, Andrew Pitt, Penn, Deism

## *Introduction*

I was of the opinion that the doctrine and history of so extraordinary a people, were worthy the attention of the curious (Voltaire 1733:1).

So begins the first of four letters devoted to Quakers and the beginning of Voltaire's lifelong interest in the Religious Society of Friends. Sprinkled

throughout his voluminous writings on a wide variety of topics, we find a recurrent reference to Quakers.

In this essay we propose to trace the evolution of Voltaire's attitude towards Quakers as it may be discerned in his writings. In the unfolding of this essay, we will also set Voltaire's attitude in the context of several French writers views of Friends.

The four letters are part of a series of letters he wrote to a friend Thieriot(1) while Voltaire was living in England. The most likely dates of the letters are 1726-1729 but most were written in 1728. Voltaire wrote them to his friend in the English language. The odyssey of the publication of the letters is an interesting one. Under the supervision of Thieriot, they were first published in 1733 in England and in English under the title *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. The first four are called *On the Quakers*. The following year they were published in France in French under the title *Lettres Philosophiques*.(2) The volume consists of twenty-five letters on various topics but the noteworthy fact is that Voltaire devoted a disproportionate amount of space to Quakers.

For example, only one letter deals with Anglicans, and one with Presbyterians. There are numerous editions of the letters in many languages and in several English translations. No authenticated manuscript exists and it is known that Voltaire made constant revisions. We should interject here, that letter writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was elevated to a high literary form of which Voltaire made ample with great skill. He used it as a polemical device and as a substitute for formal philosophical treatises.

Shortly after their publication in France, the letters were immediately banned by the Parlement (3) in Paris and a warrant for the arrest of Voltaire was issued; he escaped to Cirey.(4) The reader will discern the reason for the outrage on the part of the authorities as we recount, in part, the content of those on the Quakers. The letters extolled freedom altogether too much for the tastes of the 'Ancien Régime.'(5)

The citations from the letters that we give are from two sources, with a third

used as a sort of monitor. They are (i) the above-cited original English edition (Voltaire, 1733) which we shall refer to as E, (ii) our own translation of the Lanson edition (Lanson, 1964) which we refer to as L and (iii) as they appear in Voltaire's collected works in French in the 1785 edition.

Voltaire's preoccupation with Quakers has given rise to much speculation by scholars. Some have surmised, for example, that Voltaire used Quakerism as a subtle tool for attacking the Catholic Church and its clergy. Other scholars see Voltaire as a confirmed opponent of various sects and religious views - Anabaptists, Jansenists etc.; he regarded these as radicals lacking in systematic rational analysis and bordering on atheism.(6) On the other hand, as we have said, he appears to have been deeply affected by the Quaker movement and its followers but was critical of some of its charismatic features. It is very likely that he had read Barclay's *Apology* (7) and he may have admired its systematic analysis - an analysis worthy of any 'philosophe'.

In a letter to Nicolas de Fremont, dated Dec. 1732, (Brooks 1973:22) he wrote: 'I read two letters about the Quakers to Cardinal de Fleury from which I very prudently eliminated anything that might excite his devout and wise eminence.' Again, in a letter to Jacob Verme dated Sept 14, 1733, (Brooks 1973:28) he wrote:

These letters merely struck readers in London as philosophical, but in Paris people are calling them impious . . . and because a man has spoken *in jest* ( italics ours) against the Quakers, our Catholics conclude they do not believe in God.

Since Quakers were an object of ridicule, he may have used them as a smokescreen for his disparaging views of the Church.

#### *Some Background to Voltaire*

François-Marie Arouet was born in 1694 and died in 1778. He was the son of a lawyer and was apprenticed to an advocate named Alain. It was here that he met the abovementioned Thieriot with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship.

When he was twenty-five years old, François-Marie Arouet decided to call

himself 'Arouet de Voltaire'; he is often referred to as M. de Voltaire. (8) He was a highly gifted writer and is acknowledged as one of the leading intellectual figures of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Voltaire had associations and relations with the most eminent of contemporaneous writers and scholars. After serving as a reluctant apprentice in the law firm of Alain from 1714 to 1716, he dropped out and engaged in his passion for writing. In 1717, however, he was imprisoned in the Bastille for scurrilous political comments. He eventually worked actively as a creative writer and philosopher and made a very comfortable living doing so, acquiring fame and fortune in the process. He achieved wide recognition and indeed adulation. He made enemies though, for he often wrote with wit and pungent sarcasm - a sarcasm not always appreciated by the targets of his venom. His new name however, led him into trouble. At the age of thirty, he had an unfortunate set-to with a man of noble birth named Rohan.(9) The latter, mocking Voltaire's new name, publicly humiliated him. Without going into details, suffice it to say that, as a result of this encounter, Voltaire was once more imprisoned in the Bastille, then taken to Calais from which port he sailed for England.

While living in Paris, he made the acquaintance of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751) whose house he frequently visited. Bolingbroke, a Tory and supporter of the Jacobite cause, was exiled for his political activities. Voltaire also met Everard Falkener (10), a silk merchant who eventually became the British ambassador to Constantinople. As we shall see, these contacts later proved advantageous.

So it was that Voltaire arrived in England in May, 1726.

#### *Voltaire's Exposure to Quakerism before 1726*

Before turning to the letters and their consequences, it is interesting to speculate on what Voltaire might have known about Quakers before his departure for England. We do not have any convincing evidence that he met any Quakers in

France. Nowhere in his writings does Voltaire mention Quakers before 1726. On the other hand, while in the Bastille in 1717, he may have made the acquaintance of a Quaker who was imprisoned for engaging in missionary activities. The Friend in question was named Joseph Lacy. It is possible he and Voltaire discussed Quakers and their beliefs. Although there were several other reports of missionary activities by British Friends in France, it does not appear that there was any settled meeting there.(11)

We owe to Gustave Lanson (Lanson 1964: viii-iii) and to Edith Philips (Philips 1932:223-229) a partial record of the various reports about Quakers which appeared in France and in Holland (in the French language). These reports were relatively numerous. Philips gives credit to Voltaire for the change in attitude of the French towards Quakers from one of contempt to one of admiration and sympathy. It is possible, and even likely, that Voltaire read one or more of the accounts to which we turn our attention.

The first excerpt concerning Friends dates from 1659 and appears in the *Receuil Conrart* vol. 4 as quoted by Lanson (12):

Tremblers [ the literal French rendition of 'Quakers' ] are the latest [i.e., sect] which organized themselves only 3 or 4 years ago but which are talked about more than all the others . . . They are people of modest means and are possessed of a dark melancholy and their drawback is that they believe themselves so illuminated and filled with the holy spirit that they cannot err; their sermons are nothing but a type of gibberish or a tissue of passages from the scriptures quoted with little judgement. While they acknowledge, in general, that the scriptures are divinely inspired, they believe much more in the spirit and the light. . . . Moreover the Tremblers assume a greater probity and simplicity of customs and habits than other sects and one of their outward characteristics, apart from their sad countenance, is that they frequently sigh and groan, either an

expression of their own weakness or the observations they make on the sins of other men.

The article went on to report that the 'Tremblers' numbered the days of the week and the months of the year and that they addressed everyone with 'thee and thou' [tutoyer] regardless of rank, and deem salutations as superstitions.

The only person of stature among them is the Earl of Pembroke (13) who has since withdrawn from the sect. But one of the principal leaders is the famous James Nayler (14) who was whipped, stigmatized and imprisoned for having allowed followers to give him honors, similar to those received by our Savior from His disciples. His followers cried Hosanna on entering the city of Bristol....this punishment did not prevent the Quakers from multiplying rapidly to about 10,000 . . . and send missionaries to Turkey (15) and America . . .

The second citation comes from the same collection. It is an observation on the state of religion in England and dates from 1669. It began as follows:

The tremblers (16) are varied and consist of more than 100 factions;(17) it is impossible to find two having the same views. They tremble when they preach . . . and consider themselves sinless . . . The women and girls preach as well as the men. They believe that one should never be baptized, they never take communion and they groan like beasts.

It is only fair to say that in the early days of the Quaker movement there was a certain level of 'enthusiasm', with trembling and writhing not a rare event. This enthusiasm had abated, if it had not altogether disappeared, by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary with Quakerism was the movement known as Ranterism; Ranters practiced excesses and were often mistaken for Friends.(18)

Given the slow pace of communication at that time, it is interesting that news of the celebrated incident involving Nayler had made its way to France as soon as it did. In 1656 Nayler's followers decided to reenact the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem with Nayler playing the role of Jesus. For this blasphemy, parliament passed a severe sentence on him. He was set in the pillory, whipped through the streets, and had his tongue bored through with a hot iron, and the letter B, for 'blasphemer', was branded on his forehead. It is not surprising that such a sensational incident would attract attention.

At the time of Cromwell's Protectorate, a newspaper was published in Paris with the title *Nouvelles Ordinaires*, publishing in French, news from Britain. It was succeeded by *Journal de tout ce qui s'est passé au rétablissement du Roi* (Journal of all that happened at the restoration of the King [Charles II]). The Nayler incident was reported in the *Nouvelles* in 1656 and was quickly copied to other French newspapers. To illustrate the electrifying effect the incident had, Loret, who published, in verse form, a news bulletin for the Duchesse de Longueville, called *La Musé Historique* reported the event in 1656. Here is part of it in translation:

If everything which various individuals  
Reported today is true, then  
It is a spirit which has gone berserk,  
It is a candid hypochondriac,  
It is an instrument of Satan,  
It is an odd charlatan,  
It is a ridiculous atheist,  
It is a miserable sophist,  
Who, by several empty arguments,  
Authorizes his documents,  
It is an extravagant monster,  
Finally it is my belief that  
This messiah pretender

Runs a great risk of being hanged.

Another important potential source of information about Quakers was an encyclopedia (Chamberlain 1664) which was available in France in a French translation *L'État present de l'Angleterre* in various editions from 1670 on. The article on religion considers the various sects, devoting a paragraph to most sects but three pages to Quakers. Here is what the article on 'Quakers' said in the 1698 edition:

They are a distinct body from all the other Dissenters, disagreeing in doctrine and practice from all alike, and teaching, in truth, a distinct religion from every other body of the Christians throughout the world. Their adversaries have charged them with a denial of all the fundamentals of Christianity . . . In their outward deportment they study to appear as contrary to the rest of mankind as they possibly can.

There follows a summary of Quaker doctrine based on Barclay's *Apology* and the points (a large number) on which Quaker belief differed from traditional Christianity. Of Fox, Chamberlain wrote, 'he was a very illiterate man and so continued to his dying day.' Clearly Chamberlain's work did not paint the Society in a particularly favorable light.

As further examples of possible sources of information about Quakers, to which French readers could turn, we note that Barclay's *Apology* was first written in Latin and published in 1676 but was quickly translated into several other languages and a French translation appeared in 1702. However, in 1674 there appeared, in French translation, Barclay's summary *Abrégé des Principes de la Religion Chrétienne telle que la professent ceux que l'on appelle les Quakers ou Trembleurs*. (Summary of the principles of Christianity such as are professed by those who are called Quakers).

In 1695 a Dutchman, Gerard Croese, who was not a Friend, published a *History of Quakers* in Latin (Croese 1695). The English translation appeared in London in 1696. While this book was not translated into French, Father Catrou, a Jesuit, published *Histoire des Trembleurs* in 1733. Croese did not give a favorable view of Fox's literary and linguistic abilities nor of his educational background (19). There were numerous other references to Quakers in French newspapers, magazines, and books from 1660 on - far more than on other sects.

By some counts there were, at that time, as many as 200 sects in England; Quakers were an object of intense interest and curiosity as the apparent epitome of England's religious excesses. This curiosity may have been further stimulated by stories of Penn's colony in Pennsylvania. There were many rumors and stories; for example, that Quakerism was rampant with conspirators against the crown, that Catholics took refuge among the Quakers and that Fox himself was a Jesuit in disguise.

Voltaire would, therefore, have had ample opportunity to read about Friends before sailing for England had he chosen to do so. On the other hand, Voltaire never alludes to any knowledge of Quakerism he might have had before his arrival in England. Yet in the opening citation we have quoted, he refers to Quakers as an 'extraordinary people', suggesting some exposure to Quakerism an exposure which he may have acquired only after living in England.

#### *Voltaire in England*

After his landing at Greenwich, Voltaire's whereabouts are not well documented. His Parisian contacts with Bolingbroke and Falkener now stood him in good stead. We know that he stayed for a time with Everard Falkener in Wandsworth, that he spent some time in London, probably as a guest of Bolingbroke, and that he boarded with a dyer in the village of Wandsworth. Wandsworth was then a pretty village close to the Thames and about six miles from the center of London. There was a community of Huguenots who had fled the persecutions in France

and had developed a dying trade. There was also a thriving Quaker community as well as a Quaker school. It appears that the head of the school, John Kuweidt, gave English lessons to Voltaire on a voluntary basis and that an assistant in the school also tutored Voltaire.(20) The assistant, Edward Higginson, discussed Quakerism, read Barclay's Apology and the Spectator with Voltaire.(21) Voltaire rapidly became fluent in English and we infer that his associations with the tutors enabled him to get an exposure to Quaker faith and practice. We shall soon hear more of Higginson.

Voltaire was something of a snob (consider that he changed his name to 'Arouet de Voltaire', giving it an aristocratic tone). In Wandsworth, his Friendly associations were primarily with Quaker school teachers. This may have led him to surmise that those with a modest station in life could readily follow the precepts of Quakerism but that those with greater wealth and influence might find the strictures imposed by Friends problematic. He therefore sought a Quaker of some wealth and standing to test his speculations and found one in the person of Andrew Pitt,(22) a linen draper, of Hampstead.

Pitt was indeed prominent in the Quaker community. He was especially active in promoting legislation dealing with tithes and oaths. It will be recalled that Fox and Friends were absolutely adamant against paying tithes and swearing oaths, basing their objections upon the Scriptures. As a consequence of their refusals, Friends suffered severely, with frequent imprisonments and confiscations of goods and property. In 1689, the Act of Toleration was passed allowing the free exercise of Protestant worship but it was not until 1696 that the Act of Affirmation (23) was passed.

Because of their opposition to swearing an oath, Friends had been barred from universities, excluded from civil service, from trades in certain towns, etc., and accordingly had moved to larger cities, such as Bristol, and had engaged in trade, commerce, and manufacturing in which activities they became phenomenally

successful. Many converts to Quakerism had been well educated, not necessarily in the traditional sense (Vann 1969) and education was highly prized among them. Their education, their industriousness and their creativity were directed toward providing services to the wider society in which they lived; they did not squander excessive energy on theological debate or metaphysics. They became successful and inventive in the iron industry, in weaving, in pottery, in the manufacture of chocolate as an alternative to alcoholic drinks, in banking etc. They therefore provided goods and services affordable to those in the less affluent economic classes, a provision which was very innovative. In the process, they founded dynasties of prosperous families which in their turn generated socially conscious crusaders such as Elizabeth Fry, George Cadbury etc.(Raistrick, 1950).

Briefly then, this is the environment in which Voltaire found himself. What of Voltaire himself, and his beliefs? He claimed to be a Deist. This term and its companion Theist, were frequently used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter. Although there are subtle differences between these terms, (differences into which we do not propose to enter), it appears that Voltaire used them interchangeably and provided definitions: A Theist is a man firmly convinced of the existence of a supreme being who perpetuates the human race, punishes crimes without cruelty, and rewards virtuous actions with goodness. Deism was defined as the adoration of a supreme being divorced from all superstition. The Oxford English Dictionary defined a Deist as one who acknowledges the existence of God but rejects revealed religion.

Voltaire was vehemently opposed to the Catholic Church and uncompromisingly anticlerical. He clung tenaciously to his Deist views and, as we shall see, came to regard Quakerism as a form of Deism.

*The Quaker Letters*

*(A) The First Letter*

Let us turn to the first of the letters. Having decided to learn more about the Quakers, Voltaire came to the house of Andrew Pitt where he was invited to dinner. Incidentally we do not learn the name of Voltaire's interlocutor Pitt, (24) until much later. Moreover the letter gives the impression of being a verbatim transcript of the dialogue with Pitt, but for a variety of reasons, that is far from being the case. We are of the opinion that Voltaire was careful in phrasing the dialogue in such a way as to convey his predetermined intent.(25) This allegation is supported, in part, by the fact that he made frequent revisions of the text of the manuscript. Voltaire began with a pen portrait of Pitt.

The Quaker was a hale ruddy-complexioned elderly man who had never had any illnesses because he had never known passions or intemperance: I have never known a person with a more noble or a more engaging air.' After formalities on the part of Voltaire, he began with the sort of question which he wrote 'good' Catholics asked of Huguenots: 'My dear sir, are you baptized?' 'No' replied Pitt, 'nor are my brethren.' 'Zouns' (26) said I, 'then you are therefore not Christians.' 'Friend' (27), he replied, 'do not swear, we are Christians and try to be good Christians.' 'Ods fish' ( see note 26) said I, 'have you forgotten that Jesus Christ was baptized by John?'

A discussion ensues, Pitt pointing out that Jesus never baptized with water but said that He would baptize with the holy spirit. Paul baptized only two people and the apostles circumcised those who wanted to be; moreover, Jesus was circumcised. 'Art thou circumcised?' Pitt asked of Voltaire. 'I have not had the honour', Voltaire replied. 'Well then Friend, thou art a Christian without being circumcised and I a Christian without being baptized.'

Thus did this worthy man speciously cite three or four scriptural passages which seemed to favor his sect but he neglected, with the best will in the world, about a hundred passages which would demolish his arguments.

Voltaire pointed out that one could not reason with an unenlightened person. There followed a discussion on the sacraments, Pitt pointing out that the word sacrament does not occur a single time in the scriptures and he next called Voltaire's attention to Barclay's *Apology*. 'Our enemies claim that it is very dangerous which proves how reasonable it is.' Voltaire promised to read this book. Pitt then pointed out the justification for using the second person singular in addressing one person, regardless of his station in life. As to clothing, 'Others wear theirs as a mark of their distinction while we wear ours as a mark of our Christian humility.' Pitt went on to explain that Quakers did not go to the theater nor did they gamble. Moreover, Pitt added 'we never swear an oath, not even in the courts of justice; we believe that the name of the Most High should never be prostituted to the miserable disputes of men.'

We never go to war,[ Pitt certified] not because we are afraid to die, on the contrary we bless the day when we are united with the Being of Beings; it is because we are neither wolves, nor tigers, nor mastiffs, but men and Christians. Our Lord, who has directed us to love our enemies and to suffer without complaint, would undoubtedly not want us to go overseas to slaughter our brothers, because the murderers, dressed in red, with their two foot high hats enlist citizens by making a noise with two little sticks on the stretched skin of an ass; and after a victory in battle, when all London glows with lights, the sky is inflamed with fireworks, and the air retains the noise of chimes, organs, canon, we groan in silence at these murders and are deeply affected with sadness of spirit and brokenness of heart for this sad havoc which gives joy to the people.



This is the end of the first letter. It is difficult to imagine a more poignant condemnation of wars and their aftermath than is contained in the last paragraph.

Before going to the subsequent Quaker letters, a couple of remarks are in order. Notice first that Voltaire used the opportunity through Pitt, to take a jab at the clergy and others – who wear clothes which marked their *station*, while Quakers wear theirs as a mark of Christian *humility*. Then through the voice of Pitt, Voltaire referred his readers to Barclay's *Apology* (see note 24). The phrase about tigers and wolves has an analogue in the *Apology*: 'Men should so much degenerate that they bear the image of roaring lions, tearing tigers, devouring wolves and raging boars than of rational creatures endued with reason.' Furthermore, Voltaire would have delighted in Barclay's strident attack on the church and clergy.

Finally, this may be an appropriate place to recount an incident concerning Voltaire and the above-mentioned Edward Higginson, the apprentice school master who tutored Voltaire in English. An account of that encounter first appeared in the *Yorkshireman* in 1832.(28) It is presumed to be an authentic account related by Higginson in his twilight years.

During a discussion that Voltaire had with the headmaster John Kuweidt, concerning Quakers and the rite of baptism, they reached an impasse and summoned Higginson. The latter cited Paul in Corinthians I, 1 :17 : 'For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel.' Incredulous and enraged, Voltaire accused Higginson of distorting the scriptures. After extracting from Voltaire an agreement that he would abide by the source in the original Greek, Higginson produced his Greek Bible and on reading the passage Voltaire's rage turned to surprise. He asked how the English clergy reconciled this citation with the dispensing of 'water baptism'. The usual reply, said Higginson, was that Paul meant 'not principally or chiefly'. Voltaire observed that the clergy might, in the

same way, circumvent all the Scriptures!

Some short time thereafter, in 1726 Voltaire was at the home of Earl Temple with Pope and other luminaries and the conversation once more turned to baptism. On this occasion, Voltaire quoted the relevant passage but could not recall the exact reference. His listeners were so astounded at the revelation that they bet Voltaire 500 pounds on its authenticity. Voltaire borrowed a horse from the Earl, made his way to Wandsworth and roused Higginson to get the exact citation. Returning to the Earl's, the guests were forced to acknowledge the accuracy of the citation and Voltaire won his bet.

In the same account, Higginson related that during their tutoring sessions, Voltaire, among other things, translated Barclay's dedication of the *Apology* to Charles II. But where the Latin read 'tuus' and 'tuum', Voltaire translated these as 'you' which grated on Higginson's Friendly ears.

*(B) The Second Letter.(translated from L)*

In this letter, we find Pitt taking Voltaire to a meeting for worship in London. From the description, Lanson concludes that it was very likely Gracechurch Street Meeting(29). Voltaire reports that there were 400 men and 300 women. This was the meeting that included the Quaker 'aristocracy', with a high concentration of well-to-do merchants, traders, bankers etc. The men all had their hats on; the women, according to Voltaire, hid their faces with their fans. (30)

After about fifteen minutes of silence, recounted Voltaire, one man took off his hat and after making several wry faces and heaving several sighs, recited, half through his mouth and half through his nose, a lot of gibberish which he assumed was from the Bible, but neither he nor anyone heard anything. After this contortionist had finished his 'fine' monologue, and the assembly had broken up, all edified and stupefied, I asked my host why the wise among them put up with such foolishness'. Pitt replied 'We have to, because we

cannot know if a man who rises to speak is inspired by the spirit or by foolishness - when in doubt we listen patiently and even allow women to speak. Two or three of our faithful ones are often inspired at the same time and it is then that there is a 'fine' noise in the house of the Lord'. 'Then you have no priests?' said Voltaire. 'No, Friend' said the Quaker, 'and we are better off for it .....would thou have us eliminate so fortunate a distinction? Why abandon our child to a wet nurse when we have milk to feed it? The priests would soon dominate the house and oppress mother and child. God said 'freely have ye received, freely give'; after these words should we engage in the trade of the Gospels, sell the Holy Spirit and make of the assembly of Christians a market place of merchants? We do not give money to men dressed in black to assist our poor, to bury our dead, to preach to the faithful; these sacred tasks are too precious to us to delegate to others.' 'But' Voltaire insisted, 'how can you discern that it is the spirit of God which inspires you when you speak?' Pitt answered, 'Whosoever prays to God to enlighten him and whosoever proclaims biblical truths which he senses, such a person can be sure that God is the source of the inspiration.' Pitt continued '...It is the Creator of thy soul who gives thee ideas; but as he has given thy heart freedom, he gives thy spirit ideas which thy heart deserves; thou liveth in God, thou moveth in God, thou thinketh in God, thou hast only to open thy eyes to this light which lights all men, then wilt thou see the truth and wilt make it be seen.'

That essentially is the end of the second letter.

(C) *The third letter (translated from L)*

This letter is in part, a caricature, and in part Voltaire's distorted account of the 'rise and progress' of Friends. Voltaire may have based his account on Croese's but it is more likely a deliberate distortion of the facts to achieve his desired effect. Croese's history is not always a sympathetic one. To begin with, Voltaire exhibited his snobbery. He described Fox as illiterate; he could not conceive that a person of Fox's social and educational background could possibly have the

intellectual resources to found a religion. The facts are that Fox was far from being illiterate. He was comparatively well read and owned a large collection of more than 100 books in his personal library (see note 19).

Here is a sample of Voltaire's mockery taken from *letter C*.

Fox believed himself inspired ... and that he must speak in a manner different from the rest of mankind. He began to writhe his body, to screw up his face, to hold his breath and exhale in a forcible manner.... Inspiration became so habitual that he could scarcely deliver himself in any other manner... The oracle at Delphi could not have done better.

Voltaire continued:

Quakers were persecuted under Charles II, not upon a religious account but for refusing to pay tithes, for theeing and thouing the magistrates and for refusing to take oaths.

This is a curious statement since Voltaire must have been perfectly aware that these were indeed 'acts upon a religious account'. And if he were not aware, then he would have heard as much from Josiah Martin.(31)

Voltaire ended this letter with a quotation from Barclay's *Apology* - the dedication to Charles II - and then added 'A more surprising circumstance is that this epistle written by an obscure individual had the effect of putting a stop to the persecution.' The date of the first edition of the *Apology* is 1676 and thirteen more difficult years had to be endured by Friends before they were partially relieved from persecution. We see here another instance of Voltaire's snobbery-in the English edition, (E), Voltaire used the phrase 'a private man of no figure'.

Despite the inaccuracies, however, Voltaire did intersperse his letter with positive evaluations of Quakerism and its founder Fox, using him as an emblem of anti-

clericalism. He wrote of Fox :

Had he only preached against the military, he would have had nothing to fear, but he attacked the ecclesiastics: he was quickly imprisoned. He [Fox] dared to convert Cromwell's soldiers - the latter, seeing their numbers increase... wanted to bring them to his side: Cromwell offered them money (32) but they were incorruptible and he said that this religion was the only one which had resisted the charms of gold.

Voltaire here engaged in a curious mixture of admiration for, and ridicule of, the Religious Society of Friends, an ambivalence he maintained over the years. Can we account for this? As we have said, Voltaire claimed to be a Deist, and was a child (and possibly godfather!) of the Enlightenment - the age of reason - and could not abide revealed religion. Any system not grounded in reason was anathema to him. Nevertheless, he saw much to be admired in Quakerism. Indeed, for Voltaire the beliefs and practices of Friends embodied some of his own ideals. To set these in context, we give a romanticized summary of Friends' ideals; to be sure, these are lofty objectives to which Friends aspire and occasionally achieve!: Friends worship God without being irrational about it. They prefer love to dogmas, the inner light to theology, science to metaphysics, sincerity of faith to outward ceremonies and rites. They revere righteousness, and they believe in a love of truth. In their personal relations, they advocate reason and common sense; in work, they extol industry; they practice toleration and they endeavour to live in peace with their neighbours and with one another. They cherish the characteristics of personal integrity and sincerity. They are strict pacifists.(33)

Granted that this is idealism of a high order yet it is an idealism which Voltaire would have endorsed. Moreover, he was in complete sympathy with the anti-clerical stance of Friends. To repeat, Voltaire found Quakerism to be overburdened with what seemed to him, eccentric behaviour and enthusiasm

bordering on the ludicrous and, having a sarcastic bent, he could not resist the temptation to mock those attributes. Notwithstanding his reservations about those aspects of Quakerism which he viewed as ludicrous, he nevertheless used Friends freely as a vehicle for his anticlericalism. We shall see, however that when he referred to Quakers in his later years, he managed to overlook some of what he had earlier viewed as Quaker idiosyncrasies.

*(D)The fourth Letter (translated from L)*

This letter is in dramatic contrast to letter three. In this one he describes the life and work of William Penn (1644-1718). Where in letter three Fox is painted as an eccentric and laughable oaf, in this letter Voltaire calls him 'piously mad', while the portrait of Penn is replete with praise and admiration.

Voltaire gave different accounts of Penn's conviction by Thomas Loe, the version in the English edition E, being closer to the truth. He also recalled that Penn and Fox carried missions to the continent and had some success in Holland.

They crowned their labors with success; but a circumstance which reflected the greatest honour upon them and at the same time put their humility to the greatest trial (French-'put it in the greatest danger') was the reception they met from Elizabeth the Princess of Palatine, aunt to George I, a lady conspicuous for her genius and knowledge. She at last entertained so favourable an opinion of Quakerism that they confessed she was not far from the kingdom of heaven.

After his travels, Penn returned to his father's deathbed where Voltaire wrote that Penn 'made a fruitless exhortation to his father not to receive the [Anglican] sacrament but to die a Quaker.' As a footnote, we remark that it is interesting that Voltaire hesitated about the administration of last rites to himself, but finally, succumbing to 'Pascal's wager', accepted Extreme Unction.

In 1688 Penn then established the 'province of Pennsylvania' which Voltaire stated was 'south of Maryland'!

The first step Penn took was to enter into an alliance with his American neighbours [Indian tribes]; and this is the only treaty between these people and the Christians which was not ratified by an oath and was never infringed. The new sovereign [ Penn] ... enacted very wise and prudent laws, none of which has ever been changed. The first is to injure no person upon a religious account and to consider as brethren all those who believe in one God. 'The natives of the country...cultivated, by degrees, a friendship with the peaceable Quakers. They loved these as much as they detested the other Christians who had conquered and laid waste America and they besought Penn to admit them among his vassals. It was a new phenomenon that a sovereign was 'thoued', to whom one spoke with hat on, a government without priests [omitted in the English edition], a people without arms either offensive or defensive, all citizens equal before the law, and neighbours not entertaining the least jealousy against one another. William Penn might glory in having brought the Golden Age down upon the earth.

The letter ended with an observation.

I cannot foretell the fate of the religion of the Quakers in America, but I see that it is declining every day in England. In every country, where liberty of conscience is allowed, the established religion will, in the long run, swallow up the rest . . . The children of the Quakers, enriched by the industry of their parents, want to enjoy honours, wear buttons and ruffles; and quite ashamed of being called Quakers, they become converts to the Church of England merely to be in fashion.(34)

A postscript is called for: Voltaire and Pitt remained on friendly terms. Pitt had

apparently sent Voltaire a copy of Berkeley's 'Alciphron' and there is a letter containing a cordial acknowledgment of the gift from Voltaire (35) with comments on the book.

#### *First Reactions*

After the appearance of the first English edition, the abovementioned Josiah Martin wrote to Voltaire asking him to correct the libelous comments he had made about Fox and the Quakers. This exhortation was ignored and Martin decided to publish the letter he had written under the title *Letter from one of the People call'd Quakers to Francis De Voltaire, occasioned by etc....* It is a pamphlet of some fifty pages - a thoroughgoing admonition of Voltaire. Martin wrote:

Tis a main point of prudence in an author to make an apt choice of his matter: In this Voltaire seems to have been mistaken when he meddled with religion...The smoothness of his style, the delicacy of his diction are very pleasant and entertaining: But errors in Fact, so clad, are the more dangerous: the frequency of which in the third and fourth letters, bespeak himself not well read in the history he undertakes to write.

Commenting on Voltaire's dialogue with Pitt concerning the sacraments, Martin wrote:

Here I'm inclined to think thou wast not over-scrupulous in the wording part, nor do I believe it was thy mind so much to deliver his genuine argument, as to gratify the credulous reader at the Quaker's expense.

In the third letter, Voltaire's account is replete with inaccuracies bordering on nonsense. He spoke, for example, of Fox's asking to be scourged. Martin wrote of this episode: 'What a pity it is then that a wise man, and one who has expressed so great a regard for the truth as thou hast done, should be guilty of

writing a parcel of stories so very wide of it?' He then called Voltaire's attention to Penn's eulogy of Fox: 'After this [Penn's eulogy] shall the memory of so great a man have a ridiculous veil cast over it by the pen of a celebrated historian and one of Voltaire's character for fine writing?' Since Voltaire had expressed so high a regard for Penn, would Voltaire not accept the latter's glowing appraisal of his associate and Friend George Fox?

In an article in the Grubstreet Journal (36) we read:

Friend Ezra, in a letter from Norwich [we know nothing more about him]..... instances many particulars wherein Voltaire charges the Quakers with ceremonies, customs and sayings which they never use, prove him guilty of contradictions and nonsense' and in the same letter from Ezra, he concludes 'that such a collection of lies he had never read. Nor is it to be thought strange that he [Voltaire] has scribbled these ridiculous messages about us when it seems to be his whole business to make a droll of religion.

It is not surprising that Quakers should react unfavorably to Voltaire's four letters on Quakers and it is not unexpected that the French would too, but for different reasons. Unlike the English Quakers, the French read a flattering picture of the Quakers emerging at the expense of their society, their church and clergy! We remarked above that the thinly veiled criticism in the letters had resulted in the condemnation of the Letters by the *Parlement*, copies were seized and burned and Voltaire's house searched; he had taken refuge in Lorraine, an independent duchy which was not under the monarch's jurisdiction.

The collection of letters had a wide circulation despite efforts to suppress it; in fact it became a bestseller, and was translated and published in several languages. Here are some of the rejoinders to the letters; they are characteristic of the reaction in France.

In the 1735 volume of the *Memoires de Trévoux*, (37) there is a review of a pamphlet of unknown title which is critical of Voltaire but the reviewer took the opportunity to comment on the *Lettres Philosophiques*. He began by saying that the writer had criticized M. de V\*\*\* for having a style which is superficial, cavalier and audacious; the pamphleteer affirmed much but proved nothing. The reviewer the continued:

What a misfortune that M. de V\*\*\* leaves the brilliant sphere where he achieved recognition, to write dogmatically on catechism, theology, customs, and the law ... He begins badly. The first four letters are on the Quakers, a sect which is infinitely reviled even in England ... A simple naive portrait of this crazy and ridiculous sect would be a curious piece for the French. This is not what we are given, for by a curious counterpoint which we cannot understand at all, it pleases the author to embellish this sect.

After citing Voltaire's description of Pitt, the writer concludes that Voltaire has made a 'saintly man' of his subject and 'had used his art to embellish his subject and to enhance the description.' 'Fox himself was painted in the most agreeable colors. This Fox basically, was nothing but a crazy eccentric who spent much time in jail . . . The history of Penn is even more ornate since Pen was the equal of Fox in the level of folly.'

One of the great merits which M. de V\*\*\* finds in the Quakers is that they have neither bishops nor priests. He attacks the clergy strongly...in twenty letters he speaks badly about them and in none does he speak well. What! All the Quakers without baptism, without faith, without law, without manners,.. are good people, good Christians, saints, and all our priests, all our bishops, without exception are ambitious, vindictive, etc.

Another writer (38) ridiculed Voltaire's admiration for the Quakers. To him:

The Quaker is an admirable person by the simplicity of his customs, no reverence, no compliments, no exterior subordination, no offensive or defensive wars; the prince, the magistrate, people are not distinguished by any outward sign; it's a charming uniformity ... Here is a portrait that Voltaire gives us of a Quaker whom he visited: a Christian without baptism who is worth infinitely more than those baptized; he wishes to diminish in our eyes the respect we owe to persons of rank and dignity. Quakerism is against the first principles of reason in morality and is opposed to all the biblical evidence in their impious dogmas.

The same writer (Molinier 1735) accused Voltaire of having presented his Quaker as a man admirable for the simplicity of habits and Pennsylvania as a model of states. 'Very well then, sir, don't you sense an impatience to become a member of these Quakers? Are you wise not to go to Pennsylvania; who can stop you?' Then mockingly, 'Don't you [Voltaire] take Voltaire at his word?'

Another anonymous writer congratulated Voltaire for having, by the recitation he made of their simplicity and customs, converted to admiration the contempt with which, up to now, the French had regarded the sect.

These are but a sample of the French writers' misgivings; the reader may wonder at the vehemence of the French reaction but the fact is that inexplicably a large segment of the French litterati joined in the attack on Voltaire.

#### *Voltaire's Later Reflections on Quakers and Quakerism*

As we have noted, Voltaire described himself as a Deist and he saw in Quakerism a Deist element. This point of view was not unique to Voltaire. The abovementioned Catrou described Fox as a Deist who disguised his true feelings under a flimsy mask of Christianity. These attitudes are understandable, for neither Barclay nor early Quaker writers underscore any of the traditional church teachings. The virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection, the trinity, the concept

of atonement, are treated with some ambivalence and while an inference of Deism cannot *readily* be drawn, the ambiguities may be considered by some as sufficient to infer such a conclusion. On the other hand, these same Friends rejected the clergy, the sacraments, oaths, church structures, etc.—rejections dear to Voltaire's heart. Only the idea of justification in modified form is retained.

In the *Apology*, Barclay embarked, in fact, on a scholarly, ingenious and brilliant effort to give a complete reconciliation of Quakerism with primitive Christianity as he saw it. To do so, he relies heavily on the 'Spirit' whose workings he took as an act of faith and he interpreted many traditional church beliefs symbolically or metaphorically. He also used the Scriptures heavily, but selected and interpreted those that support his position. His arguments are sometimes opaque and, if subjected to careful scrutiny, they are at times circular and inconclusive.

Christian Church opponents of Quakerism could readily, on the basis of the writings of early Friends, construe Quakerism as a thickly veiled form of Deism.

We should add the caveat that Quaker documents such as Friends' letter to the governor of Barbados (39) sound much like one of the classical creeds or the Westminster Confession or the Thirty-nine Articles. We shall not pause to debate the matter of Quaker Deism or non-Deism. Suffice it to say that leveling a charge of Deism against Barclay and other contemporary Friends would not be without some foundation were it not for the crucial element of Quaker belief in immediate revelation—a belief so central to Friends. It is however, relatively easy for a person sympathetic to Friends' practices to gloss over the theology and Voltaire does so. In other words, he viewed Quakerism as his brand of Deism and was willing to ignore the earlier idiosyncrasies of Quakerism.

A rich source of other references to Friends is to be found in Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*. As the title implies, this consists of Voltaire's comments on various topics. References to Quakers occur under several entries. [We have not specified the edition or page number so as to give interested readers more flexibility in looking up the source.]

Affirmation. 'In the *Encyclopedic Dictionary* it is said that the primitives, called Quakers, in England testify in courts with their simple affirmation without being required to swear an oath. Peers of the realm have the same privilege. Secular peers affirm on their honor and ecclesiastics by putting their hands on their hearts'. Voltaire then told a story.

Chancellor Cowper (40) wanted to require Quakers to swear like all other citizens but Quakers called attention to the biblical passage forbidding such. The chancellor replied: 'One cannot make a better case but you should know that one day Jupiter gave the order that all beasts should be shod; horses, mules, camels all obeyed willingly but the donkeys resisted. They gave many reasons, they started to bray and Jupiter finally said 'Sirs the donkeys, I grant your plea but the first time you blunder, you will get 100 lashes'. It should be certified that, as of now, the Quakers have not made a single blunder.

In the entry on 'Baptism', Voltaire provides a somewhat lengthy history of the rite, and from Luke, he quoted John the Baptist: 'I indeed baptise with water but he who comes after me will baptise with fire'. Luke 3: 16.

He went on to set out various forms of baptism. This breadth of approach reads rather surprisingly given his earlier astonishment at the citation given by Higginson. Voltaire then wrote 'For the Quakers, which comprise a society of considerable size in England and America, they do not use baptism basing their belief on the fact that Jesus did not baptize any of his disciples and they pride themselves on being Christians as Christians were at the time of Jesus, which creates a great chasm between them and other communicants'.

In the *Essay on Customs* (Moeurs) Voltaire wrote:

Penn and his primitives, that are called Quakers, and who should not be called anything but 'the righteous', had, as a principle, never to wage war abroad, and never have court cases among themselves. No judges are to be seen among them but they have arbiters who, without payment, take care of all litigious affairs.

In the *Philosophic Dictionary*, under the article on the 'Church', Voltaire wrote:

....William Penn resolved to go and establish what he called the primitive Church on the shores of North America . . . His sect was called Quakers, a ridiculous name. Nevertheless, they deserved it by the trembling of their bodies.... and by a nasal twang .... which is also practised by the Capuchin friars. But despite speaking through the nose and shaking, one can still be tender, frugal, modest, just, charitable. No one can deny that this society of primitives presented an example of all these virtues.....

Voltaire continued:

The first disciples (of Jesus) received the spirit and spoke in their gatherings; they had neither altars, nor temples, nor ornaments, nor candles, nor incense nor ceremonies; Penn and his followers rejoiced in receiving the spirit and renounced all ceremonies, all instruments. Charity was precious to the disciples of our Savior; those of Penn established a fund for the poor. Hence these imitators of the Essenes and the first Christians, although straying in their dogmas and rites, were for all the other Christian societies a stunning model of morals and refinement.

That is a flattering picture of Friends yet Voltaire accepted Friends' depiction of themselves as the early Christians restored. Notice too, that he refers to Jesus as 'Our Savior'.

The second chapter of *Treatise on Toleration* considered the question whether toleration is dangerous and provided examples where toleration was practiced. On the subject of the Quakers, he wrote 'What shall we say of these primitives, who have been called in derision Quakers and who, even with practices possibly ridiculous, have been so virtuous, and have taught peace, in vain, to the rest of mankind? They are in Pennsylvania numbering about one hundred thousand; discord, controversy, are ignored in the fortunate country which they made for themselves: and the name of their city is Philadelphia, which reminds them at all times that men are brothers, is an example that shames people who do not know toleration'.

Under the heading 'Toleration' in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire wrote:

If there is a sect which recalls the time of the first Christians, it is without doubt that of the Quakers. Nothing resembles the apostles more. The apostles received the spirit, and the Quakers receive the spirit. The apostles and the disciples spoke three or four at a time in their assemblies on the third floor and the Quakers do the same on the ground floor. It is permitted according to Paul for women to preach and according to the same Paul, it is forbidden; Quakeresses preach in virtue of the first permission. The apostles and disciples testify by yea or nay and the Quakers do not do otherwise.

Here, Voltaire appears more tolerant of the Quaker form of worship and of Friends' early manifestations of enthusiasm and gender equality..

Under the entry 'Quakers' in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, the four letters on the Quakers are reproduced and are followed by the assertion :

I shall tell you without repeating myself, that I like the Quakers. Yes, if the sea did not induce in me an intolerable sickness, it would be in my heart to go to Pennsylvania to finish the remainder of my

career, if indeed any remains . . . An eternal peace reigns among its citizens and only one who was banished (41)... you can buy land and you do no harm to anyone nor can anyone harm you, you are free to think whatever you please...

These are several of the more pertinent references to Quakers which can be found in Voltaire's writings. They give a good sense of the evolution of his attitude, toward a more sympathetic view of Quakers.

#### *Conclusions*

Although his ridicule abated, it does not appear that Voltaire repented all his earlier sarcastic description of Quaker practices. It cannot be denied, however, that in spirit, if not in theological belief, he would be sympathetic with contemporary Quakerism.

Despite his literary successes, Voltaire was never warmly received by the haughty and snobbish French aristocracy. He may have seen in Quakerism an atmosphere of warmth, friendliness and acceptance, qualities for which he longed.

What should we say if he were to request membership in the Society of Friends? It is true that some Friends in the more evangelical tradition might find Voltaire's beliefs wanting, yet it is difficult to imagine that he would be rejected. He would find in the contemporary debate among different segments of the Society an exhilarating vehicle for his theological interests.

To give a touch of further conviction to our assertion that he would be welcomed into Quakerism, perhaps it would be appropriate to end this essay with an abridgment of his prayer; it is the last chapter of his *Treatise on Toleration*. Friends of all persuasions would find it congenial.

It is no longer to men that I speak but to thee God of all beings, of all worlds and of all times: if it is allowed to feeble creatures, lost in



the immensity and unaware of the rest of the universe, to dare to ask something of thee, thee who has given all, whose secrets are unalterable as they are eternal... it is to ask mercy for the errors attached to our nature...thou hast not given us a heart to hate one another nor hands to slaughter one another; decree that we help one another to support the burden of a transient and sometimes painful life. That the small differences in clothing, which cover our weak bodies, that among all our imperfect laws, among all our insensitive opinions, among all our conditions so distorted in our eyes and so equal before thee, that all these small differences among humans not be signals of hatred and persecution...that those who light candles at high noon to worship thee support those who are content with the light of thy sun; that those who cover themselves with a linen robe in order to say that we must love thee, should not detest those who say the same thing under a cloak of black wool .. that it is the same whether we adore thee in an ancient tongue or in a new idiom.. May all people remember that they are brothers and sisters. If the horrors of war are inevitable let us not lacerate one another in the bosom of peace.... and let us use the moment of our existence to bless, in a thousand languages, thy goodness which has given us this moment.

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I am deeply grateful to Dr. Michael Mullett for his many suggested improvements. His efforts went well beyond the normal responsibilities of a reader

#### *Notes*

1. Nicolas Claude Thieriot, (1696-1772). Voltaire met him in 1714 in the attorney's office where they were both apprentices. They became lifelong friends and during the course of his life, Voltaire wrote no fewer than 500 letters to him.
2. The same London printer set up type for a French edition. (Rousseau 1979: 11-28) and (Pomeau 1979: 28-46).

3. The 'Parlement' in Paris was a judicial, not a legislative body.
4. The home of Madame du Chatelet with whom he had a long association.
5. In a letter to Thierot, dated August 12, 1726, Voltaire writes 'This is a country where people think freely and nobly'. (Brooks 1973:22)
6. As an avowed Deist, Voltaire expressed his opposition to the atheists, some of whose leaders included Helvetius, Diderot and Holbach. (Didier, 1994; entry on Athée)
7. Robert Barclay (1648-1690) was a learned Friend who published extensively. The *Apology or Theologiae Vere Christianae Apologia* was translated into several languages and went through many editions.
- 8.. The origin of the name is obscure. Some have surmised that it is an anagram on 'Arouet l j' - Arouet the younger -, replacing the letter 'j' by the letter 'i' and 'u' by 'v', - not a very persuasive explanation.
9. Guy Auguste, chevalier de Rohan-Chabot, dates unknown. He was a sort of aristocratic dandy.
10. Everard Falkener, sometimes written Fawkener 1694-1758. Falkener was host to Voltaire for part of the latter's sojourn in England.
11. The earliest Frenchman to be called a Quaker appears to be Claude Gay, (1706-1786). (van Etten, 1947)
12. Valentin Conrart (1603-1675) is regarded as the founder of the Academie Française. He was active in the literary arena. He kept copious notes of contemporary affairs and these were compiled as the 'Recueil Conrart and deposited in the 'Arsenal'.
13. We are not able to identify this nobleman.
- 14.. James Nayler (1618-1660) was one of the most prominent of the early Quakers, was very active in the early years of the movement and was widely known for his work. His unfortunate Bristol episode was the cause of his downfall.
15. Possibly a reference to Mary Fisher's visit to the sultan of Turkey in 1658. (Braithwaite 1955:420)

16. The French frequently used this literal translation of the English 'Quaker' but later they more frequently used 'Quaker' or some phonetic variant of the spelling.
17. It is difficult to say how the idea arose that there were innumerable factions. It is true that there were controversies among Friends, such as the Wilkinson-Story controversy, but that was later. It is fair to say that pioneering Friends, such as the 'valiant sixty', were well united in their beliefs.
18. Alarmed by the identification of Ranters with Friends, Robert Barclay wrote a booklet in which he endeavours to set the record straight. (Barclay 1676: passim)
19. In an article 'Lexical Agraphia in the Writing of Fox' to appear in *Quaker History*, the present author collaborating with a Neurologist, David Roeltgen, asserts that Fox was afflicted with a neurologically based writing disorder. This disorder may account for the assertion that Fox was illiterate.
20. Some of this history is recounted in the pamphlet *Wandsworth Meeting House, a Short Sketch* by W.J. Edwards. (Published by the Meeting House. No date.) It is in this pamphlet that we are told that Voltaire boarded with one of the dyers.
21. A periodical started by the English authors and essayists Joseph Addison and Richard Steele.
22. As Falkener and Pitt were both in the textile industry, it is possible that Falkener suggested Pitt's name to Voltaire.
23. This allowed Friends to 'affirm' a statement, thus avoiding the necessity to swear an oath. Friends' objection was based upon the Scriptures viz. Matthew 5.
24. The name of Pitt appears as a footnote to the first letter in the version of the letters appearing in Didier 1994 under the article 'Quakers', originally published in 1764.
25. In the preface to (Brooks 1973) the Ed. writes 'The Persian letters used the guise of a novelistic plot as a link between a series of letters whose principal purpose was a critique of contemporary France. In the Philosophical

- letters Voltaire refined the process by eliminating any fictional pretense... and these letters were extremely critical of the existing state of affairs ...in French Life.'
26. Several expletives are used. 'Zouns' is from E the 1733 edition. The French edition uses 'morbleu' etc. In other places the author has simply substituted one of several English euphemistic blasphemies.
  27. In this version, Voltaire has Pitt say 'My son...' but in E he has him say 'Friend...', a more authentic response.
  28. 'The Yorkshireman, a literary and Religious Journal, by a Friend', Pontefract, 1832, vol 1:167-169. The Friend is Luke Howard, F.R.S.
  29. See the notes to Lanson 1964.
  30. The writer is not able to find definite information about dress codes of female Quakers of this period but it would seem *very unlikely* that the women had fans. It is more likely that they covered their faces with their shawls, scarves or veils, if they covered at all.
  31. Josiah Martin (1683-1747) was a learned Friend who was an accomplished classics scholar and who wrote on tithes and the vindication of women's speaking.
  32. It is difficult to ascertain whether there is any truth to this statement.
  33. While Voltaire denounced wars in general, as an 'absurdity' and claimed not to believe in the 'just' war, he was intrigued by 'military glory'. In our judgement, he cannot be counted as a strict pacifist. See the article on 'Guerre' in (Didier 1994).
  34. Examining the historical justification of Voltaire's claim would lead us far afield.
  35. The acknowledgment is in a letter, see (Besterman. 1952) It is also referred to in (Edwards, undated)
  36. The citation is from the 1733 issue, page 191. The journal was published in London.
  37. The journal published in the town of Trévoux was called *Journal de Trevoux, ou Memoires pour Servir l'histoire des Sciences et des Arts*. It was

started in 1701 by the Jesuits. Trévoux was the ancient capital of the principality of Dombes and became a famous center for the publication of books outside Paris. It was here that the Jesuits published their *Dictionnaire*

38. Jean G. Molinier in the *Journal de Trévoux* of 1736. See note 37. Jean Guillaume Moilinier (1733-1814) was a priest and principal of the Collège de Tarbes and elected bishop of the département des Hautes Pyranées

39. In their visit to Barbados and the eastern shore of the U.S. in 1670-1672, Fox and Friends were accused of heresy and in response composed a letter to the Governor of Barbados setting forth their beliefs. It highlights beliefs more in the traditions of the Anglican church.

40. William Earl Cowper 1665-1723 was Lord Chancellor of England.

41. This is very likely George Keith (1638-1716), a prominent Friend, who left Friends and became a minister in the Church of England. To say that he was 'banished' is a gross exaggeration.

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