

"MORE THINGS CHANGE, MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME."

**VOLTAIRE -- *DIALOGUES PHILOSOPHIQUES*
(1787)**

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A **PRIEST** AND AN **ENCYCLOPEDIST**[†]

THE PRIEST

You constantly mention the English, and that is the rallying word of the philosophers; you took the task of praising this fierce, impious and heretical nation; you would want to have, like them, the privilege to evaluate [and] to think for yourself, and to wrest from the ecclesiastics [the clergy] the immemorial right to think for you, and to conduct your life by yourself. You wish that all admire a people who is our enemy from all eternity, who devastated our colonies, and who ruined our business; you are not content, therefore, to be unfaithful to religion only, you are unfaithful even to the State! The government may have the weakness to close its eyes on your treason, but we [priests] will find the means to punish you. We will make more speeches before the Academy which will be satires of the English philosophers, and we will adopt in the council of Versailles none of the maxims of the council of Kensington.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIST

This will be fine. But we have spoken enough about the English. So that we can shorten our conversation, tell me, I pray you, where does your fury against the encyclopedists come from? Have you read their work carefully?

THE PRIEST

Indeed no; I am not enough of a villain to have defiled my mind by reading such a profane work: I have not read a word of it, and never will I read any part of it; I will be content to denounce the work in my newspaper, and to have it printed weekly that this work is the most dangerous ever composed.[‡]

[†] AN **ENCYCLOPEDIST** is an 18th century collaborator to the *French Encyclopedia* under the direction of the French *littérateurs* Diderot and d'Alembert.

[‡] My translation from the French, Voltaire, *Dialogues philosophiques* (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1966 [Édition de R. Naves]), 71-72.