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Cary J. Nederman, John Christian Laursen. *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Tolerance in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996. ix + 240 S. $36.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8476-8376-5; $86.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8476-8375-8.

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Difference and Dissent is a collection of ten essays, not including the introduction. The editors, in their introduction, challenge traditional assumptions about the "tale of tolerance" (p. 4) in the West. First, the origins of primarily but not exclusively religious toleration must be traced back beyond Locke and the Enlightenment to medieval and early modern Europe. Second, toleration is more than simply the by-product of liberal political theory. As Nederman and Laursen assert: "Historically speaking, the story of toleration must be told not according to a single, more or less cohesive narrative, but as the tale of many divergent and potentially conflicting visions" (p. 5). The purpose of *Difference and Dissent* is to show that theories of or ideas about toleration antedate the Enlightenment and, it seems, to indicate alternatives to the Locke-inspired, liberal conception of toleration, founded upon individual rights and liberties, current today. By studying the theories of earlier thinkers we may devise new theories of toleration that avoid "the pitfalls of conventional liberalism while still promoting the goals of mutual respect and understanding (if not acceptance) among disparate groups and individuals" (p. 12). Nederman and Laursen conclude their introduction by expressing the hope that "the studies collected here ought to be treated as preparation for contemporary political theorists to address the question of toleration in the spirit of their predecessors" (p. 13).

The essays of *Difference and Dissent* examine the writings of medieval thinkers (John of Salisbury, Marsiglio of Padua, John Wyclif, Christine de Pizan) as well as writers and theorists of the sixteenth century (Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Francisco de Vitoria, Bartolome de Las Casas, Jean Bodin) and seventeenth century (Hobbes, Pufendorf, Spinoza, and Locke). Taken separately, these essays serve as interesting introductions to the political ideas of various writers, but, as an ensemble, they do not completely fulfill the purpose of the volume. Some devote little space to the theme of toleration; most avoid indicating alternatives to liberal tolerance.

Stephen Lahey analyzes the political dimensions of Wyclif's theology of "Grace-founded" and civil *dominium*, but the discourse of toleration is virtually absent in this analysis. Lahey is more interested in Wyclif's ideas of social and ecclesiastical reform. The only mention of toleration in the section on "Economic and Political Toleration in Wyclif's Thought" is of Wyclif's own "readiness to tolerate civil ownership despite his round condemnation of the institution" (p. 47). Lahey raises the question of how a king should deal with heresy in his realm (p. 52) but does not adequately answer it from Wyclif's writings. Kate Langdon Forhan discusses the values of respect for the other, interdependence, and justice in the political thought of Christine de Pizan without really demonstrating how these combine to form a late medieval theory of toleration. In a fascinating study, Paul J. Cornish shows how Vitoria and Las Casas adapted Thomist philosophy to argue against the injustices visited upon the native peoples of the Americas by Spanish conquistadors. The two Spanish writers maintained that the Indians owned their property by natural law and could not rightfully be deprived of it; nor could they be enslaved. It is difficult to see, however, how protests against injustice amount to "arguments for toleration" (p. 100). The problem is one of definition. Readers of *Difference and Dissent*, most likely bringing with them modern notions of toleration, would be better served if the essays elucidated more rigorously the concept of toleration in its various medieval and early modern settings.

Glenn Burgess' paper on Hobbes and William Walker's paper on Locke, while concentrating on the theme of toleration, are rather curious contributions to a volume on tolerance. Burgess concedes that "Hobbes's toleration is extraordinarily narrow, extending only to private beliefs and not at all to religious practice…His toleration amounts to the declaration that it was contrary to natural law to attempt to persecute people for their private beliefs" (p. 155). With the exception of those, like Richard Tuck and Alan Ryan, who wish to present a

"more tolerant Hobbes," this conclusion will not surprise most readers. In *Leviathan* Hobbes makes a distinction between private and public worship. Presumably one may believe what one wants in private, but there is only one public belief system, determined by the sovereign, and all must conform to it. Surely Burgess does not want to propose "Hobbes's toleration" as an alternative to liberal tolerance!

Yet from Walker's perspective, the liberal tolerance usually associated with Locke is not very "liberal" after all. Walker narrows Locke's scope of tolerance by an exhaustive analysis of Locke's use of "force" in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* and argues that the term extends not only to physical or material coercion but also to immaterial compulsion. Persuasion, Walker reminds us more than once, is also a "kind of force" in Locke's *Letter*. Since everyone, including the magistrate, is free to persuade others to adopt his or her religious beliefs, the potential for the use of force by means of argument or exhortation is practically unlimited, leaving precious little room for tolerance in a commonwealth. The problem with Walker's critique of Locke lies with his analysis of "force." Persuasion may very well be a "kind of force," but what "kind of force" is it? Walker acknowledges that "force" when associated with persuasion is a metaphor; nevertheless his reading of "force" in Locke remains too univocal.

Only a few essays extend textual analysis to a discussion of alternatives to modern, liberal tolerance. Nederman employs the term "communal functionalism" in his analysis of John of Salisbury and Marsiglio of Padua to show that tolerance of dissenting opinions need and ought not be grounded in individual liberty but may find its basis in the interaction of individuals and the maintenance of the common good: "The good of each depends on the ability of everyone to contribute freely to the whole. Hence, respect for difference is a precondition of an adequate communal life–that is, a life of peace and mutual advantage. This means that toleration is not a privilege to be granted or denied at the whim of some superior (as liberals might object) but a necessity strictly entailed by and thus built into the very terms of social and political interaction" (p. 32).

To liberal skepticism, which argues for tolerance because one can never know which, if any, religious belief system is true, Gary Remer opposes "Bodin's Pluralistic Theory of Toleration." In his *Republique* (1576) Bodin grudgingly allowed for a measure of religious toleration when and if the maintenance of religious uniformity endangered the state's stability more than concessions to a religious minority. But in the *Colloquium heptaplomores* (completed in 1588 but not published until 1857) Bodin assumed a new position: a confident religious pluralism. All religions must be allowed because "they, collectively in their opposition to each other, contain the whole truth" (p. 127). The *Colloquium* presents a discussion among seven interlocutors, a Catholic, a Lutheran, a Calvinist, a Jew, a Muslim, a proponent of natural religion, and a skeptic. No one gives any ground; everyone holds fast to his religious convictions, but, remarkably, harmony suffuses the discussion. The *Colloquium* certainly deserves attention in *Difference and Dissent*, but Remer must still answer a few questions: What explains Bodin's shift from a pragmatic to a principled toleration? How can one reconcile Bodin's belief that all religions contain "the whole truth" with Remer's later claim that the purpose of the *Colloquium* "is no longer for the interlocutors, collectively, to discover the truth but for each participant to confirm himself further in the truth of his own beliefs" (p. 130)? Given that Remer challenges skepticism with pluralism, one would like to know more about the skeptic's position in the *Colloquium*. Does skepticism count as a religion as Remer seems to imply (p. 123), and how does it contribute to the truth?

Remer's essay is indicative of two qualities common to all the essays in *Difference and Dissent*: they are informative and intellectually stimulating. Some will provoke discussion and thought about the meaning and application of toleration better than others. The challenge that confronts every collection of essays is the fulfillment of editorial aims in the essays themselves. Perhaps it is a certain measure and type of tolerance in the form of forbearance that makes these collections possible and worth scholarly attention. For all its shortcomings, we are better off with *Difference and Dissent* than without it.

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