

The following texts, written by [André Morellet](#) and translated by Philip Stewart (pstewart@duke.edu) are related to the article [Gomarists](#).

**Parts of the article *Gomarists* suppressed by the censor Tamponnet
before publication of the article in volume VII (1757)**¹

The Dutch magistrates could see that many religious societies were divided in the same way over the great questions of the power of God and the freedom of man, without these contestations causing trouble in the state, so long as they were allowed to be contested in the shadow of the ecclesiastical tribunals; that by taking part and party in quarrels of this nature, they were going to give them or at least preserve for them an air of importance which they have at most only at the time they are first spawned, which they lost rather quickly when they are left to themselves, and without which they can hardly keep going. In Holland these abstract matters could be disputed for a thousand years without any trouble resulting from them in civil society, unless the government got involved; for as long as the government had let them dispute without fighting, they would never have fought, although they would always have disputed. More to the point, if they had allowed the theologians to quarrel as they would, without attaching any importance to their quarrels in the civil order, as they really have none in this respect, they would soon have tired of disputing. The abbé de Saint Pierre says that disputes really end only when no one talks about them anymore;² he should have said, *when enough has been said about them*.

The rage of disputing on a given subject is a vicious humor which must be allowed to take its natural course. If you keep it from settling, if you turn the crisis aside, the illness may be dangerous.

We see clearly that these contestations left to themselves caused no harm to civil order. Agriculture, commerce, the arts, all these great parts of the political machine were moving freely, whatever Arminius and Gomar had written about *the foreknowledge of future contingencies and predestination before the foreseeing of merits*. It seems to me then that our Dutchmen were giving themselves a great deal of trouble to maintain public tranquility that was not genuinely troubled, and to calm the disputes of theologians which were not *seditionous* as the abbé de Saint-Pierre calls them,³ because doing theology, one rather easily commits heresies; but a heresy is not a sedition. [...]⁴

I conclude that, in all the cases we have supposed, magistrates should let the theologians

¹ Source: Morellet, *Mémoires sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la révolution française*, ed. Dorothy Medlin and Kathleen Hardesty Doig (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), p. 583–586. It was the abbé J. Tamponnet who had presented the report of the commission condemning the abbé de Prades on 10 January 1752: see John S. Spink, “[Un abbé philosophe: l’affaire de J.-M. de Prades](#),” *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, no. 3 (1971), p. 159.

² Charles Irénée Castel, abbé de Saint-Pierre (1658-1743), does assert that arbitration can keep the peace (but not end disputes) between these particular Dutch parties in his [Projet de traité pour rendre la paix perpétuelle entre les souverains chrétiens](#) (Utrecht: Antoine Schouten, 1717), pp. 248–249.

³ It is not clear where such a term appears in Saint-Pierre’s work.

⁴ The disappearance of the original manuscript makes it uncertain exactly what was eliminated here.

talk; that the law of silence, in such disputes, is neither useful nor necessary; and that the Dutch government in the quarrels of the *Arminians* and the *Gomarists* strayed from the principles it ought to have followed. Allow me to make an hypothesis that will shed full light on the truth of the principles we have just established.

Since there have been synagogues in certain European countries, Christian and even Catholic, and the Jews have been granted the same civil toleration that is refused to Christians, more than one Jew has been excommunicated by rabbis and expelled from the synagogue.

Let me assume that at the same time that theologians were quarreling in Holland over matters of grace and predestination, the Jews of the Amsterdam synagogue had seen contestations arise among themselves over some point of Mosaic law, over the ceremonies and practices they observe; that most of them had been declared heretics and had expelled the innovators from the synagogue, and these had recourse to the civil authority to be allowed at prayers by presenting a request in which they had exposed the supposed problems with the schism and solicited a law of silence: it seems to me that the burgomaster ought to say to these excommunicates: « My children (for although excommunicated you are nonetheless my children), I understand nothing about the contestation that arises between you and your rabbis; I shall not neglect the concerns of the republic to learn whether you explain the Talmud better than the heads of your synagogue. What I know is that, if you want to continue to live in the religious society in which you have been raised, you must conform to its doctrine and its practices. That society must know better than I do whether the sentiments which you hold conform to theirs; it has an acquired right to preserve its religious worship and reject the changes you want to make in it, and consequently to separate you from its communion. If you are condemned unjustly, God, who is above all laws, absolves you and condemns your judges. Aside from that, in losing the right to attend prayers in your synagogue as children of Abraham, you maintain all the rights of which you were in possession in our city as citizens. You are probably not good Jews, and too bad for you; but for us it is enough that you be faithful subjects of the republic: we will not require you to expatriate, we will not deprive you of your possessions, we will not take away your children. You will be under the protection of the laws although excommunicated by the synagogue, and if the rabbis were to subject you to ill treatment, I would hang one rabbi as soon as another. Go in peace. »

It seems to me that the discourse of my burgomaster is reasonable and unanswerable by the Jews. Do you think after that there would be great quarrels? If there had been a great number of them, they would have asked for their own synagogue; we would have allowed them to build one; the rabbis would have written against each other; we would have let them write as they will; the rebels would have piled heresy on heresy; we would have let them. I see no harm in all that. These are troubles in the synagogue, and not troubles in the state. That is the way the government should behave with respect to the *Gomarists* and the remonstrants.

But should the magistrate, affected by what are called the *harms of schism*, impose silence on the two parties and forbid the majority from excluding the innovators from the synagogue, the disputes will not end; they will write despite the prohibition. Were they not to write, the animosity fomented in the two parties will grow from day to day; a hundred years later, the feelings of hatred and division will germinate once more, and our Jews whom we insist

on not separating might very well stab each other.

Morellet's later commentary on these texts⁵

Diderot and D'Alembert then engaged me to work for the *Encyclopédie*. I furnished them with a number of theological fragments, such as *Figures, Son of God, Faith, Fundamental* (articles), *Gomarists, Fatality*, etc. [...]

The second anecdote I wanted to include has to do with my article *Gomarist* which figures in volume VII of the *Encyclopédie*.

My purpose had been to establish the doctrine of the civil toleration of religious opinions. The disputes of Jansenists and Molinists, the writs of confession required by archbishop Beaumont, had all Paris astir.⁶ After doing the history of Gomarism and Arminianism in Holland on the occasion of those quarrels, which were fundamentally the same as those of the Jansenists and Molinists, I had laid out the principles that the Estates of Holland should have followed with respect to the two factions, principles of purely civil toleration for the magistrates as such, without being principles of religious indifference. All of that was perfectly applicable to our quarrels of the moment. Dr. Tamponnet, whom Voltaire rightly mocked,⁷ was a censor for the *Encyclopédie*. He allowed all of the historical part, but wanted no reflections. Although a man of little wit, he sensed the application I was trying to invite to the quarrels of Jesuits and Molinists; and fanatic that he was, he absolutely refused to approve the second part: it was printed only on the proofs. D'Alembert and Diderot wrote to me in Lyon, where I had taken a little trip, that they had done everything in their power to get the inexorable doctor to yield. I have kept the manuscript. It is curious to compare what has been done since with what we were then asking for in an indirect manner, and those same men whom we wanted to make tolerant outrageously persecuted, and up against a much more crying injustice than the one which then aroused every good mind.⁸

⁵ Source: *Mémoires sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la révolution française*, edition cited above (see note 1), ch. II, pp. 69, 71–73.

⁶ The archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, tried in 1746 and for some time thereafter to impose a requirement that a dying person could receive last rites only if they could attest they had been confessed by a priest who had subscribed to the papal bull *Unigenitus* condemning Jansenism. The quarrels over its application, and between ecclesiastics and the Paris Parlement, had intensified in 1752.

⁷ Morellet likely refers to [Le Tombeau de la Sorbonne](#) (1752), a satire of the Prades affair (see note 1), the attribution of which to Voltaire is dubious. There are numerous other swipes by Voltaire at Tamponnet, including citing him as translator of [Les Questions de Zapata](#) (1767) and [Lettres d'Amabed](#) (1769).

⁸ Morellet, who lived until 1819, alludes here to the persecution, during the Revolution, of priests who refused to swear allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790.