The modern world continues to grapple with the meaning and practice of toleration. Predominant Western notions of toleration assume a moral foundation that infers acceptance of others’ rights, beliefs and practices. This paper considers how ideas of toleration may have entered early Enlightenment travel, diplomatic and trade reports about the ‘Turbanned Nation’ of Islam, and influenced John Locke’s (1632-1704) writings on toleration. Locke wrote his portrayal of Ottoman religious toleration during a time of shifting geo-politics in the Mediterranean and increasing concern about religious diversity in Britain and Europe. The Ottomans ruled an extremely heterogeneous population that was multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-tribal. The ‘transnational and trans-imperial circulation of knowledge’ (specifically British knowledge) of the Ottoman Empire fed into British and European Enlightenment conceptions of toleration. The British and wider European awakening to the Ottoman concession of toleration became a distinctive feature of the Enlightenment and deserves continued intellectual attention.

You cannot but allow there are many Turks who sincerely seek the truth, to whom yet you could never bring evidence sufficient to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion, whilst they looked on it as a principle not to be questioned, that the Koran was of Divine revelation. This possibly you will tell me is a prejudice, and so it is; but yet if this man shall tell you it is no more a prejudice in him, than it is a prejudice in any one amongst Christians, who having not examined it, lays it down as an unquestionable principle of his religion, that the Scripture is the word of God; what will you answer to him?

While toleration as a religious and secular aspiration had a long history prior to the British and wider European Enlightenment, the severity of seventeenth century politico-religious conflicts culminated in the emergence of significant ‘Toleration’ scholarship. The English liberal philosopher, John Locke (1632-1714), contributed significantly to this Western inheritance. Theories of toleration were central to the

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intellectual orientation of the British and European Enlightenment (1680-1810) and were fuelled by the defence of toleration of Christian dissenters and non-Christian minorities persecuted within British and European societies. Concurrently, British and European travellers and traders to the lands of Islam reported how Ottoman Muslims managed to coexist with the religiously diverse communities within their Empire because of a Qur’anic injunction which welcomed visitors and offered protection in multi-religious and multi-ethnic communities: \(^5\) where the bestowing of alms ‘not only to Turkes, but also to Christians’ occurred because they were recognised as ‘People of the Book’. \(^6\) Travel reports such as William Biddulph’s *The Travels of Certain Englishmen into Africa, Troy, Bythia, Thracia, and to the Black Sea* (1609) furnished British and European commentators with encouraging reports of the benefits of religious toleration in the Ottoman state when compared to the ‘Papist’ model of religious coercion that had ravaged Christian communities for centuries because:

…the Turke giveth libertie of conscience to all men, and liketh well of every man that is forward and zealous in his own religion. But among the Papists no man can buy and sell, unless hee beare the markes of the beast as S. John foretold. \(^7\)

Growth in commercial and intercultural exchange between Christian Britain and Europe, and the Ottoman Empire and broad British and European Enlightenment concern for religious toleration had encouraged interest in the Islamic model of toleration. This paper will consider how ideas of toleration entered early Enlightenment travel, diplomatic and trade reports about ‘Turbanned Nations’ and explore how John Locke melded reflections on Turkish religious toleration and the metaphor of a leaking ship of state to sustain his ideas of the symbiotic relationship between toleration and the creation of the ideal state. \(^8\) The Enlightenment’s related concern for toleration and the ideal state has received significant academic attention since the Post-Cold War Era, including recognition of its powerful influence on the development of secular Western civilisation over the last three hundred years. \(^9\) In


particular, this paper seeks to add to the existing literature that acknowledges Islam’s contribution to the development of these philosophical traditions. Critical engagement with how the Islamic model of toleration contributed to the emergence of the British and European Enlightenment could help alleviate tensions between the Muslim world and the West today, where value judgements of different cultural practices and religious beliefs, made in the name of toleration, continue to challenge our sensibilities and undermine state security.

**Ideas of Toleration in the Early Enlightenment**

Western Christendom was a fractured, persecuting and intolerant entity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the mid 1650’s, the dominant ecclesiastical and aristocratic hierarchies presiding over Church and society began to unravel causing a fragmentation of the ‘old edifice of thought’ that had sustained religious conflicts between dissenting Christian communities for centuries. Pockets of political and intellectual resistance developed, challenging the principle of ‘One King, One Law, One Faith’, the constitutional basis for monarchical rule across Catholic Europe which had resulted in remorseless persecution of Protestant dissenters during the Reformation. The Dutch Republics became a refuge for these dissenters after the Union of Utrecht (1579) where a level of religious freedom was instituted that guaranteed freedom of conscience and reduced religious dissent within Holland. Philosophical luminaries such as French Huguenot, Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and Portuguese Jew, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) took refuge in the Dutch Republics during the seventeenth century, escaping persecution which had curtailed their freedom to publish their thoughts in their homelands. Meanwhile, the undertones of religious dissent continued in England and Europe, challenging the authority and stability of the region’s political and religious institutions.

Christian dissenters, freethinkers and deists in England and across Europe fuelled religious scepticism by challenging the rationality and certitude of traditional Christian theologies and advocated religious toleration as a political paradigm. Mythical revelations and false and superstitious ideas trafficked by priests were thought to have clouded the original morality enshrined in the natural and rational religion of Christianity. Controversially for the time, Enlightenment freethinkers...
found sound moral principles were also present in non-Christian theologies.\textsuperscript{14} Increased awareness of, and interest in, ‘heathen’ religions illustrates the intellectual orientation of the Enlightenment era. Global travel, diplomacy and trade had accelerated since the Renaissance and revealed an expanded new world. Curiosity and lust for knowledge of this new world exposed Britain and Europe to an array of new ideas and possibilities which were previously unknown. This exposure to diversity challenged previously held beliefs in the homogeneity of humanity. Oriental studies (including Arabic and Hebrew language studies) flourished in the universities of Britain and Europe. There, freethinkers and deists identified how religious diversity operated in tandem with human variability, creating a ‘cabinet of diverse faiths’ in disparate communities around the globe.\textsuperscript{15} Comparisons were made and differences and similarities identified between the major global religions with all ‘sects, schisms... and polytheistic cults’.\textsuperscript{16} Contact with such heterogeneity, cultivated the conviction that multiple theological treatises provided for many paths to ‘God’ which were equally deserving of toleration.\textsuperscript{17} With doubt cast over the philosophical primacy of Christianity, cosmopolitan and tolerant attitudes towards religious diversity emerged.

From the late sixteenth century, increasing numbers of British and European traders, travellers, explorers, diplomats, missionaries and scholars were attracted to opportunities offered in the ‘well-organised, wealthy and technologically advanced’ Islamic Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{18} The establishment of French, English (later British) and Dutch Levant Trading Companies in the Ottoman Empire during this period facilitated increased diplomatic and commercial co-operation and competition between these entities and the states that supported them.\textsuperscript{19} While exchange of ideas and trade between Christian Europeans and Muslim Eurasians had begun in the medieval period, fear of military engagement had simultaneously entrenched old hostilities. As the military might of the Ottoman, Persian, and Mughal Empires began to recede, and Islam became less of a military threat to continental Europe, Christian merchants were able to avail themselves of self-governing mechanisms offered by Ottoman authorities to manage the various confessional communities (including Armenian, Greek Orthodox and Jewish) within their midst. The level of local acceptance was in stark contrast to the intolerance that would be experienced by religious minorities throughout seventeenth century Britain and Europe.\textsuperscript{20}

From the very beginning of Islam, Islamic law readily supported ‘the ethic of diversity and toleration’.\textsuperscript{21} Protection of Christian and Jewish minorities within Muslim societies was prescribed because of their status as ‘People of the Book’. Because the Qur’an stated that there was ‘no compulsion in religion’, religious

\textsuperscript{15} Ole, Grell and Porter, Toleration in Enlightenment Europe, p.4.
\textsuperscript{16} Ole, Grell and Porter, p.4.
\textsuperscript{17} Ole, Grell and Porter, p.4.
\textsuperscript{20} Laidlaw, pp. 82-91.
minorities were offered the opportunity of protection as dhimmis, recognised as believers in God despite their refusal to accept the prophet-hood of Muhammad. Dhimmis were afforded lower civil status in Muslim societies and obliged to pay a poll tax as a price for their protection when their religious communities (Millet) were subsumed within the expanding Ottoman Empire. The Millet system is believed to have helped many Christian communities ‘retain [their] communal coherence’ without excluding individuals from civil, diplomatic, military, mercantile or academic success within the Ottoman Empire. Reports by Christian travellers, such as Edward Brown, highlighted how large numbers of Orthodox Christians continued to live patiently under Turkish toleration, preferring to ‘sit still, and be little active: and if any Forces of the Latine Church…attempt[ed] conquests…in all probability they would find little assistance from them… they would rather adhere unto their Turkish masters’. In many parts of Europe, Islam’s arrival was recognised as liberation from the tyranny of ‘Latine’ (papal) intolerance.

Opportunities to experience Ottoman toleration increased as that empire progressively opened itself up to British and European agriculture, industry, and trade during the seventeenth century. The combination of declining central government efficiencies and increasing British and European diplomatic and trade capitulations slowly undermined the Ottoman imperial edge. While material, philosophical and scientific attributes of Islamic civilisation had long enriched British and European life only the most radical early Enlightenment thinkers afforded Islam more than minimal spiritual recognition. Trade in, and translation of, Arabic manuscripts and books across Britain and Europe (including the Qur’an, first translated into English from French 1649) expedited broader interpretations and comparisons between Christianity and Islam. Sojourners returning to Britain and Europe from the Ottoman Empire were furnished with new experiences and knowledge sourced from a vast trove of manuscripts, books and artefacts, providing them with the potential to develop new ideas and skills. The skills of literary translation and criticism they had acquired working on classical texts during the

25 E. Brown, 1673, A brief account of some travel in Hungary, Servia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thessaly, Austria, Styria, Carnithia, Carniola, and Friuli. As some observations on the gold, silver, copper, quick-silver mines, baths, and mineral waters in those parts: With the figures of some habits and remarkable places, London, R.T. for Benjamin Tooke, pp. 82-83.
26 MacLean and Matar, Britain & the Islamic World, pp. 42-123. Capitulations were diplomatic protections historically granted to foreign merchant communities by the Ottoman Sultan
28 A. Ross, The Alcoran of Mahomet, translated out of Arabick into French […] newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into Turkish vanity, London, 1649.
Renaissance were now applied to oriental sources. The advent of Arabist studies and increasing trade and diplomacy facilitated the translation of a wide variety of Arabic texts (whether Islamic, Jewish, or Christian) introducing the limitless curiosity of British and European ‘humanists, philologists and other erudite’ thinkers to an array of challenging new knowledge.30

Copies of Oriental bibles were sourced, authenticated and translated. Similarly, European bibles were translated into oriental languages and dispersed by missionaries. Catholics and Protestants were both anxious to solicit the support of Eastern Orthodox churches; each hoping to establish a greater politico-religious hold over Western Christianity while converting Muslims and heretic Christians.31 Consequently, many early Enlightenment British and European scholars were aware that the vast civilisations of Islam had adopted and adapted the same Greco-Latin legacy which they claimed as their own classical patrimony.

English physician and Arabist scholar, Henry Stubbe (1632-1677), and Irish born philosopher, John Toland (1670-1722) acknowledged the shared patrimony of Western and Islamic religious traditions.32 Stubbe’s work, The Rise and Progress of Mahometanism (c.1671) became the republican text ‘par excellence’ referred to by free thinking and deists radicals seeking to remedy the Anglican state’s inequitable policies.33 Later, John Toland’s Christianity not Mysterious (1696) challenged the misinterpretation and corruption of early Christian theology by clerics, while his published views on ‘Mahometan Christianity’ offered a theory of theological continuity between the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.34 Both Stubbe and Toland recognised how Islam’s deism and ‘natural faith’ avoided the complexity and intolerance of Christian dogma. Stubbe recommended Islam’s policy of religious plurality and religious toleration as the antidote to the political and religious strife that had plagued Britain and Europe since the Protestant Reformation. Likewise, Islam’s model of ancient constitutionalism was promoted by Toland as a worthwhile political model for early Enlightenment England.35 But validation of Islamic theology remained controversial, and dissemination of comparative theological, legalistic and philosophical frameworks employed by Islam remained highly contested during the late seventeenth century.36

Influential English Orientalist, Arabist and Oxford biblical scholar Edward Pococke (1604-1691) contributed significantly to the dissemination of Islamic knowledge in the seventeenth century. Employed by the English Levant Trading Company in the Ottoman city of Aleppo as chaplain between 1630 and 1636, Pococke had freely confessed that collecting manuscripts was one of his chief aims of seeking

31 MacLean and Matar, pp. 166-169.
34 MacLean, pp. 52-53.
36 Oxford scholar, Humphrey Prideaux’s 1697 published biography, The True Nature of Imposture Displayed in the Life of Mahomet was typical of the polemical material published during this period.
an appointment with the Trading Company. Pococke’s 1671 translation of the Islamic philosopher Ibn Tufayl’s twelfth century morality tale, The Life of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, explored the life of a baby nurtured by a gazelle and raised without human contact on an isolated island. Ibn Tufayl explained how Hayy had learnt by innate intelligence and attained moral maturity without the prescriptions of religion only to be corrupted when he was found and drawn into civilisation by Absal. Hayy, horrified by what he saw, realised that most humans were ‘unreasonable animals,’ governed by their appetites and required the restraint of government and traditional religion to maintain a semblance of civility. Unable to share his philosophical standpoint in such a corrupted society, Ibn Tufayl returned Hayy to his island in disillusionment where he resumed a life of quiet contemplation with his new friend, Absal. Publication of the translation of this ‘subversive’ work after the Restoration (translation had begun 1645) in his son’s name could be viewed as an ‘attack on revelation and organised religion’ at a time when tolerance of religious differences threatened the stability of the English state. But Pococke’s fusion of rational Christianity and its attributes of toleration for religious differences coincided with his fascination for Arabic literature and the history and culture which produced it were out of step with the prevailing attitudes of seventeenth century Europe. Whilst he viewed Mohammad as a false prophet with an empire founded by the sword, Pococke avoided the customary ‘ritual abuse of Islam’, forming friendships with Muslims (during his time in Aleppo) and admiring the diversity within Islamic philosophy.

John Locke’s Formative Thinking ‘On Toleration’

Modern scholars speculate that Arab translations influenced many of the key early Enlightenment thinkers. Certainly accounts of Ottoman toleration shared in seventeenth century British and European literary circles fuelled discussions of how the extension of religious toleration could benefit the state. One such thinker was British philosopher John Locke (1632-1714), who had benefited from exposure to

37 Laidlaw, The British in the Levant, p. 82.
38 Muhammad ibn Abd al-Malik Ibn Tufayl (b.1105-d. 1185) Arab-Andalusian Muslim polymath, philosopher and theologian.
41 Pococke’s admiration of eleventh century Persian Islamic philosopher al-Ghazali was infused with the words of St Paul, cited in Toomer, Eastern Wisdom, pp. 224-225.
Arabic and Islamic studies during his time at Oxford University (1652-1674). He identified how the Islamic model of toleration could be applied in a British and European context.

Locke was educated in Latin and Hebrew at Westminster School London, and studied Arabic and Islam, and the work of Islamic scholars at Oxford. There, Locke met Edward Pococke and exchanged ideas with Henry Stubbe. Stubbe clandestinely applauded ‘Mahometan-deist views’, while linking the cause of religious toleration with the limits of political authority in An Essay in the Defence of the Good Old Cause, or a Discourse concerning the Rise and Extent of the power of the Civil Magistrate in reference to Spiritual Affairs (1659). Locke’s early unpublished writing on religious liberty and toleration (1660-1661) did not share the same liberality expressed in the writings of Pococke and Stubbes. Rather, they were informed by the ‘Thirty-Year War’ (1618-1648) and his memory of the tumultuous English Civil War (1642-1651). He blamed the contradictory and unreasonable religious beliefs employed by dissenters and enthusiasts with all their extravagant and dangerous forms of spirituality and irrational assertions of direct divine inspiration for undermining political stability in pre-Restoration Anglican England. Consequently, Locke’s early writings on religious liberty and toleration (Two Tracts on Government 1660 and 1662) were subsumed within broad discussions of how societies unravel without stable government. After the Clarendon Code enacted the ‘Restoration’ of the ‘Church of England’ between 1661 and 1665, Locke repeatedly decried the extension of religious toleration to Catholics and Protestant dissenters and enthusiasts because he remained fearful of compromising state security by giving ground to indifferent religious matters. The continued misery caused by politico-religious conflict across England and Europe later shifted Locke’s opinions as evinced in the first drafts of An Essay concerning Toleration in 1667 and An Essay in Human Understanding in 1671. Locke’s extensive scholarship after this time, framed a considerable defence for toleration.

Locke adopted the empirical research model advocated by the Royal Academy to frame his defence of toleration. Utilising translated Arabic and Hebrew...
manuscripts and the travel accounts of sojourners to distant lands, Locke searched for evidence to support his belief that the diversity located in the human condition corresponded with the diversity evident in the natural world. Locke used empirical observations of ‘languages, learning, government, and manners’, alongside examples of ‘human practice and belief’ (including fashion, religion, education and law) to support his early Enlightenment critique of human innateness. Discrediting the Cartesian claim of innateness, in early drafts of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke alleged that the human mind was not preordained with epistemic principles at birth but was rather, tabula rasa (a blank slate). All knowledge and understanding, he argued, was acquired through human experience: where knowledge was produced by utilising ‘impressions drawn from our five senses’. Further, Locke recognised that all human experience was accumulative, acquired from interactions with the diversity in the natural world and interactions with the diversity found in the sociability of other human beings. Incorporation of seventeenth century travel references helped Locke substantiate his claim that human diversity was an essential feature of the human condition and supplemented his philosophical discussions on toleration. Having laid down his early academic rationale for toleration, the evolution of Locke’s political writings began to advocate against religious intolerance and persecution.

Locke’s political writings and affiliations during the reign of Charles II (r.1660-1685) forced his self-imposed political exile in the ‘Reformed’ Dutch Republic between 1683 and 1689, where he wrote extensively on the value of toleration. In particular, his association with the politician and philosopher First Earl of Shaftesbury Anthony Ashley Cooper (c.1621-1683), an outspoken supporter of the Exclusion Bill, undermined his safety during this period when censorship and political persecution of Anglicans was rampant. After eighty years of war and religious persecution, the Protestant (Calvinist) Dutch Republics had revolted against Catholic Spain and gained independence at the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). After this time, the hope of a Roman Catholic reconquest of Europe had ended and Protestantism was legally entrenched across northern Europe. The Dutch Republics consolidated as a global trading hub and emerging empire, benefiting significantly from Ottoman capitulatory privileges in the Levant region at a time when the Ottoman’s were struggling for political ascendency along their border with the Spanish Catholic House of Habsburg and the Catholic Venetian States. The

52 Locke owned a translated copy of the Qur’an, and had spoken to French physician Francois Bernier who had travelled to the Mughal Empire in the mid-17th century. He drew on the observations of Sir Paul Rycaut who had spent time in the Ottoman Empire, while also sourcing information from a collection of extensive maps and geographical surveys, and 195 works of travel literature cited in D. Carey, 2006, Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 14-15, 25-27.
56 This was evinced in his involvement with Lord Shaftesbury in the drafting of the Constitution of North Carolina 1669 which prohibited persecution of speculative religious opinion (Section 109) cited in J. Locke, Political Writings, pp. 210-232.
integration of the commercial economies of the Ottoman Levant and the Atlantic states (British, French and Dutch) during the seventeenth century had accelerated cross cultural encounters and exchanges between all these entities.\textsuperscript{57} Increased commercial integration and exchange facilitated the key words of ‘toleration, humanism and freedom’ in the social and political life of the Dutch Republics.\textsuperscript{58} Dutch commercial, creative and intellectual success had provided a fertile social and political climate for Locke’s writing on toleration.\textsuperscript{59} There he operated in a climate of relative intellectual freedom and literary exchange, having access to clandestine political manuscripts from across Europe. The broad distribution of clandestine literature reflected the multiplicity of ideas, debates and rivalries amongst philosophers of the period, promoting an outpouring of toleration literature. Indeed, Locke’s contributions were fed into the long philosophical tradition which had challenged or criticised religion and the power of the Church, to the extent that an early Enlightenment philosophical treatise was measured on how tacitly or overtly it challenged or criticised the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{60}

Protestant and Catholic hostilities came to a head in 1685 when the French Catholic king, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes. James II then became the Catholic king of Anglican England. This subsequent persecution of Anglicans and French Protestants (Huguenots) caused an influx of politico-religious refugees to the Dutch Republic. Three years later, when James II was usurped by Hanoverian King William of Orange, and fled to Catholic France in the Glorious Revolution 1688, religious persecution of Catholics and non-conformist dissenters was reinstated across Britain. The idea of toleration in Britain continued to be challenged by the Toleration Act 1689 which excluded Catholics and Atheists without compromise from any toleration at all, and deprived Non-conformists Christians of any share in government offices.\textsuperscript{61} Locke returned to England and to this political climate in 1689 when he published three of his most significant works: \textit{A Letter Concerning Toleration, Two Treaties of Government} and \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}.

\section*{Locke’s Politics of Toleration}

\textit{A Letter Concerning Toleration} distinguished the business of government from religion, insisting that the state was responsible for the civil interests of society and religious institutions, ‘the interest of men’s souls’.\textsuperscript{62} He insisted that boundaries between church and state jurisdictions should be ‘fixed and immovable’, avoiding the jumbling of political and religious ends, thereby ‘free[ing] men from all dominion

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\textsuperscript{58} M. Bulut, 2001, \textit{Ottoman-Dutch Relations in the early modern period 1571-1699}, Hilversum, Verloren, 2001


\textsuperscript{62} Locke, \textit{Concerning Toleration}, p. 3.
over one another in matters of religion’. Significantly, Locke contrasted the example of Turkish (Mahometan) religious toleration with the Christian Orthodox church’s propensity to assert religious authority over all those that exhibited ‘erroneous or heretical’ opinions. Identifying how each and every religious authority expressed the primacy of their orthodoxy, Locke remarked that every church was orthodox to itself and erroneous and heretical to another. He referred to the prospect of dissenting Christians (Armenian and Calvinist) in Ottoman Constantinople depriving the other of their estates or their liberty because of differing doctrines and ceremonies, causing the Ottoman Turkes to look on silently and laugh at ‘what inhuman cruelty’ one Christian group could inflict upon another. He reminded his readers ‘that civil power is the same in every place’. Civil power in the hands of a Christian prince in a Christian kingdom equates to that held by a Turkish emperor in Constantinople, where neither leader had authority to punish their faithful ‘for the articles of their faith’. This ardent defence of Christian and Muslim religious rights was subsumed within his broader defence of political liberty and toleration of Protestant dissidents in Christian England.

Locke’s understanding of Ottoman tolerance was informed by knowledge that while the West was ‘banishing Jews’ and ‘unleashing inquisitors’, the Ottoman state had been usually peaceable, accepting of diversity and had pursued policies of compromise and accommodation. Locke admired how Mahometans in ‘turbanned nations’ tolerated religious minorities without persecution on theological or denominational grounds and believed that his ‘co-nationals and co-religionists’ should similarly accept Protestant dissenters in Britain.

It should be noted that Locke referenced religious toleration in Muslim societies without affording credence to Islamic theology, preferring to prioritise the political security and legitimacy of religious communities within civil society rather than the primacy of liturgical belief. He distinguished the theology of Islam from Protestant Christianity on cultural grounds, believing that society and habit cemented the differences between the two. In Locke’s evaluation, each faith held a sincere recognition and obedience to the word of ‘God’ and each held their faith to be true: ‘Turks who sincerely seek [religious] truth’ are no different than Christians, Turks see ‘Divine revelation’ in their Koran just as Christians see their ‘Scripture as the word of God’.

While Locke compared each theology in a similar context, he retained his disdain for the Islamic creed but expressed sympathy for Muslim people. He could tolerate Muslims in order to legitimise the toleration of dissenters in Anglican England. Locke substantiated this by claiming ‘neither Pagan, nor

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63 Locke, p. 13; Locke, p. 18.
64 Locke, p. 11.
65 Locke, p. 11.
66 Locke, p. 11.
67 Locke, p. 12.
68 Locke, p. 12.
70 Locke, Two Tracts on Government, p. 146; Matar, Locke and the Turbanned Nations, p. 72.
71 Matar, pp. 67-77.
73 Matar, p. 76.
Mahometan, nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the Commonwealth, because of his religion’. Importantly, Locke broke with precedent when he recognised that Muslims and Jews were members of unique religious entities and not Christian heretics. Religious differences within and across different civil societies were unavoidable and predictable because complete uniformity on any level was irrational, just as it was ‘to promise the same looks or constitution’ across all societies. Locke considered religious diversity as a category of the human condition and acknowledged that diversity of religious opinion could not be avoided. Troubled by the ramifications of religious violence which were caused by matters of religious difference, Locke realised that:

[t]he refusal of toleration to those that had different opinions, which might have been granted, [had] produced all the bustles and wars, that have been in the Christian world, upon account of religion.

Locke grounded his philosophical discussions of toleration by expressing the need to avoid the forceful imposition of any religious doctrine upon others, Christian or otherwise. To do so, in Locke’s view, would ‘be utterly void of true Christianity’.

Locke was concerned with the abuse of ‘true Christianity’. He was not a deist. He valued Anglican Christianity because of its ‘scripturalism and rationalism’ and argued for the ‘reasonableness’ its ethical foundation provided. At the same time, he repudiated the effects of many of the orthodox notions ecclesiastics propagated, including atonement, predestination and original sin. Locke believed such notions prevented Christianity from producing a perfect society because ‘man was still not realising the benefits of his own inalienable rights and was yet infringing upon those of others’. Placing a high emphasis on toleration, Locke claimed that religion should remain a matter of private conscience. He debated the exclusive right of any one religion (‘be they Papist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or an Anabaptist; nay no more… it can be allowed to a Jew or Mahometan’) to claim itself as the only true religion in comparison to all others with similar claims. Locke preferred to think it ‘vain and idle’ to enquire after true religion, claiming that all knowledge of the true religion would remain unknown across time for everyone ‘till [the believer] come into the other world’. Rather, all believers, including ‘Mahometans and idolaters’, should be free to express their religious beliefs without inflicting or experiencing coercion, as long as their personal faith remained secondary to the jurisdiction of the magistrate and the security of society:

74 Locke, Concerning Toleration, p. 35.
75 Spellberg, Thomas Jefferson’s Qur’an, pp. 75-77.
76 Locke, Two Tracts on Government, p. 129.
77 Locke, Concerning Toleration, p.36.
78 Locke, pp. 38-41.
81 Locke, Reasonableness of Christianity, pp. xvii-xix.
82 Locke, p. xviii.
83 Locke, A Third Letter for Toleration, p. 288
no Opinions contrary to human Society, or to those rules, which are necessary to the preservation of Society, are to be tolerated by the Magistrate.\textsuperscript{84}

Locke defended the position of law-abiding Muslims in English civil society alongside all other law-abiding Protestant dissenters and non-Christians, while repudiating the toleration of Catholics and Atheists. Papist allegiances to Rome and Atheists’ denial of God threatened Locke’s vision for a tolerant and safe England, responsive to English magistrates. While Locke believed that magistrates should concern themselves with the political integrity of the Anglican state by doing ‘good, not harm,’ and not forcefully enslaving their population with an intolerant universal belief system, he doubted the allegiance of Catholics and Atheists to the English state.\textsuperscript{85} Locke’s logic was conflicted. Drawing on the strengths of Islamic tolerance to pinpoint the danger of ‘force’ being applied by magistrates to ‘laws obliging all to [religious] conformity’, he remained unable to sanction toleration of Catholics and Atheists.\textsuperscript{86} While Locke encouraged his detractors, in \textit{A Third Letter for Toleration}, to seek out the good example and ‘ingenuity’ practiced by ‘[my] Pagans and Mohametans for a little conscience and modesty,’ he resisted similar toleration of Catholics and Atheists primarily because of his overriding concern for state stability.\textsuperscript{87}

Whereas Locke expressed openness towards Muslims, most seventeenth century Englishmen expressed a fear of Ottoman might and a distrust of heretical Islam.\textsuperscript{88} Although his literary concession to Muslims was built around specific references to the practice of religious toleration in the Ottoman state, his support for this group of ‘non-Christian outsiders’ was in stark contrast to the usual pronouncements during the Restoration period in England.\textsuperscript{89} It constituted the ‘first tolerant pronouncement’ about the status of Muslims in Christian England, but remained a complex concession more broadly, because of his oblique criticism of the use of arbitrary power in the Ottoman protectorate of Algiers.\textsuperscript{90}

Locke’s concession to Muslims in Christian England was complicated by his metaphorical reference to a ‘leak[ing]’ company ship sailing through ‘cross winds’ in Algerian waters in \textit{Two Treatises of Government}.\textsuperscript{91} Locke adopted the metaphor of the ‘ship of state’ to suit his political ends. The company ship was a reference to the Levant Company that plied its trade in the pirate ridden waters of the Mediterranean. The Levant ship was looking for safe passage in inclement waters near Algiers, a known Barbary slavery port where arbitrary power operated co-

\textsuperscript{84} Locke, \textit{Concerning Toleration}, p. 30
\textsuperscript{87} Lorenzo, \textit{American Journal of Political Science}, pp. 248 - 258
\textsuperscript{89} Matar, \textit{John Locke and the Turbanned Nations}, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{90} Matar, p. 77
\textsuperscript{91} Locke, \textit{Two Treatise of Government}, pp. 223-224.
operatively with pirates and clandestine people smugglers. Locke was perhaps doubly alluding to the perilous situation of French Huguenot refugees who, after escaping persecution following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes 1685, were in danger of being picked up by an unscrupulous ship’s captain and offloaded in Algiers when ‘circumstances would let him’.92 Locke knew slavery wore many hats in the seventeenth century (he was a stockholder in The Royal Africa Company, a slave-trading company), and understood how well worn literary tropes of Ottoman and Barbary piracy and slavery were commonly used to underscore the threatening nature of the Ottoman state.93 Although Locke’s references were indirect, his subtlety was laden with political overtones. Unrestrained Barbary piracy and slavery had disrupted English trade and the security of Christian England’s coastline for centuries, while English and European pirates were similarly engaged in maritime violence throughout the Mediterranean.94 Locke’s leaking ship was an allusion to a pirate ship, captained by a corrupt and intolerant slave-master. Locke had fled his island home of England when it was ‘captain[ed]’ by a corrupt and intolerant master, who had threatened to impose the same ‘boundless will of tyranny’ that operated in Algiers.95 James II had rocked and destabilised his island nation by threatening to impose the tyranny of absolutism and popery on Protestant England. In Locke’s eyes, James II had threatened to enslave the troubled island ‘ship’, Christian England, with the same brand of intolerant Catholicism that Louis XIV had arbitrarily applied to France.

This satirisation of slavery and corruption in Algiers and the complicity of the Ottoman state were fed into knowledge of the religious intolerance and absolutism of Louis XIV and Locke’s portrayal of the concession of religious toleration in the Ottoman Empire. These instances emphasise how Locke fed transnational and trans-imperial knowledge into his philosophical conception of toleration and his broader concern for the ideal model of state. Increasing global interconnectedness and knowledge circulation had facilitated the spread of ‘useful information and testimony,’ including the Ottoman concession of toleration, during the early British

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and European Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{96} The British and wider European awakening to the
Ottoman concession of toleration became a distinctive feature of the Enlightenment,
and deserves our enduring intellectual attention today.

Conclusion

John Locke was educated in the ‘Age of Arabick’.\textsuperscript{97} His understanding of Turkish
(Mahometan) toleration in Constantinople and his extension of toleration towards
Muslims and Jews in England was informed by knowledge circulated by travellers
and traders in Islamic lands that had been incorporated into British and European
Enlightenment travel writing.\textsuperscript{98} Travel to distant lands from the sixteenth century
was recognised as an opportunity to blend ‘social, moral and aesthetic perspectives’
for the purpose of gaining inspiration of other ways of life that might be worth
emulating at home.\textsuperscript{99} Travel and acquired knowledge were considered integral to the
Enlightenment prospect of cultural reform whereby Enlightenment thinkers
encouraged the ‘selection of worthy customs observed abroad’ that could be drawn
into the social and political environment at home.\textsuperscript{100} Importantly, travel was
increasingly viewed as a ‘liberal pursuit’ with an ethnographic purpose that could
provide useful information and testimony for broader human, but particularly
European, improvement. Awareness of how the Islamic model of religious toleration
operated in the heterogeneous, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and
multi-tribal Ottoman Empire provided such useful information and testimony.

Locke’s attitudes to Islam and to Muslim people, although complicated,
reflect an awareness of how the Ottoman state had mostly avoided inter-communal
violence in its management of the religiously and ethnically differentiated
communities within its borders. There was increased respect for the imperial
achievement, permanence and toleration of the Ottoman Empire, by some Euro-
Christian Enlightenment diplomats, pilgrims, traders, and chaplains who moved
relatively freely throughout the Empire and reported on what they saw.\textsuperscript{101} John
Locke’s appeal for the extension of religious toleration to Christian dissenters in
Anglican Britain in the late seventeenth century was informed by his understanding
of how the Ottoman Empire had mostly managed to distinguish the business of
government from that of religion for the joint purpose of state building and regional
imperial expansion. Although Locke incorporated an oblique criticism of Ottoman
slavery and piracy in the protectorate of Algiers for political ends (concern for the
‘boundless will of tyranny anywhere), his sustained defence of Muslims and Jews in
British civil society can be described as pragmatic, while his egregious disregard for

\textsuperscript{96} D. Carey, 2008, ‘Continental Travel and Journeys Beyond Europe In The Early Modern Period: An
Armitage, ‘John Locke: Theorist of Empire?’ in S. Muthu, (ed.) \textit{Empire and Modern Political Thought},
\textsuperscript{97} Russell, \textit{The ‘Arabick’ Interest}, pp. 1-19.
\textsuperscript{98} Matar in M. Malik, \textit{Anti-Muslim Prejudice}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{100} Carey, pp.1 - 23
\textsuperscript{101} K. Barkey, ‘Islam and Toleration: Studying the Ottoman Imperial Model’, \textit{International Journal of

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English Catholics and Atheists remained contentious unresolved in his political writing. Ultimately, Locke’s early Enlightenment statements and references were designed to convey a belief that the role of government and the stability of civil society were inescapably linked to the concession of religious freedom and toleration.