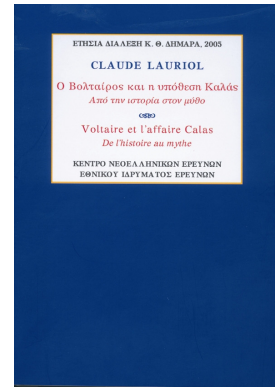




INSTITUTE FOR NEOHELLENIC RESEARCH  
NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION



**Claude Lauriol,**

***Ο Βολταίρος και η υπόθεση Καλάς. Από την ιστορία στον μύθο / Voltaire et l'affaire Calas. De l'histoire au mythe.***

Translation: Anna Tabaki.

Annual C. Th. Dimaras Lecture -2005, INR/NHRF , Athens 2006, 142 p.

According to the speaker, the Calas Affair is still alive in the collective memory of the French people. This case of bigotry and its connection to Voltaire's famous *Traité sur la tolérance* [Treatise on tolerance], a case that has not been properly investigated yet, is treated from all sides in this lecture.

The lecture begins with a systematic exposé of facts: the death of the young Marc Antoine Calas in the ground floor of the family home in Toulouse (attributed to a possible suicide or unsolved murder) which was unhesitatingly imputed to the father, Jean Calas, a Huguenot cloth merchant. Public opinion assumed that the father killed his son upon being ordered to do so by the Protestant Church to prevent his conversion to Catholicism. The Supreme Court of Toulouse sentenced the father to death by torture. Claude Lauriol, who specializes in the study of dogmatic and religious quarrels in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, places the matter in its broader context of reference, connecting it to the climate reigning in France against the Huguenots after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

This is but one of the parameters of the affair. The other regards the active, albeit somewhat delayed involvement of Voltaire, leading him to write the *Traité sur la tolérance* as well as his mobilization for the restoration of Jean Calas's reputation after his death. The whole argumentation is very interesting, as is the analysis of the *Traité*. Voltaire's stance remains a complicated issue, as the Deist philosopher gradually relieved his support for Protestants and gravitated towards religious indifference. The Huguenots felt therefore some embarrassment and criticized the *Traité*.

Yet the dynamics of Voltaire's undertaking went much further than the contested points of his *Traité*, cloaking him in the legendary dimension of a fierce advocate of individual and religious liberty.