

In Search of a Stereotype: “the Turkish Question”

By ÉVA BÓKA (Amstelveen)

The Islam world, represented by the Turkish Empire (Ottoman Empire)¹), is the “eternal enemy of Christianity against which Christianity has to fight in unity” — was repeated stereotypically in most of the political literature when describing the contacts between Christianity and Islam during the medieval and early-modern history of Christianity till the end of the 18th century²). This prejudice, created by medieval and early modern European policy, was based on the Christian religious mythology which considered Christianity as the only true religion which was to dominate the whole World. Based on this prejudice, all non-Christian populations were regarded as barbarians and were thus considered as enemies³). As such, all barbarians were imagined to be evil, with wicked personality, wild, ferocious, and uncivilised. This religious and prejudicial ideology was used by the Papacy as a political doctrine, as a basis for the principle of Holy Wars. In other words, Christian mythology, based on a prejudice, was used to cover an exclusive, religious, and power-thirsty political culture; this prejudice influenced the behaviour of a society regarding other peoples⁴).

Why was this so and why was this necessary? These were the most important questions for all Christian philosophical thinkers aiming to improve Christian society, from the beginning of the Reformation and during the En-

¹) The names Turkish Empire and Turks which were often used both earlier and nowadays in Europe concerning the Ottoman Empire were inappropriate. The Ottomans did not use these names.

²) See J. ter Meulen — G. Berlage — J. Huizinga, *Bibliographie du mouvement de la paix avant 1899. Période 1480—1776*. La Haye 1936; C. Göllner, *Turcica. Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Bucureşti, Baden-Baden 1967, Vol. 1—2.

³) On this stereotype see: Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*. München 1948, pp. 89—112; Max L. Baeumer, *Toposforschung*. Darmstadt 1973, pp. 1—19; J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens. Proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur*. Haarlem 1938, pp. 128—150 and 301—306.

⁴) J. Huizinga, *In de schaduwen van morgen*. Haarlem 1935, pp. 99—114.

lightenment. The question arising in the idea of the Holy War, using a modern terminology, was the problem of the cognitive dissonance⁵⁾ between the imaginary goals of Christianity and political reality. Analysing the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance the dissident Christian thinkers were confronted to the problem of intolerant human social behaviour all over the world. To explain the reasons of intolerance they began to examine the functioning of human understanding and behaviour. They recognized that human society was full of false ideas and stereotypes. The role of stereotypes was to justify every power oriented, dominant, and intolerant human behaviour and mentality.

In what follows we will survey how the phenomenon of intolerance (expressed by stereotypes) in the practice of Christian religious state organization and its role regarding the non-Christian peoples was discovered and opposed by some of the most important thinkers of early modern Europe, through the relationships between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe.

I. The doctrine of Holy War against the eternal enemy

Christian state organization is based on Christian mythology. According to this mythology, the most important aim of this religion is to fight against the evil (personified by the idea of the Devil). But who and what was evil, who and what was the enemy? This was always decided by the imaginations of the most powerful persons, or groups of persons, who were themselves manipulated by their own interests and political goals. *Saint Augustinus*, for example, believed that God himself may order war, and men who make war obeying God, to punish the evil and unlawful, are serving justice. All this also applies to the ways of dealing with barbarians and heretics who attack Christians professing the true faith⁶⁾. On the basis of this doctrine, Papacy preached that the evil was embodied by the barbarians and unknown populations, or groups of populations, who permanently endangered the goals and life of Christians. As a consequence, evil, for medieval Christians, was embodied by the barbarian empires. Among them, from the 15th century, the Ottoman Empire was the most powerful, thus it became the eternal and common enemy of Christianity. The fight against the Ottomans was decided as a rightful, Holy War. This religious doctrine was based on a prejudice which, of course, represented the phenomenon of intolerance.

⁵⁾ Elliot Aronson, *The Social Animal*. New York 1984, pp. 116, 229—236, 244—245.

⁶⁾ Saint Augustin, *La cité de dieu*. Œuvres de Saint Augustin. Bibliothèque Augustienne. Paris 1960, vol. 37, p. 261 and 265, and vol. 36, p. 667.

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When, from the 15th century, the period of the Ottoman “counter crusades” against Christianity began, the Ottoman religious doctrine answered the same way to the Christian challenge. Islam animosity against Christians was also based on prejudices expressed by stereotypes. Christians became the infidels, the eternal enemies, against whom the fight by all imaginable means was allowed and justified. As a consequence, both religious mythologies, preaching the necessity of fighting against the representatives of evil, led to a fight of peoples against peoples. Muslims and Christians, in interaction with each other, created a political reality together where two great religious groups of people stood against one another as enemies.

The stereotypes related to the Ottoman Empire lived and influenced the opinion of the Christians for a long time. Consequently, almost everybody regarded the Ottoman world through some kind of special glasses, which distorted their perception and the whole process of human understanding. This distortion was so strong that travellers, visiting the Ottoman Empire, could not see and speak about reality any more: most of the time they unconsciously tried to prove their own stereotypes, the untrue images on the life of the eternal enemy⁷).

The stereotypes always revived in the periods of Ottoman attacks against Christian territories. They began to lose their power only with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century. It should also be mentioned that, from the beginning of the 16th century, the economical and political contacts with the “eternal enemy” helped to break this stereotypical thinking. However, trade and political contacts were directed by economical and political interests. This could produce only a few conscious impulse to throw away the “glasses” of stereotypes and, in the thoughts, the distance was kept just as before. It was necessary to go through a long period of crisis in the social development of Christianity, full of analysis and discussions, to be able to see the real face of Christian political mentality and its intolerance. Furthermore, progressive Christian thinkers soon found themselves face to face with the intolerance of their own religion during the Reformation, which also helped them in going through radical changes in their perception. This personal confrontation with the problem of intolerance motivated the philosophers to think on the necessity of the humanisation of contacts between Christianity and the non-Christian world. However, it was only from the second half of the 17th century that they began consider more and more consciously the real nature of the Ottoman society. Until that time they mostly lived in a mythological dream full of prejudices, paralysing their thinking. The doctrine of the Holy War had thus a long influence. The task of the early modern Christian thinkers was to recognise, to oppose, and to

⁷) On a good summary of literature on this problem see in Wolfgang F. Reddig, *Reise zum Erzfeind der Christenheit. Der Humanist Hans Dernschwam in der Türkei (1553—1555)*. Bamberg 1990.

break the doctrine of Holy War, thereby eliminating the cognitive dissonance between thoughts and reality.

The main steps on the road of clearing up the stereotypes on the Ottoman society were as follows: 1. *Luther's* ideas to reform Christianity. 2. The idea of the Christian mission — modernisation of a prejudice. 3. The trauma of the religious wars. Ottoman “religious tolerance” in the state organisation as an example. 4. *Locke's* ideas on a tolerant state-system. 5. In the name of the Enlightenment — *Montesquieu, Voltaire*, and we will elaborate on all of these in what follows.

II. The main phases of the opposition against the stereotypes on the Ottoman Empire

1. *Luther's ideas to reform Christianity*

Due to Reformation and the progress of nation states the power of Papacy, the principle initiator of the Crusades, declined. As a consequence of this decline, conflicts between different religions as a cause of war began to lose its persuasive power. The supporters of the Reformation wished to confine religious questions to the private sphere. One of the important consequences was that European thinkers tried to eliminate the idea of religious war, i. e., of a war fought over matters of faith, from international contacts. As a first step *Luther* initiated a major movement against the crusades at the beginning of the Reformation. *Luther* declared the crusades to be an evil fruit of papal policy which lacked any legal basis. Although he himself thought of the Turks as the incarnation of the city of the Devil, he emphasised that the Devil could only be fought by the improvement of the individual. Religion was everyone's private matter, thus one could not wage wars over religion, since religion referred to the relationship between an individual and his or her God. Only defensive wars were justified against the Ottomans, under the leadership of the Emperor, since the Ottomans unjustly attacked Christian territories, primarily those ruled by the Emperor⁸). Thus *Luther*, rejecting the idea of religious war, and liberating Christians regarding their contacts with God, diminished the cognitive dissonance of the medieval Christian political doctrine. Following *Luther*, a growing number of European thinkers, among them *Grotius, Vitoria*, and *Crucé*, argued that wars should not be fought over matters of faith.

⁸) Martin Luther, *Eine Heerpredigt wider den Türken*. Wittenberg 1529 and M. Luther, *Vom Kriege wider den Türken*. Wittenberg 1542.

2. *The idea of the Christian mission — modernisation of a prejudice*

The second step in criticising the prejudices on the Ottomans was represented by *Vitoria*. When the Spanish king asked him to give an advise on how to behave with the populations living in the New World, he rejected the idea of a Holy War led against them. He accepted a defensive war only, based on the rules of natural law⁹). Regarding the legalisation of the Spanish colonisation, *Vitoria* made one step further and considered colonisation as a humanitarian act, serving the interests of the, in his view, politically and culturally immature peoples. His goal was to realise the Christian idea of improving people in the colonies. In a way, he exchanged the idea of a Holy War for the idea of a peaceful Christian mission among non-Christians¹⁰).

Thus, *Vitoria* rejected the old prejudices regarding non-Christian populations as enemies, as the representatives of evil. But, on the other hand, he recreated the old prejudice in a new form, by proposing the humanitarian mission of Christianity among non-Christians; this was still, after all, the idea of the inferiority of non-Christians and the superiority of Christians. He modernised the old cognitive dissonance without changing its real content. Christian mission was still based on a prejudice. It let the way free to misuse — including the use of violence — the original idea aiming at improving humanity. From the 17th century the idea of mission began to change the nature of the crusades against the Ottoman Empire, too.

3. *The trauma of the religious wars. Ottoman political “religious tolerance” in the state organisation as an example*

Uniformity of religious belief in Western Christendom had been shattered by the Reformation; and from then onwards true faith was no longer associated exclusively with the Catholic Church under the spiritual authority of the Pope. Other Churches, including the Church of England and the various Lutheran and Calvinist churches, also claimed to hold and practice true faith. Like the Catholic Church, all these churches were intolerant towards other churches and sects. Similarly, the secular princes and rulers, each claiming to uphold the true faith, denied religious freedom to their subjects based on the principle of “*cuius regio eius religio*”. Churches and secular rulers alike believed that men must be forced to accept whichever religious beliefs each church or ruler regarded as the true faith. As a result of their power oriented and intolerant behaviour they continued to misuse religion

⁹) Franciscus de Vitoria, *De Indis, recenter inventis et de jure belli hispanorum in Barbaros. Relectiones* (Vorlesungen über die kürzlich entdeckten Inder und das Recht der Spanier zum Kriege gegen die Barbaren, 1539). Lateinischer Text nebst deutscher Übersetzung hersg. von Walter Schätzel. (Die Klassiker des Völkerrechts) Tübingen 1952, p. 129.

¹⁰) F. de Vitoria, *De Indis*, p. 115.

by manipulating their subjects using the mechanism of prejudices. The most extreme manifestation of religious intolerance was the massacre of French Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572. The memory of this massacre remained very much alive in France and elsewhere throughout the 17th century. Religious issues played an important role in this century in the Thirty Years' War as well as in the English Civil War.

Religious tolerance was scarce in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. The opposition against this intolerant policy was developed by those Protestants who were themselves confronted to this intolerant policy for their different view on the essence of Christianity. They were therefore deeply motivated to draft new ideas on a tolerant state and a community of states. Looking for examples, they also studied the state organisation principles of the non-Christian world and they compared them with the Christian society they knew. They regarded, e.g., the millet-system of the Ottoman Empire with a certain appreciation. This was understandable, because the Ottoman Empire could effectively keep together different religious groups and different cultures without conflicts; the secret of this organisation was what interested them. There were some who thought that the Ottoman state organisation followed the example of the Roman Empire¹¹⁾ (idealised by Europeans), which could also keep together lots of different nations.

Guillaume Postel, for example, in his "République des Turcs" (1560)¹²⁾, although politely, but used the example of the Ottoman society for a satire of the Christian society of his age¹³⁾. *Postel* was in favour of religious tolerance and for the unity of well-armed Christian states. He used the example of the Ottoman state organisation — with exaggerations understandable to everybody — to emphasise how a great power represented a disciplined army, religious tolerance, and the peaceful coexistence of people having different cultures within the same state. In his view, this was the secret of the power of the Ottoman state which, in this respect, could be regarded as the descendant of the ancient Roman Empire. He also believed that the Christians had to follow this example — first of all the example of religious tolerance — by organising the universal empire of God¹⁴⁾. *Postel*, by contrasting Christianity with the Turks, and presenting the Christian society as being

¹¹⁾ Jean Bodin, *Les six livres de la République*. Faximiledruck der Ausgabe Paris, 1583. Aalen: Scientia 1961, p. 458 and 543; Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*. Vol. 1, Paris 1972, p. 211.

¹²⁾ Guillaume Postel, *De la République des Turcs: et l'occasion s'offrera des meurs et loy de tous Muhamedists*. Poitiers 1560.

¹³⁾ F. Lestringant, *Guillaume Postel et l'obsession turque*, in: *Guillaume Postel, 1581—1981. Actes du Colloque International d'Avranches, 5—9 septembre 1981*. Paris 1985, pp. 265—298.

¹⁴⁾ Guillaume Postel, *La tierce partie des orientales histoires, où est exposée la condition, puissance, et revenu de l'Empire Turquesque*, in: *G. Postel, De la République des Turcs*, p. 21, 44, 70, 72, 79.

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inferior to the Ottomans with regard to state organisation, gave a new conception for the fight of stereotypes: the necessity for the comparison of the two societies and for trying to draw conclusions as a result of such comparison.

It was well known in Europe, in the 16th and 17th centuries, that the Ottoman politicians continuing the antique traditions of the Byzantine Empire and the great state organizer emperor *Constantine I*, have developed a sort of self-government, and that under the Ottoman rulers the system known as millet-system became institutionalised. This system was basically a minority home-rule policy based on religious affiliation. Islam theology made a difference between the “people of the book”, as the Christians and Jews were called, and the pagans who theoretically had to accept to be converted or otherwise be killed. The “people of the book”, who possessed scriptures that represented divine revelations, and who had once known true belief in God, could buy their freedom by paying for it¹⁵). The difference between the Muslims and these other monotheists was simply that Muslims, through the teachings of Mohammed, have received the last and uncorrupted message, whereas the others explained the divine revelations erroneously¹⁶). However, Islam did not preach persecution against the “people of the book”.

The problem of the administrative integration of the important non-Muslim groups of the empire was solved by Sultan *Mehmed I the Conqueror*, shortly after his conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Using the “people of the book” precept as his justification, *Mehmed’s* idea was to divide the subject population of the empire into millets (nations), based solely on religious affiliation, and administrated by the highest religious authorities of each. All non-Muslims in the empire were officially distributed among three millets, representing the three most important non-Muslim faiths existing among the subjects: the Orthodox Christians, headed by the patriarch of Constantinople, the Jews, headed by an elected representative of the rabbinical council in Istanbul, and the Armenians, headed by an Armenian patriarch of Istanbul appointed by the sultan, who also came to represent any Roman Catholic subjects of the Turks. Each millet was responsible for representing its membership before the Ottoman court and for its own internal administration. They were all granted the rights to tax, judge, and order the lives of their respective members insofar as those rights did not conflict with Islamic sacred law and the sensibilities of the Muslim ruling establishment. The religious hierarchies of the millets were thus endowed by the Turkish central authorities with civil responsibilities beyond their ecclesiastical duties. In effect, each millet, personified by its religious administrators,

¹⁵) Adrian Reland, *Zwey Bücher von der Türkischen oder Mohammedischen Religion*. Utrecht 1717, pp. 161—163.

¹⁶) M. Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d’un voyage de Levant*. Amsterdam 1718, p.39.

became an integral part of the empire's domestic administration, functioning as a genuine department of the Ottoman central government. The sultan's government granted each millet a considerable amount of autonomy in the spheres of religious devotion and cultural activity, judicial affairs, and in local self-government. A millet was a religious association which eliminated all ethnical and territorial considerations. No matter where one lived within the empire, no matter how mixed the population was, millet affiliation governed one's life¹⁷). This structure remained alive and functioned more or less peacefully during the 17th—18th centuries, till the great changes caused by the triumph of nationalism in the 19th century¹⁸).

This phenomenon of "Ottoman tolerance" was very strange for the European contemporaries, who regarded the Ottoman Empire as a despotic military theocracy, which named itself "The divinely protected well-flourishing absolute domain of the House of Osman"¹⁹), where nobody questioned the absolute right of the ruling house to own and administer the state's domain. The question arising was whether it was true or not that the Ottoman state was tolerant and did not want the soul of its non-Muslim subjects, thereby creating a form religious freedom within the Empire. Accepting this state-

¹⁷) Dennis P. Hupchick, *Culture and History in Eastern Europe*. London 1994, pp. 146—147. Peter F. Sugar writes that from the administrative-political angle the Ottoman Empire was organized into horizontal layers of social classes in accordance with their professional activities. The population was also divided vertically along legal-religious lines. In addition to the Muslims there existed the millets of the Orthodox, the Armenians, and the Jews. These were parallel organizations, and each was independent within the limits of its own competence. The Ottomans had no concept corresponding to national lines of differentiation, and although Islam was certainly superior in their eyes to any other creed, they did not subordinate the latter to the former. By this way there was created acceptable living conditions and legal structures for the non-Muslims ... The vertical and horizontal divisions of society coexisted with equal force and, superimposed on each other, produced a grid. Each individual belonged within one of these squares in this grid. Horizontal movement from one millet into another was possible through conversion for all except Muslims, while vertical movement within a given millet was much more difficult and rarer because too much movement along these lines would have upset the socioeconomic balance on which the existence of the state depended. Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354—1804*. Washington 1977, pp. 273—274; about the idea of the millet system see also Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453—1923*. Cambridge 1983, pp. 288—289, 259—261, 264; Franz Babinger *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*. Princeton 1978, pp. 432—442.

¹⁸) P. Sugar believed, that Ottoman "backwardness" is exaggerated when applied to the end of the eighteenth century. The nineteenth was the critical century from this point of view. P. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 282—283.

¹⁹) *Ibidem*, p. 279.

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ment meant to acknowledge this policy as a merit. Doubting this statement meant to criticise it, and to consider it merely as a cynical mean to keep peace inside the empire, to make the Empire “well flourishing”.

“Ottoman tolerance” in the state organisation was a matter of discussion, first of all among the Protestant thinkers at the time of the religious persecutions in Europe. The problem was to decide on the character of Islam tolerance. Protestant thinkers were motivated to deal with the Ottomans, to learn about them, whereas the Roman Catholic Church, continuing to argue using century old stereotypes regarding Islam, also attacked the Protestants having contacts with the Turks. For example, *Adrian Reland*, one of the first European professors of the Arabian language and Islam religion and culture at the University of Utrecht at the turn of the 17th century, describes how the Roman Catholic Church attacked *Luther* and his Protestant followers claiming that they turned to the Muslim religion²⁰). On the other hand, it was a question of self-defence for Protestant thinkers to deal with Islam and the organisation of the Ottoman state. Liberating themselves from the religious prejudices of the previous centuries, they thought it to be their task to know the truth about the Ottoman society and religion.

At the end of the 17th century the problem of religious tolerance was also in the focus of the interest among Dutch philosophers, belletrists, theologians, as well as the French and other refugees of various nationalities residing in the Netherlands (which was at that time the secure place of tolerance and religious freedom). These refugees included, for example, *Peter Bayle*, who was in exile in the Netherlands after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685, or *Locke*, who also lived and worked there at the time of his exile²¹).

It was the famous history of the Turkish Empire by *Rycaut*, originally written in English, which served as a guide to the Ottoman Empire. *Rycaut* himself emphasised his view that, on the basis of the Koran, Islam is not tolerant²²). He believed that the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire could be regarded only as cynicism: “Comme ils savent qu’on ne peut forcer la volonté des homme, ni assujettir leurs conscience, il n’y a point d’artifices et de tyrannie qu’il ne pratiquent, pour rendre le Chrétiens pauvres, méprisables, et leur vie chagrine et malheureuse; de sorte que la tolerance qu’ils ont pour leur Religion, est plutôt un supplice et une persecution, qu’une grace ou faveur²³.” He acknowledged that Islam accepted the existence of the old churches but it was forbidden to Christians to build new ones or to repair

²⁰) A. Reland, *Zwey Bücher*, Preface, p. a. 7.

²¹) Jean Le Clerc, *Bericht von dem weltberühmten und hochgelehrten Engländer John Locke*. Magdeburg 1720, pp. 60—61.

²²) Sir Paul Rycaut, *Histoire de l’etat present de l’Empire Ottoman*. Amsterdam 1696, p. 256.

²³) P. Rycaut, *Histoire*, p. 257.

old ones. On the basis of the restrictions regarding Christians he concluded: “C’est pourquoy il faut que les Églises Chrétiennes qui sont aujourd’huy dans les État du Turc, perissent avec le temps comme cela est déjà arrivé en plusieurs endroits²⁴.” *Rycaut* believed that the tolerance of the Islam state was by far not humanitarianism, but simply a cold “raison d’état” of a despotic state²⁵).

Bayle, who was the most outspoken in his advocacy of religious freedom, strongly criticised the intolerance of Christianity. Comparing the “tolerance” of Christians and the Muslims, he concluded to the advantage of the Ottomans: “... les hommes se conduisent peu selon leurs principes.” “Les Mahometans selon les principes de leur Foi sont obligez d’employer la violence pour ruiner les autres religions, et néanmoins ils les tolèrent depuis plusieurs siècles. Les Chrétiens n’ont reçu ordre que de prêcher et d’instruire, et néanmoins de temps immemorial ils exterminent par le fer et par le feu ceux qui ne sont point de leur religion²⁶.” Thus *Bayle* emphasised the contrast between the teachings of Christianity and the age-old practice of compelling men to accept certain doctrines. *Bayle* concluded further that tolerance is not a satisfactory solution to achieve the peaceful coexistence of different populations. This is why he advocated freedom of conscience, rather than religious toleration; he saw no need for the organised religion of the churches.

Later, in the name of truth, *Adrian Reland* protested against the stereotypes of the Latin books, which were written mostly against the Turks, serving proselytism, based on religious enthusiasm. He believed that religion should be an issue of personal human understanding all over the world. Fighting against the inaccurate and falsified ideas on the Turks, he emphasised the necessity to study the Arabic language and Islam culture in their genuine form, instead of relying on Latin books. He believed that the world cannot be directed further by prejudices²⁷). In his book on the Muslim religion he tried to be objective and rational, in harmony with his own goals, and to eliminate unjustified ideas of Christians on the Islam religion and society.

Writing on the Islam law of war, *Reland* acknowledged that in the Islamic perception the Ottoman Empire was indeed a despotic theocracy, based on the idea of Holy War against the infidels world-wide, and which tried to expand the domains of the “true believers”²⁸). He also believed that, in such

²⁴) Ibidem.

²⁵) Ibidem, pp. 257—258.

²⁶) Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*. Rotterdam 1697, vol. 3, pp. 483—484.

²⁷) A. Reland, *Zwey Bücher*, Preface, p. c. 5.

²⁸) “Jeder Krieg ist nach Beschreibung der Mohammedaner ein Streit mit solchen Menschen, die entweder nicht dem Mohammedischen Glauben zugehörig, oder demselben ungehorsam sind, welcher Streit um der Religion wil-

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a state system, the tolerance of the Ottomans toward Christians could only be regarded as a kind of oriental enslavement based on the *raison d'état*. Tolerance was merely a political tool to keep together a large, varied population. He proved this by examining the restrictions of the rights of the “peoples of the book” living in the territory of the Ottoman Empire, which were the following: they had to pay a personal tax; it was not possible to build Christian churches at a place where the Muslims had already built a church; it was not allowed to build a Christian house to be higher than a Muslim; they could not own a horse, only a donkey; they had to get out of the way of the Muslims; they had to wear different clothes; it was forbidden to try to convert a Muslim and it was not possible to speak about Mohammed without respect; it was not allowed to go into a Muslim church or only with permission; they were not allowed to go to the surroundings of Mecca; they were not allowed to live in the surroundings of a Muslim holy town, only to travel through it. The “peoples of the book” had to give up every resistance to the Muslims²⁹). On the basis of these restrictions *Reland* concluded that religious freedom, as a right for a Christian, was something to be paid for and not a natural right; by paying for his freedom a Christian acknowledged the Islam domination. However, this political principle was still better than persecution. Finally, *Reland* concluded that it was necessary to use the example of Ottoman tolerance with care: because offering a limited privilege only for the minority religious groups, it created a stable state organisation which made possible further conquests. One should not forget that, in the Ottoman state conception, the whole state was still the propriety of the sultan.

The discussion on “Ottoman tolerance” made it necessary to decide on the character of the Ottoman society. The Ottoman society was generally presented, after the ideas of *Aristotle*, as tyranny³⁰). *Jean Bodin* proposed, in the 16th century, the concept of a “monarchie seigneuriale”³¹) as the earliest social form of human society. The Turks became rulers of the territories which they had conquered on the right of war, and the conquered people submitted themselves. This was the opinion of *Hobbes*, too, who, on basis of this idea, regarded the Ottoman state as a despotic and not a tyrannical state and, as such, representing a natural state form³²). *Rousseau* and *Montesquieu* also regarded the Ottoman state as a despotic state; they clearly

len geführt wird.” Adrian Reland, *Türkisches Krieges-Recht, oder kurtze doch ausführliche Beschreibung der Weise wie die Türcken gegen die Christen Krieg führen und was sie dabey für Gesetze haben*, in: A. Reland, *Zwey Bücher*, pp. 143—231.

²⁹) *Ibidem*, pp. 167—169.

³⁰) *Aristote*, *Les politiques*. Paris 1990, pp. 309—310.

³¹) *J. Bodin*, *Les six Livres de la République*, p. 136, 274, 275.

³²) *Thomas Hobbes*, *Le citoyen*. Paris 1982, p. 146.

made a difference between tyranny and despotism. Thus, the Ottoman Empire was, for the people of the 17th and 18th centuries, the representative of the Eastern despotism³³) which used tolerance as a political means to keep the empire together.

Although “Ottoman tolerance” was strongly criticised, it continued to serve as an example and as a contrast to intolerant Christian state-organisation ideas. *Spinoza*, for example, making a parallel between the Ottoman one-man management and the absolutism of the French king, expressed the similarity between the two concepts of state: “Experience seems to teach that it makes for peace and harmony if all power is rested in one man. For no state has stood so long without any notable change as that of the Turks and, conversely, none have proved so short-lived and so liable to constant civil strife as popular or democratic states. But if slavery, barbarism and desolation are to be called peace, peace is the greatest misfortune that men can suffer. . . . So it is slavery, not peace, that is furthered by the transfer of all power to one man; for peace, as I have said already, is not mere absence of war, but a union or agreement of minds³⁴.” *Spinoza* was convinced that tolerance, i. e., religious freedom, was not present neither in the Ottoman Empire nor in France.

The idea of personal liberty as part of the state organisation developed step by step in the European political thought. The centralised French absolute state was an obstacle in this development. This is why *Abbé de Saint Pierre* compared the state system of *Louis XIII* and *Louis XIV* to the Ottoman system, calling the French system “vesirat”. He believed that *Richelieu*, *Colbert*, or *Louvois* played the same roles as the viziers in the Ottoman state. All the three served a king holding the supreme right of a commonwealth, who, in turn, regarded them only as his counsellors³⁵). There was, however, a great difference between these French kings and the Ottoman sultans, namely that these Christian absolute kings rejected the idea of tolerance as a principle of state organisation.

As a conclusion we can say that the phenomenon of intolerance in the Christian state-organisation resulted in its comparison with the Ottoman state. It was known that Ottoman “tolerance”, based on the idea of freedom, did not fully exist, and that discrimination was never eliminated. It was, however, a wise state organisation principle, aimed at maintaining the state of a despotic monarchy, and representing the interests of the dominating

³³) Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois*. Paris 1979, vol. 1, p. 139; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*. Paris 1966, pp. 127—128.

³⁴) Benedict de Spinoza, *The political works* (The tractatus theologico-politicus in part and the Tractatus politicus in full). Oxford 1958, pp. 315—317.

³⁵) Charles-Irene Castel, *Abbé de Saint Pierre, Discours sur la polysynodie*. Rotterdam 1719, pp. 93—100.

Islam. Thus, animosity and persecution among the majority and minority religious groups were stopped by the benevolence, favour, and wisdom of the sultan, whose absolute authority hold the great empire together. The millet-system was never based on the principle of personal religious freedom; freedom was to be paid for, or to be acquired with presents, thereby accepting the domination of Islam. Personal and political freedom of people played no role and the religious tolerance of the millet-system was not an example for human rights. The ideas and the theoretical structure of the millet-system undoubtedly influenced the European thinkers, when they tried to draft their ideas on a tolerant, multireligious, and multinational democratic state organisation. Indeed, at the time of religious persecutions in Europe, the following question could be most naturally raised: what would happen if one threw away the despotic theocracy and tried to implement the idea of the millet-system in a democratic state?

As an example we can mention the ideas of the outstanding defender of the concepts of religious and political freedom, *Roger Williams*, who, in his treatise entitled “The bloody tenant of persecution for cause of conscience” (London, 1644)³⁶), compared the State and the Church to two different ships. On the first, the ruler was the State, on the other, the Church. On the ship of the State not only every member of all Christian sects could voyage in peace, but the Jews and the Turks, too, and their common interest was that the ship could navigate in security, without religious conflicts. The other ship could have been a lot of small boats, and everybody could find salvation concerning his or her own belief. This is the substance of the Protestantism³⁷).

Another example could be *Crucé* who, considering the important commercial interests between the Ottoman Empire and France, completely broke with the tradition of the crusades against the Turks³⁸). His “Le Nouveau Cynée”³⁹) was essentially the first plan which covered not only Christian Europe but the whole world, discussing as it did the creation of an international world organisation on the basis of the status quo, accepting the sovereignty of states. *Crucé* argued that a reconciliation between Christianity and Islam, the faiths of enemies confronting each other, would be a great and

³⁶) Roger Williams, *The bloody tenant of persecution for cause of conscience*. London 1644, in: Mária Ludassy, *A toleranciától a szabadságig*. Budapest 1992, pp. 41—42.

³⁷) *Ibidem*, p. 41.

³⁸) About the commercial and diplomatic contacts between Europe and the Ottoman Empire there is a significant literature. Regarding the documents see: Gabriel Noradounghian, *Recueil d’actes internationaux de l’Empire Ottoman*. Paris 1897, vol. 1. (1300—1789); Baron I. Testa, *Recueil des traités de la Porte Ottomane avec les puissance étrangères*. Paris 1864.

³⁹) Emeric Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*. (Translated into English from the original French text of 1623). Philadelphia 1909.

necessary step forward on the road to universal peace. Religion was not a business of the rulers of this world but of God. *Crucé* did not merely propose the union of Christians but truly a world federation. Differences in religion cannot be an obstacle to a universal peace. There must be freedom of religion and freedom of thought. He is the first who accepted that religious Freedom and tolerance must cover Islam society as well, and that the Ottoman Empire has to be concluded in the world community of peace.

4. *Locke's ideas on a tolerant state-system*

At the end of the 17th century *Locke*, who was under the influence of the discussion on tolerance in England and in the Netherlands, summed up all the ideas which were proposed on the problem of toleration in his age. *Locke* believed that people were full of false ideas, untrue images, inherited from the past. It is only by enlightenment that this mentality can be changed, and this is why toleration (as the first step) was necessary in the state of knowledge of the people living in his age⁴⁰). In his “*Epistola de Tolerantia*”, written in 1685 during his exile in the Netherlands, he argued, while criticising the Holy War: “it is not the diversity of opinions (which cannot be avoided), but the refusal of toleration to those that are of different opinions (which might have been granted), that had produced all the bustles and wars that have been in the Christian world upon account of religion. The heads and leaders of the church moved by avarice and insatiable desire of dominion, making use of the immoderate ambition of magistrates and the credulous superstition of the giddy multitude, have incensed and animated them against those that dissent from themselves, by preaching unto them, contrary to the laws of the Gospel and to the precepts of charity, that schismatics and heretics are to be outed of their possessions and destroyed. And thus have they mixed together and confounded two things that are in themselves most different, the church and the commonwealth⁴¹).” He thought that, in reality, only distress and subjection could be a real cause of a revolt against social injustice, not religion. Based on this arguments he stated clearly the necessity of the separation of freedom of worship and of religious belief from the state.

It is not by coincidence that when explaining his ideas on the church, as a voluntary and free society, he used as an example a discussion between the Armenian and the Calvinist churches residing in Constantinople. He asked the question, whether “will any one say that either of these churches has a right to deprive the members of the other of their estates and liberty,

⁴⁰) John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*. Oxford 1975, p. 659.

⁴¹) John Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*. (Latin and English texts). The Hague 1963, pp. 105—107.

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because of their differing from it in some doctrines or ceremonies, whilst the Turks in the meanwhile silently stand by, and laugh to see, with what inhuman cruelty Christians thus rage against Christians?” His answer is undoubtedly no, because what any church believes, it believes it to be true. He concluded that there is no judge, either at Constantinople or elsewhere upon Earth, to decide which religious doctrine is true. The Ottoman emperor cannot give religious rights to his Christian subjects. “An infidel, who has himself no authority to punish Christians for the articles of their faith, cannot confer such an authority upon any society of Christians, nor give unto them a right which he has not himself. This would be the case at Constantinople; and the reason of the king is the same in any Christian kingdom. The civil power is the same in every place: nor can that power, in the hands of a Christian prince, confer any greater authority upon the church than in the hands of a heathen; which is to say, just none at all⁴².” *Locke* believed that the defenders of a religion, considering themselves as being the only true religion, are the most active when strengthened by civilian power. When not helped by a secular power to carry out persecution, they desire to live upon fair terms and preach toleration.

Thus, *Locke* believed that the Ottoman state cannot protect its Christian subjects regarding their religious discussions, because it is not competent and has no right to punish the Christians. He also believed that this principle had to be true in the case of Christian states regarding their non Christian subjects, too. The state can nowhere be involved in religious discussions. If it is involved, fanaticism will never be stopped. The state cannot confiscate the properties of people and persecute them based on religious causes⁴³). We may suppose that *Locke*, when formulating his concept of a tolerant state, was also inspired by the idea of “millet tolerance” and its autonomous organisation, which followed the religious tolerance of the ancient world. He probably imagined this system, based on the idea of tolerance and equal rights, in a state where state and religion were separated.

Locke was in general tolerant to all churches which did not tend to establish domination over others⁴⁴). At the same time *Locke* refused any tolerance to be exercised by the magistrates vis-à-vis churches which were based upon the principle that all those who enter into it do thereby ipso facto deliver themselves to the protection and service of another prince. He believed that a Muslim, who professed his religion, could not be the subject of a Christian magistrate, because in the Ottoman State religion and church were not separated. Consequently, the supreme magistrate and the head of church for a Muslim was always the Ottoman Emperor. Such a situation would only cause unsolvable conflicts between the two, i. e., the Christian and the Otto-

⁴²) J. Locke, A letter, pp. 35—37.

⁴³) Ibidem, p. 15 and 23.

⁴⁴) Ibidem, pp. 91—93.

man magistrates, if the legal procedure took place on the territory of a Christian state. He believed that, in the case of Islam, the solution should also be to separate the State and the Religion, so that Muslims could live in peace together with the other religions and peoples.

Locke's main argument, in his “*Epistola de Tolerantia*”, is based on the premise that church and state should be separate because the functions of the state are quite different from those of the church: “The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own civil interests⁴⁵.” “A church, than, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls⁴⁶.” Based on these principles he proposed to regard religion as everybody’s private affair which had to be independent from the state all over the World. He proposed to tolerate all religious differences (with the exception of the atheists) within the state without discrimination, and to achieve this through free religious associations, which should be independent from the state. Through his ideas *Locke* wanted to stop the states and their rulers, on the one side, and the churches and their leaders, on the other side, to exercise religious manipulation of people; he wanted to stop using religion as an instrument of political power and fight. He believed that a democratically organised and tolerant constitutional monarchy could solve all conflicts. However, his concepts on toleration did not offer a full solution to solve the problem of the minority and majority religious groups (standing on the side of the magistrate) in a state. His idea on tolerance, as state organisation principle, was still under the influence of the concepts of state of the idealised antiquity. In any case, *Locke*, in his “*Epistola de Tolerantia*” distilled the best thoughts of his age concerning the organisation of a type of democratic state which he believed to be the most suitable to achieve the true goals of Christianity. At the same time his ideas on human understanding opened the way in the direction of freedom of conscience.

5. *In the name of the enlightenment — Montesquieu, Voltaire*

The development of the philosophy of nature changed the earlier world views, which were primarily religiously oriented. It became a continuing goal to enlighten people, to make them free from all kinds of prejudices and superstitions regarding non-Christians. As a follow-up on *Locke's* ideas on human understanding, these philosophers attacked and criticised all reli-

⁴⁵) “Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and like.” J. Locke, *A letter*, p. 15.

⁴⁶) *Ibidem*, p. 23.

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gious prejudices, superstitions, dubious principles, medieval dogmas, false persuasions and conceits, predominant passions, and religious enthusiasm, as false, stereotyped ideas serving only the authorities. Boundaries between Faith and Reason had to be clarified and truth had to be searched for⁴⁷). All this happened in the name of eliminating intolerance and improving Christian civilisation. Fight against stereotypes became a special goal for the great French philosophers of the Enlightenment, although the political life in France still remained intolerant. The religious persecutions, which periodically reappeared, were the sources of additional challenges for all these thinkers and demanded new ideas in order to fight prejudices.

Montesquieu, for example, regarded toleration as a political principle. He believed in the principles of natural religion: he was a deist. He emphasised that only reason and morality led to toleration. Conversely, intolerance and persecution, both being the outcome of enthusiasm, which was unreasonable. In his “Persian Letters” (1721) and, later, in “The Spirit of the Laws”, *Montesquieu* drew attention on two further issues related to the question of religious intolerance. First, that as all religious sects “enjoy obedience” and “preach submission”, and that toleration of several religions within the same State would not affect its safety, because “ce n’est point la multiplicité des religions qui a produit ces guerres, c’est l’esprit d’intolérance qui animait celle qui se croyait la dominante⁴⁸.” Secondly, that the source of intolerance was to be found in the “spirit of proselytism” which, like an epidemic, spread among both Muslims and Christians; the progress of this epidemic could only be regarded as a total eclipse of human reason⁴⁹). *Montesquieu* let a Persian explain all this (in his “Persian Letters”), thereby clearly expressing how a general, world-wide phenomenon intolerance was, that it was the attitude of despots, autocrats, and all power-oriented persons. He also emphasised how great the loss a country was if, as a result of religious persecution, industrious and enterprising people left the country and took their talents elsewhere⁵⁰).

He knew all too well that an intolerant and conquering attitude continued to be the reality of his age. In his attempts to humanise this general mentality, he argued in favour of avoiding the complete submission of people, because “C’est la folie des conquérants de vouloir donner à tous les peuples leurs lois et leurs coutumes; cela n’est bon à rien: car, dans toute sorte de gouvernement, on est capable d’obéir⁵¹.” He proposed further to follow, as

⁴⁷) J. Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, p. 696—697.

⁴⁸) *Montesquieu*, *Lettres persanes*. Paris 1973, No. LXXXV, p. 208 and *idem*, *The Spirit of the Laws*. Paris 1979, vol. 2, book 25, Chpt. 9, pp. 169—170.

⁴⁹) *Montesquieu*, *Lettres persanes*, No. LXXXV, p. 208.

⁵⁰) *Ibidem*, p. 207.

⁵¹) *Montesquieu*, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*. Paris 1968, p. 69.

a state-organisation principle, the example of ancient Rome: “Mais, Rome n’imposant aucunes lois générales, les peuples n’avaient point entre eux de liaisons dangereuses; ils ne faisaient un corps que par une obéissance commune, et, sans être compatriotes, ils étaient tous romains. . . . Mais il n’y a rien au Monde de si contradictoire que le plan des Romains et celui des Barbares; et, pour n’en dire qu’un mot: le premier était l’ouvrage de la force; l’autre, de la faiblesse; dans l’un, la sujétion était extrême; dans l’autre, l’indépendance⁵²).”

Finally, *Montesquieu* regarded intolerance, expressed by the persecutions which justified themselves in prejudices, as a barbaric and inhuman phenomenon. This was, for him, the general behaviour of all power thirsty people all over the world. He made, therefore, a further step in the fight against the stereotypes, declaring them a product of an autocratic human psychology.

In parallel with *Montesquieu*, *John Bellers* also warned his contemporaries that Muslims were men, with the same talents and minds as other men. They desire the same chances and wish to be accepted as men like all others. Not to accept them would be a great mistake and would lead to a continuous state of war in Europe⁵³).

Religious persecution and fanaticism did not disappear from the French society during the 18th century. *Voltaire*’s “*Traité sur la Tolérance*” (1764), is an accusation against all kinds of fanaticism and an indictment of intolerance. *Voltaire* vigorously attacked fanaticism and unreasonable intolerance, which were the most important elements of an ancient and permanent enemy of human society: he called this enemy “l’infâme”. L’infâme has variously been understood as being either clericalism, and particularly “clerical superstition” in all forms, or the Catholic Church, or even Christianity itself; in other words, the phenomenon of fanaticism expressed in intolerance⁵⁴). Thus, *Voltaire* believed, if people needed to have enemies than they could find it in their own fanaticism and intolerance. This is the real eternal enemy, and not the Ottomans or other religions or peoples.

For *Voltaire* intolerance was the main hindrance to the progress of humanity toward reason. Thinking on the possible consequences he concluded that, if intolerance were consistent with the Law of Nature, then the Japanese should detest the Chinese, who should abhor the Siamese; the latter pursuing the people of the Ganges, who should fall upon the inhabitants of the Indus; a Mogul should tear out the heart of the first Malabarian he comes across; the Malabarians should slaughter the Persians, who should massacre

⁵²) Ibidem, p. 9.

⁵³) John Bellers, *Some reason for an European state*, 1710, in: John Bellers. Quaker, economist and social reformer. His writings reprinted, with a memoir by Ruth Fry. London, Toronto 1935, p. 103.

⁵⁴) Peter Gay, *Voltaire’s Politics*. Princeton 1959, pp. 239—240.

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the Turks; and altogether they should throw themselves upon the Christians, who for so long have been devouring each other. Consequently, concluded *Voltaire*, the principle or the right of intolerance is absurd and barbarous. It is the right of tigers; “nay it is more horrible: for tigers murder to eat; we are exterminated merely for paragraphs⁵⁵.” *Voltaire* believed that the false ideas of religious leaders, based on superstitions, led people in direction of intolerance.

Analysing the phenomenon of intolerance, which was dominant in France and which was the reason of religious conflicts everywhere in Europe, *Voltaire* asked himself the question whether there ever existed nations who used tolerance as their state organisation principle. Giving a vast image of various nations all over the World, he realised that in the Ottoman Empire, in India, in Persia, among the Tartars, in China, in Japan, and in Russia tolerance was exercised and favoured⁵⁶). The religion, the agriculture and the political unity benefited from this policy. Concerning the Ottoman Empire he wrote: “The Grand-Seignior governs in peace twenty provinces of different religions. Two hundred thousand Greeks live in security at Constantinople. The muphti names and presents the Greek patriarch to the emperor. A Latin patriarch is also suffered. The sultan appoints Latin bishops for some of the Grecian isles; and uses the following formulary: ‘I command him to go and reside as a bishop at the isle of Chio, according to the ancient custom, and to the vain ceremonies of the inhabitants.’ That empire is filled with Jacobites, Nestorians, Monothelites, Copti, Christians of the sect of St. John, Jews, Guebres, and Banians. The Turkish annals do not record any revolt occasioned either of these religions⁵⁷.” With this comparison *Voltaire* continued the line of thought of presenting the tolerance of the Ottoman state policy as an example, and as a contrast to the intolerance and the prejudices of Christians. He presented the barbarians to be more tolerant than Christians, although these latter regarded themselves as civilised. He wanted to make it clear for the French that the tolerant state-organisation policy of the Asiatic nations was much better than the intolerant, centralised, and absolutist state organisation of France.

Voltaire also referred to the example of the ancient Greek and Roman societies. From the other hemisphere he mentioned the example of Carolina, where the state was organised following the principles of *Locke*⁵⁸). *Voltaire*

⁵⁵) *Voltaire*, A treatise on toleration. (Translated from the French of Mr. de *Voltaire*). London 1779, Chpt. 6, p. 32.

⁵⁶) *Ibidem*, Chpt. 4, p. 23—24.

⁵⁷) *Ibidem*, Chpt. 4, p. 23.

⁵⁸) “In Carolina for example the constitution of whose government was given by the great *Locke*, it is sufficient to form a church to be protected by law, that seven fathers of families should assemble for public worship. This liberty has never occasioned any disorder.” *Ibidem*, Chpt. 4, p. 25.

believed that France should use this example, and should also develop a state organisation based on *Locke's* ideas. Finally, he also mentioned the tolerant Quaker state organisation in Pennsylvania⁵⁹).

Summarising, from the point of view of moral philosophy, the essence of the cognitive dissonance characterising the social behaviour of intolerant people, *Voltaire* writes: “When our actions contradict our moral system, it is owing to our belief that we have an interest in practising contrary to what we teach. But there cannot be any advantage in persecuting those who are not of our opinion, and making ourselves hateful to them. We may repeat it, therefore, that intolerance is an absurdity⁶⁰.” As an example, he mentions the case of the French ambassadors: if they really think that the Ottoman Empire is the eternal enemy of the Christians, how could they speak to the Sultan? How is it possible that the French kings sent ambassadors to the Ottoman politicians, have political and commercial contacts with them? He further asked: “What duty of civil life could we ever fulfil, if we were in pact possessed with the idea, that we were conversing with persons eternally reprobated⁶¹)?” In other words, in *Voltaire's* view, the behaviour of French politicians regarding the Ottomans is a very good example of the phenomenon of the cognitive dissonance: there is a complete contradiction in the way they think, speak, and the way they act.

Finally, *Voltaire* believed that intolerance was a superstition, indeed one of the most dangerous ones, because it “induces us to hate our neighbour for his opinions”⁶²). As a solution he proposed: “It does not require great art, or studied eloquence, to prove, that Christians should tolerate each other. I shall go further, and say, that we should regard all men as our brethren. What! a Turk my brother? a Chinese my brother? a Jew? a Siamese? Yes, without doubt; for are we not all children of the same father, and creatures of the same God”⁶³)?

For *Voltaire* toleration was as much a moral duty as a political goal. Concentrating on the psyche of the people he gave a new interpretation of the phenomenon of stereotypes. He made his opinion very clear that the ability of living together in peace depends on the improvement of people. Without personal improvement, and without improving the states they live in, they would only repeat intolerance, possibly in new forms, during their future history.

⁵⁹) Ibidem, Chpt. 4, p. 26.

⁶⁰) Ibidem, Chpt. 15, p. 100.

⁶¹) Ibidem, Chpt. 21, p. 121.

⁶²) Ibidem, Chpt. 19, p. 115.

⁶³) Ibidem, Chpt. 21, p. 118.

III. The conclusions of a Central European

Eötvös, one of the most important liberal thinkers of the 19th century Habsburg Monarchy, continued and summed up the ideas of the European thinkers on the state. He believed that the goal of Christian civilisation was to realise the intellectual freedom and to unify mankind in peace. To achieve this goal Christianity had to surpass at last the state organisation principles of the idealised antique world. Antiquity, i. e. the Roman Empire submitted people to the state. Alien nations and religions were also subjected to the despotism of one ruler. Tolerance was only a state organisation principle, in which the idea of freedom was not present. *Eötvös* emphasised that Christian Civilisation, on the contrary, had to liberate people from the domination of the state. It had to surpass the stereotyped idea of centralisation inherited from the ancient world. The goal of a modern state could only be to ensure individual freedom in all the spheres where it was possible⁶⁴). His conception on the personal system followed the best original ideas of Christian Civilisation first of all the example of the structure and coexistence of various Protestant religious communities.

He regarded the so-called “questions”, like “Turkish question”, “Jewish question”, “national question”, etc., as prejudices, as the product of false ideas, i. e., as stereotypes. In his essay on the “Jewish question” he analysed the mechanism of this century old socio-psychological phenomenon. He defined prejudice as a self-justifying mechanism of people in defence of their imaginary interests⁶⁵).

Eötvös regarded the Ottoman Empire as it was, i. e., an aggressive, conquering empire. He repeated that Hungary served as a “bulwark” of Western Christianity in the 14th—16th centuries. He also believed that if Hungary, after the decisive Ottoman victory in 1526, had given up its original Christian orientation and had chosen the Ottoman one, then Hungary would be a backward state, resembling to the Balkan states of the 19th century⁶⁶). At the same time, in his historical roman entitled “Aufstand der Kreuzfahrer”⁶⁷), *Eötvös* definitely rejected the old stereotypes regarding the Ottoman Empire. Using the real story of a Hungarian peasant revolt in 1514 under the leadership of *György Dózsa*, *Eötvös* stressed the fact that the peasants liberated themselves from the idea of a crusade against the Turks (which was preached to them), regarding it as a superstition. Searching their real common enemy, they finally found it at home, represented by the back-

⁶⁴) József Eötvös, A 19. század uralkodó eszméinek befolyása az államra. Pest 1870, vol. 2, pp. 27—29, 650 and 722.

⁶⁵) See his essay on the Jewish problem: József Eötvös, A zsidók emancipációja. Budapest 1981.

⁶⁶) József Eötvös, A nemzetiségi kérdés. Budapest 1903, p. 120.

⁶⁷) József Eötvös, Aufstand der Kreuzfahrer. Budapest 1976.

ward feudal nobility and their privileges. Consequently, they attacked, in place of the Ottomans, their feudal landlords, who kept them in an inhuman state. *Eötvös* used the example of the peasants living under Ottoman rule, whose situation was indeed better than that of the peasants in Hungary, as a call for reform and improvement of the feudal Hungarian society which was very backward compared to the Western part of the continent. He believed that the idea of freedom was realisable only in the fight against feudalism and privileges. Thus *Eötvös*, regarding the Ottoman problem, believed that the real enemy of the Hungarian peasantry was the backward Hungarian feudal social system, and religious enemies were merely the product of deceptive human imagination.

Eötvös, who summed up the essence of the dominant democratic ideas of Western Christianity to his contemporaries, considered the national movements of his age to be analogous to the religious movements of previous centuries. He believed that, after the French Revolution, intolerance, embodied by the new French national idea, replaced the earlier religious intolerance. This is why he believed that the French ideas of national self-determination and popular sovereignty, as new political and state-organisational principles followed the centralised state organisation principles of the antique world, and would not lead to a peaceful human coexistence worldwide. These principles will continue to organise human society along the lines of national prejudices. The analogue between religious and national intolerance was so important for him that one could think that he just repeated the ideas as presented in the “*Epistola de Tolerantia*” of *Locke* to offer a solution to the nationality conflicts in the multinational Habsburg Empire. It was only necessary to change the word “church” to “nation”. However, the idea of toleration, expressed through privileges granted by the state, was not a satisfactory solution for *Eötvös*, because it could not really solve the minority problems. *Eötvös* believed in the necessity of the personal liberation of people because only individual political and cultural freedom could insure real peace in a state. In other words, *Eötvös* developed the ideas on tolerance further, namely in direction of the individual freedom of conscience. He proposed the idea of a personal system, by this he meant to divide nation and state, to give everybody equal political rights, to organise the state on the basis of communal self-government, and to regard nationality as a cultural right with the right of free association of people as nationalities.

Regarding earlier solutions for religious conflicts, to be achieved by means of tolerance in the form of autonomy and granted privileges, *Eötvös* emphasised that the nationality conflicts of his age could be solved only on the basis of the idea of freedom. It is not possible to use the ideas of the ancient world, because by this way ancient situations would be re-created, leading to a kind of a cast-system based on nationalities. He emphasised that the nationality problems could be only solved using the examples of the North-American or Swiss state-organisations in Eastern and Central Europe.

He believed that it was necessary to search the solution based on common freedom and its possible implementation within the state, and not using the idea of granted privileges, because this would be in contradiction with the general idea of freedom which is a general trend of the Christian civilisation⁶⁸).

IV. Conclusions

This small investigation on the ideas of the early modern European thinkers who were opposed to the century old stereotype on the “Turkish question” led us to the problem of tolerance and intolerance within a state. Opposing Christian religious intolerance made these thinkers realise how intolerant the doctrine of the Holy War of the medieval and early modern Christianity was; this doctrine caused wars and conflicts within Christianity itself. Later, the approach of tolerance proved not to be satisfactory either in order to eliminate all kinds of discrimination exercised by a majority. This problem was later solved by proposing the idea of personal freedom, regarding religion and nationality as personal, cultural rights. We can conclude that the appearance of stereotypes seems to be the result of, on the one hand, the intolerant behaviour of people vis-à-vis each other and, on the other hand, the associated, but unsatisfactory ideas on state organisation.

All the process of liberation from the religious, and later national, prejudices had also its influence on the general opinions on the Ottoman Empire. There was a period in this process when the Ottoman millet-system, as a state organisation idea, influenced the European ideas on the state, at a time when Europe was in a deep crisis. Thus, the idea of toleration and the idea of the freedom of conscience, as state organisation principles, are also the results of the mutual influences of the best state organisation ideas of different cultures.

We can finally conclude that, in reality, there has never been a real “Turkish question”; this was one of the greatest myths of European history. It was the product of fantasy on the eternal and common enemy of medieval Christianity, a prejudice, which became a stereotyped idea, well alive for centuries, but merely disguising political interests. As we have seen, it was rejected as a prejudice covering intolerance already in the 18th century. It revived again in the periods which followed when nationalism came to the fore, i. e., in the 19th and 20th centuries. National historians and politicians, creating their national myths, used additional stereotypes. Thus, the “Turkish question” became part of the Eastern and Central European national myths, and survived in the stereotype of “bulwark”, in its original

⁶⁸) József Eötvös, *A nemzetiségi kérdés*, p. 112.

meaning. This was possible because nationalism continued to be intolerant, keeping therefore the whole mechanism of cognitive dissonance and stereotypes creation of the medieval Christian policy alive. This is why the thoughts of the early modern European political thinkers were forgotten. The “Turkish question” was simply created. What really existed, as an Ottoman problem, was the problem of defensive war against a conquering empire.