

# Treatise on Tolerance

Voltaire

1763

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type. —It may be worth mentioning that this work uses *tolérance* dozens of times and *tolération* not once.

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## Glossary

**annate:** ‘The first year’s revenue of a see or benefice, paid to the Pope’ (OED).

**apology for:** Here it means ‘defence of’.

**condition:** As used on page 46 and perhaps elsewhere, it means something like ‘socio-economic status’.

**convulsionaries:** ‘A sect of Jansenist fanatics who repeatedly threw themselves into convulsions on the tomb of Deacon Pâris in the cemetery of St. Medard’ (translated from the Petit Robert dictionary).

**enthusiasm:** Like what we call ‘enthusiasm’ except tending towards fanaticism. Always used disapprovingly.

**Gallican Church:** The Catholic Church in France through most of the 18th century. It claimed a good deal of independence from Rome, a claim that the Roman Church never accepted.

**indulgence:** (as a count-noun) A certificate supposedly ensuring the owner of freedom from punishment.

**Jansenist:** Jansenism was a movement within the Roman Catholic Church, heavily influenced by the thought of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and regarded by much of the Church—especially the Jesuits—as heretical.

**League:** The Catholic League of France, founded in 1576, was dedicated to the eradication of Protestants from France and to driving Henry III from the throne.

**moeurs:** Someone’s *moeurs* includes his morality, basic customs, attitudes and expectations about how people will behave, ideas about what is decent. . . and so on. This word—rhyming approximately with ‘worse’—is left untranslated

because there’s no good English equivalent to it. The Oxford *English* dictionary includes it for the same reason it has for including *Schadenfreude*.

**Molinist:** Follower of Luis de Molina (1535-1600), who wrote influential works trying to reconcile the reality of human free will with various theological doctrines about predestination. In item (7) on page 39 Molinists are envisaged as taking communion along with Jansenists, but in general the two groups were not friends.

**Nantes:** The Edict of Nantes was a French royal decree (1598) granting limited freedom of worship and legal equality for Protestants. It was revoked by Louis XIV (1685).

**parlement:** ‘A sovereign court of justice formed by a group of specialists who are not connected with the royal court’ [translated from the Petit Robert dictionary].

**St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre:** Starting in Paris on that one day in 1572, but spreading across much of France over two weeks, a massacre of about 10,000 Huguenots.

**Turk(ish):** Used to translate *Turc* and *Turque*; but actually in the French of Voltaire’s day these words were a kind of code for ‘Moslem’.

**Waldensians:** A sect, starting around 1180, within the Roman Catholic Church, but regarded first as unorthodox and before long as downright heretical. With their emphasis on voluntary poverty, lay preaching, and reliance on the Bible, the Waldensians have been regarded as precursors of the Protestants.

**wheel:** Breaking someone on the wheel was a method of slowly torturing him to death.

## 1. Short account of Jean Calas's death

The murder of Calas, perpetrated with the sword of justice at Toulouse on 9.iii.1762, is one of the most singular events that deserve the attention of our own and of later ages. We quickly forget the multitude of dead who have perished in countless battles, not only because death is the inevitable fate of war, but also because those who die by the sword could also have inflicted death on their enemies, and did not die without the means of defending themselves. When the risk and the advantage are equal, the death is no longer a shock and even pity is lessened. But

- when an innocent father is delivered into the hands of error, of passion, or of fanaticism,
- when the accused has no defence but his virtue,
- when those who make the decision can slaughter him without risking anything but making a mistake,
- when they can slay with impunity by an order from the bench,

then the voice of the public is heard, and each fears for himself. They see that no man's life is safe before a court that was set up to guard the lives of citizens, and all the voices join in a demand for vengeance.

This strange affair involved religion, suicide and parricide. The question was whether •a father and mother had strangled their son to please God, •a brother had strangled his brother, •a friend had strangled his friend; and whether the judges were open to criticism for making an innocent father die on the wheel [see Glossary] or for sparing a guilty mother, brother, and friend.

Jean Calas, 68 years old, had been a merchant in Toulouse for more than forty years, and was recognised as a good father by all who shared his life. He was a Protestant, as were his wife and all his offspring except

one son, who had abjured the heresy and received a small allowance from his father. He seemed to be so far from the absurd fanaticism that is breaking the bonds of society that he approved the conversion of his son Louis Calas, and for thirty years employed a zealous Catholic woman, who had reared all his children.

One of the sons of Jean Calas, named Marc Antoine, was a man of letters; and was regarded as restless, sombre, and violent. This young man, failing to enter the commercial world (for which he was unfitted) or the legal world (because he did not have the necessary documents certifying him as a Catholic), determined to end his life, and informed a friend of his intention. His resolve to do this was strengthened by reading everything that has ever been written about suicide.

Having one day lost his money in gambling, he determined to carry out his plan on that very day. A personal friend and friend of the family named Lavoisier, a 19-year-old well known for his candid and kindly *moeurs* [see Glossary], son of a distinguished Toulouse lawyer, had come from Bordeaux on the previous day. He happened to dine with the Calas family—the father, mother, Marc Antoine (the elder son) and Pierre (the second son). After the meal they withdrew to a small room. Marc Antoine disappeared. Eventually, when young Lavoisier was ready to leave, he and Pierre Calas went downstairs and found, near the shop, Marc Antoine in his shirt, hanging from a door, his coat folded on the counter. His shirt was not so much as ruffled, his hair was neatly combed; there was no wound or sign of violence on the body.

I'll omit the details the lawyers gave in court; I shan't describe the grief and despair of the father and mother, whose cries were heard by the neighbours. Lavoisier and Pierre, beside themselves, ran for surgeons and the police.

While they were doing this, and the father and mother sobbed and wept, the Toulouse populace gathered around the house. This populace is superstitious and impulsive; it regards brothers who don't share one's religion as monsters. It was at Toulouse that God was ceremonially thanked for the death of Henry III, and that an oath was taken to cut the throat of the first man who proposed to recognise the great and good Henry IV. This city still annually celebrates—with a procession and fireworks—the day two centuries ago when it massacred 4,000 heretical [here = 'Protestant'] citizens. The Council has repeatedly forbidden this odious affair; the Toulousians celebrate it still like a floral festival.

Some fanatic in the crowd cried out that Jean Calas had hanged his son Marc Antoine. In a moment everyone was saying it. Some added that the dead man was to have recanted on the following day, and that the family and young Lavoisier had strangled him out of hatred for the Catholic religion. In a moment all doubt had disappeared. The whole town was convinced that for the Protestants a father and mother had a religious duty to kill their child when he wanted to change his faith.

When passions are aroused, they do not stop. It was imagined that the Protestants of Languedoc had held a meeting the previous day; that they had, by a majority of votes, chosen an executioner for the sect, the choice falling on young Lavoisier; and that in the ensuing twenty-four hours this young man had received the news of his appointment, and had come from Bordeaux to help Jean Calas, his wife, and their son Pierre to strangle a friend, a son, a brother.

The chief magistrate of Toulouse, Sieur David, aroused by these rumours and wanting to get credit for acting swiftly, did something that conflicts with the laws and regulations. He put the Calas family, the Catholic servant, and Lavoisier in irons.

A report was published—it was at least as vicious as this procedure. It went further: Marc Antoine Calas had died a Calvinist, and if he had committed suicide his body was supposed to be dragged on a hurdle; instead of which he was buried with great pomp in the church of St. Stephen, though the priest protested against this profanation.

There are in Languedoc four brotherhoods of penitents—the white, the blue, the grey, and the black. Their members wear a long hood, with a cloth mask, pierced with two holes to see through. They tried to get the Duke of Fitzjames, the Governor of the Province, to join them, but he refused. The white friars held a solemn service over Marc Antoine Calas, as over a martyr. No church ever celebrated the feast of a true martyr with more pomp; but *this* ceremony had something terrible about it. They had raised above a magnificent bier a skeleton, which was made to move its bones. It represented Marc Antoine Calas holding a palm in one hand, and in the other the pen with which he was to sign his renunciation of heresy, and which in fact wrote his father's death-sentence.

Nothing remained for the poor suicide but canonisation. The whole populace regarded him as a saint:

- some invoked him,
- others went to pray at his tomb,
- others asked him for miracles,
- others related the miracles he had performed.

A monk extracted some of his teeth, to have permanent relics of him. A pious woman who was rather deaf told how she had heard the sound of bells. An apoplectic priest was cured after taking an emetic. Official reports of these prodigies were drawn up. The present writer has in his possession an affidavit saying that a young man of Toulouse went mad because he had prayed for several nights at the tomb of the new saint, and could not get the miracle he begged for.

Some of the magistrates belonged to the brotherhood of white penitents, which made the death of Jean Calas seem inevitable.

What contributed most to his fate was the approach of that strange festival that the Toulousians hold every year in memory of the massacre of 4000 Huguenots. The year 1762 was the bicentenary of the event. The city was decorated with all the trappings of the ceremony, which stirred up the heated imagination of the people still further. It was openly said that the chief ornament of the festival would be the scaffold on which the Calas family would be broken on the wheel. It was said that Providence itself provided these victims to be sacrificed for our holy religion. A score of people heard these statements and others that were even more violent. And this in our days! at a time when philosophy has made so much progress! and when a hundred academies are writing for the improvement of our *moeurs*! It seems that fanaticism, indignant over reason's recent successes, struggles under it even more angrily.

Thirteen judges met daily to bring the trial to a close. There was not, and could not be, any evidence against the family; but deluded religion took the place of proof. Six of the judges long persisted in condemning Jean Calas, his son, and Lavoisier to the wheel, and the wife of Jean Calas to the stake. The other seven, more moderate, wanted at least to make an inquiry. The debates were laboured and long. One of the judges, convinced that the accused were innocent and the crime impossible, spoke vigorously on their behalf. Against zeal for severity he brought zeal for humanity; he became the public pleader for the Calas family in every household in Toulouse, where the incessant cries of deceived religion demanded the blood of these unfortunate folk. Another judge, known for his violent temper, spoke in the town with so much passion against the Calas family

that the former judge felt called on to defend them. The uproar finally became so great that they both had to recuse themselves, and retired to the country.

But by a singular misfortune the judge who was favourable to the Calas family had the decency to persist in his recusal, while the other returned to condemn those whom he could not judge. His voice settled the condemnation to the wheel, for there were now eight votes to five, as one of the six opposing judges had finally switched—after much debate—to the harsher side.

It seems that in a case of parricide, when a father is to be condemned to the most frightful death, the verdict ought to be unanimous, as the evidence for such an unheard-of crime ought to be such as to convince everybody; the slightest doubt in such a case should intimidate a judge who is to sign the death-sentence. The weakness of our reason and the inadequacy of our laws are shown daily; but what could show their wretchedness better than a situation where a one-vote majority gets a citizen condemned to the wheel? In ancient Athens there had to be a majority plus 50 votes to secure a sentence of death; which shows us—not that it does us any good—that the Greeks were wiser and more humane than we are.

It seemed impossible that Jean Calas, a 68-year-old man whose limbs had long been swollen and weak, had been able to strangle and hang a young man in his 28th year and above average in strength. He *must* have been helped in this execution by his wife, by his son, by Lavoisier, and by the maidservant. They had not left each other's company for an instant on the evening of the fatal event. But this supposition was just as absurd as the other. How could a zealous Catholic servant allow Huguenots to kill a young man, reared by herself, to punish him for embracing her own religion? How could Lavoisier have come expressly from

Bordeaux to strangle his friend, whose supposed conversion was unknown to him? How could a tender mother lay hands on her son? How could they jointly strangle a young man who was stronger than all of them, without a long and violent struggle, without screams that would have aroused the neighbours, without repeated blows, without wounds, without torn garments?

It was obvious that if the murder had been committed, all the accused must be equally guilty, as they had never left each other for a moment; it was obvious that they were not all guilty; it was obvious that the father alone could not be guilty; yet he alone was condemned to die on the wheel.

The reasoning behind the sentence was as inconceivable as all the rest. The judges who were bent on executing Jean Calas persuaded the others that the weak old man could not endure the torture, and would on the scaffold confess his crime and accuse his accomplices. They were abashed when this old man, dying on the wheel, called God to witness his innocence and asked him to pardon his judges.

They had to pass a second sentence in contradiction of the first, setting free the mother, the son Pierre, the young Lavaisse, and the servant. But one of the councillors pointed out that this verdict gave the lie to the other, that they were condemning themselves, and that as the accused were all together at the supposed hour of the crime the acquittal of the survivors necessarily proved the innocence of the father they had executed. They accordingly took the course of *banishing* Pierre Calas. This banishment seemed as illogical and absurd as all the rest: Pierre Calas was either guilty of parricide or innocent; if he was guilty, he should be broken on the wheel like his father; if he was innocent, he should not be banished. But the judges, disturbed by the execution of the father and the touching piety of his death, thought they were saving their honour by letting it be believed that they

were showing mercy to the son, as if 'mercy' for him were not a further lie; and they thought that the banishment of this poor and helpless young man was only a small injustice after the large one they had already had the misfortune to commit.

They began by threatening Pierre Calas, in his dungeon, that he would suffer like his father if he did not renounce his religion. The young man attests this on oath: 'A Dominican monk came to my cell and threatened me with the same kind of death if I did not give up my religion.'

When leaving the city Pierre Calas met a priest, a specialist in conversions, who made him return to Toulouse. He was confined in a Dominican convent, where he was forced to perform all the functions of the Catholic faith. This was the price of his father's blood, and religion seemed to be avenged.

The daughters were taken from the mother and shut up in a convent. The mother, almost drenched in the blood of her husband, who had held her eldest son dead in her arms and seen her other son exiled, deprived of her daughters and all her property, was alone in the world, without bread, without hope, dying from the excess of her misery. Certain persons, having soberly examined all the details of this horrible affair, were so struck by it that they urged Madame Calas to emerge from her solitude, go boldly to the feet of the throne, and ask for justice. She couldn't bear it at that time; she was fading away; and also—being English by birth and having been transplanted into a French province in early youth—she was terrified by the very name of Paris. She imagined that the capital of the kingdom must be even more barbaric than the capital of Languedoc [Toulouse]. At length the duty of clearing the memory of her husband prevailed over her weakness. She reached Paris almost at the point of death. She was astonished to find there welcome, help, and tears.

In Paris reason dominates fanaticism, however powerful it be; in the provinces fanaticism almost always wins.

M. de Beaumont, the famous advocate of the *Parlement* [see Glossary] of Paris, undertook to defend her right away, and drew up a legal opinion signed by fifteen other advocates. M. Loiseau, no less eloquent, wrote a memoir on behalf of the family. M. Mariette, an advocate of the Council, drew up a judicial petition which brought conviction to every mind.

These three generous defenders of the laws, and of innocence, gave to the widow the profit on the sale of their speeches.<sup>1</sup> Paris and the whole of Europe were moved with pity, and joined the unfortunate woman in demanding justice. The verdict was given by the public long before it could be signed by the Council.

The spirit of pity penetrated the ministry [here = 'the government'], despite the torrent of business that so often shuts out pity, and despite that daily sight of misery that does even more to harden the heart. The daughters were restored to their mother; dressed in mourning and bathed in tears, the three of them were seen to evoke tears from their judges.

This family still had enemies, however, because religion was involved. Many of those people who are known in France as *dévots*<sup>2</sup> said loudly that it was much better to let an innocent old Calvinist be broken on the wheel than to compel eight Councillors of Languedoc to admit that they were wrong; they even said 'There are more magistrates than Calases', the implication being that the Calas family ought to be sacrificed to the honour of the magistrates. The *dévots* did not reflect that the honour of judges, like that of other men, consists in repairing their blunders. The Pope is believed in

France to be infallible, even with the aid of his cardinals; so perhaps eight judges of Toulouse are not infallible either! All other people, more reasonable and disinterested, said that the Toulouse verdict would be quashed all over Europe, even if special considerations prevented it from being quashed by the Council.

That is the state this astonishing course of events had reached when it moved certain persons—impartial but not without feelings—to submit to the public a few reflections on the subject of tolerance, leniency and pity. . . .

Either the judges of Toulouse, swept away by the fanaticism of the populace, had an innocent father broken on the wheel, which is without parallel; or the father and his wife strangled their elder son, aided in this parricide by another son and a friend, which is unnatural. Each account implies that the abuse of the most holy religion has led to a great crime. So a question that concerns us all is: Ought religion to be barbaric, or should it rather be charitable?

## 2. Results of the execution of Jean Calas

If the white penitents were the cause of the execution of an innocent man, the utter ruin and dispersal of a family, and the humiliation that ought to go only with wicked behaviour but in fact goes also with execution; if the white penitents' haste to commemorate as a saint one who 'according to the standard treatment of suicides in Toulouse' should have been dragged on a hurdle led to the death on the wheel of a virtuous father; this calamity should make them genuinely

<sup>1</sup> They were pirated in several towns, and Madame Calas did not get the benefit of this generosity.

<sup>2</sup> From the Latin word *devotus*. The *devoti* of ancient Rome were those who sacrificed themselves for the good of the Republic. [In France the word came to signify passionate dedication to religious faith; Voltaire is using it perjoratively.]



penitent for the rest of their lives: they and the judges should weep, but not wearing a long white robe, and with no face-mask to hide their tears.

The religious brotherhoods are all respected for their contributions to piety; but whatever good they may do the State, can it outweigh this appalling evil that they have done? They seem to be based on the zeal which in Languedoc arouses the Catholics against those we call Huguenots. One might say that they had taken vows to hate their brothers; for we have enough religion to hate and persecute, but not enough to love and support. What would happen if these brotherhoods were controlled by fanatics, as were once the Congregation of Artisans and the Congregation of *Messieurs*, among whom, as one of our most eloquent and learned magistrates said, the seeing of visions was reduced to a fine art and life-style? What would happen if these brotherhoods set up those dark so-called 'meditation rooms', on which were painted devils armed with horns and claws, gulfs of flame, crosses and daggers, with the holy name of Jesus surmounting the picture? What a spectacle for eyes that are already dazzled and imaginations that are as inflamed against 'heretics' as they are submissive to their confessors!

There have been times when, as we know only too well, brotherhoods were dangerous. The Fratelli and the Flagellants caused disturbances. The League [see Glossary] began with associations of that kind. Why should they distinguish themselves thus from other citizens? Did they think themselves more perfect? The very claim is an insult to the rest of the nation. Did they wish all Christians to enter their brotherhood? What a sight it would be to have all Europe in hoods and masks, with two little round holes in front of the eyes! Do they seriously think that God prefers this costume to a plain jerkin? Further, this garment is the uniform of controversialists, warning opponents to arm

themselves. It can excite a kind of civil war among minds, and would perhaps end in fatal excesses if the king and his ministers were not as wise as the fanatics are demented.

We know well enough what the price has been ever since Christians began to dispute about dogmas. Blood has flowed, on scaffolds and in battles, from the fourth century to our own days. Let us confine ourselves here to the wars and horrors that the Reformation struggle caused, and see what their source was in France. Possibly a short and faithful account of those calamities will open the eyes of the uninformed and touch the hearts of the humane.

### 3. The idea of the Reformation

When the renaissance of letters began to spread enlightenment, there was a general complaint about abuses; everybody agrees that the complaint was just.

Pope Alexander VI had openly bought the papal crown, and his five bastards shared its advantages. His son the Cardinal the Duke of Borgia joined his father in making an end of the Vitelli, Urbino, Gravina and Oliveretto families, and the families of a hundred other nobles, in order to seize their lands. Pope Julius II, . . . helmet on head and cuirass on back, spread fire and blood over part of Italy. Pope Leo X, to pay for his pleasures, sold indulgences [see Glossary] as snacks are sold in the open market. Those who spoke up against this brigandage were not wrong from the moral point of view, at least. Let us see whether they did us any harm from a political point of view.

The reformers said that since JESUS-CHRIST had never exacted annates [see Glossary] or hold-backs, or sold pardons for this world or indulgences for the next, one need not pay a foreign prince the price of all these things. If the annates,

the legal costs of the Court of Rome, and the dispensations that we still buy, cost us no more than 500,000 francs a year, it is clear that in the 250 years since the time of Francis I we would have paid 125,000,000 francs; which is about twice that in today's money. One may, therefore, without blasphemy, admit that the heretics in proposing to abolish these singular taxes that will astonish posterity did not do great harm to the kingdom, and were good financiers rather than bad subjects. Also: they alone knew Greek, and were acquainted with antiquity. Let us not disguise the fact that despite their errors we owe to them the development of the human mind, so long buried in the densest barbarism.

But as they denied the existence of Purgatory, which it is not permitted to doubt and which brought a considerable income to the monks; as they did not venerate relics, which ought to be venerated and are a source of even greater profit; and, finally, as they attacked much-respected dogmas,<sup>1</sup> the only answer to them at first was to have them burned. The king, who protected and subsidised them in Germany, walked at the head of a procession in Paris, after which a number of these wretches were executed. [He gives details of how, concluding:] It was the most long-drawn-out and hideous execution that barbarism had ever invented.

Shortly before the death of Francis I, certain members of the *Parlement* of Provence, incited by their clergy against the inhabitants of Mérindol and Cabrières, asked the king for troops to support the execution of nineteen persons of that

district whom they had condemned. They had six thousand of them slaughtered, without regard to sex or old age or infancy, and they reduced thirty towns to ashes. These people, who had not hitherto been heard of, were doubtless in the wrong to have been born Waldensians [see Glossary]; but that was their only crime. They had been settled for three centuries in deserts and on mountains which they had, with incredible labour, made fertile. Their quiet, pastoral life repeated the innocence attributed to the first ages of the world. They knew the neighbouring towns only by selling produce to them; they knew nothing of law-courts or of war; they did not defend themselves. They were slain as one slays rounded-up animals, in a pen.<sup>2</sup>

After the death of Francis I—a monarch better known for his amours and misfortunes than for his cruelties—the execution of a thousand heretics. . . . caused the persecuted sect to take to arms. Their faction had grown by the light of the flames around the stake and under the sword of the executioner, and their patience gave way to fury. They imitated the cruelties of their enemies: nine civil wars filled France with carnage; and a peace more deadly than war led to the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day [see Glossary]. . . .

The League assassinated Henry III through a Dominican monk and Henry IV through a monstrous former Cistercian monk. Some claim that humanity, indulgence, and liberty of conscience are horrible things; but could they have produced calamities such as these?

<sup>1</sup> They revived Bérenger's view about the Eucharist; they maintained that not even omnipotence can cause a body to be in a hundred thousand different places at once; they denied that attributes can exist without a subject for them to be attributes of; they thought it was absolutely impossible for something that eyes, palate and stomach experienced as bread and wine to go suddenly out of existence. . . .

<sup>2</sup> Madame de Cental, who owned some of the ravaged land, now littered with the corpses of its inhabitants, appealed to Henry II for justice. He referred her to the *Parlement* of Paris. The Attorney-General of Provence, named Guerin, was the principal author of the massacres and the only one to lose his head. According to de Thou, of all those who were guilty he alone was punished because he had no friends at court.

#### 4. Whether tolerance is dangerous. The peoples that practise it

Some have said that if we treated with paternal indulgence those erring brethren who pray to God in bad French, we would be putting weapons in their hands, and would once more witness the battles of Jarnac, Moncontour, Coutras, Dreux, and St. Denis. I don't know, because I am not a prophet; but it seems to me an illogical piece of reasoning to say: 'These men rebelled when I treated them badly, therefore they will rebel when I treat them well.'

I would venture to take the liberty of inviting those who are at the head of the government, and those who are destined for high office, to reflect maturely on •whether there is a risk of kindness leading to the same revolts that cruelty gave rise to; •whether what happened in certain circumstances are bound to happen in other circumstances; •whether times, public opinion and *moeurs* never change.

The Huguenots *have* indeed been drunk with fanaticism and stained with blood, as we have; but is their present generation as barbaric as their fathers? Haven't the intellectual leaders of these people been affected by •time, •the progress of reason, •good books and •the humanising influence of society? And aren't we aware that within the last fifty years or so most of Europe has come to look quite different?

Government is stronger everywhere, and *moeurs* have become gentler. The ordinary machinery of public safety, supported by numerous standing armies, saves us from having to fear a return to those anarchic times when Calvinist peasants fought Catholic peasants, hastily enrolled between

the sowing and the harvest.

Other times, other concerns. It would be absurd to decimate the Sorbonne *today* because at earlier times it •presented a demand for the burning of the Maid of Orleans, •declared that Henry III had forfeited his right to reign, •excommunicated him, and •proscribed the great Henry IV. We shan't, of course, inquire into the other bodies in the kingdom that committed the same excesses in those frenzied days. It would not only be unjust, but would be as stupid as to purge all the inhabitants of Marseilles because they had the plague in 1720.

Shall we set about sacking Rome (as did Charles V's troops) because in 1585 Pope Sixtus V granted a nine-year indulgence [see Glossary] to any Frenchman who would take up arms against his sovereign? Is it not enough to prevent Rome for ever from reverting to such excesses?

The rage inspired by the dogmatic spirit and the abuse of the Christian religion when it is wrongly conceived has shed as much blood and led to as many disasters in Germany, England and even Holland as in France; yet religious differences cause no trouble today in those States. The Jew, the Catholic, the Greek, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Anabaptist, the Socinian, the Memnonist, the Moravian, and ever so many others live as brothers in these regions and contribute alike to the good of the society.

In Holland they no longer fear that disputes of a Gomar<sup>1</sup> about predestination will lead to the death of the chief of government. In London they no longer fear that quarrels of Presbyterians and Episcopalians about liturgies and surplices will spread a king's blood on the scaffold.

<sup>1</sup> François Gomar was a Protestant Theologian; he maintained—against his colleague Arminius—that God has from all eternity destined most men to burn eternally; this hellish doctrine was upheld, as it had to be, by persecution. The Grand Pensionary of Holland, Barneveldt, who disagreed with Gomar about this, was decapitated at the age of 72 in 1619 for having 'done his best to sadden the Church of God'.

·START OF END-NOTE·

An orator in *Apology* [see Glossary] *for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes* said, of England: ‘A false religion was bound to produce such fruits. There was only one still to ripen: these islanders gathered it; it is the contempt of the nations.’ This author picks a bad time at which to say that the English are despicable and despised by all the earth. When a nation shows its courage and generosity, when it is victorious all over the world—what a fine time to say that it is despicable and despised! This remarkable passage is found in a chapter on intolerance; it is what would be expected from someone preaching intolerance. That abominable book. . . . is the work of a man without a mission; for what priest would write like that? Its frenzy goes so far as to justify the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre [see Glossary]. One might have expected a book full of such frightful paradoxes to be on everyone’s bookshelves, if only because of its singularity; but in fact it is hardly known.

·END OF END-NOTE·

A populous and wealthy Ireland will no longer see its Catholic citizens spending two months sacrificing its Protestant citizens to God. [He goes into gruesome details of how this was done, concluding:] Such is the account given by Rapin Thoyras, an officer in Ireland and almost a contemporary; it’s what is reported in all the annals and histories of England, and will surely never be repeated. Philosophy—mere philosophy, that sister of religion—has taken the weapons from the hands so long drenched in blood by superstition; and the human mind, awakening from its intoxication, is amazed at the excesses fanaticism had led it into.

We have in France a rich province where the Lutherans outnumber the Catholics. The University of Alsace is in the hands of Lutherans; they occupy some of the municipal

offices; yet not the least religious quarrel has disturbed this province since it came into the possession of our kings. Why? Because no-one has been persecuted there. Seek not to vex men’s hearts and the hearts are all yours.

I do not say that all who are not of the same religion as the prince should share the **positions and honours** of those who are of the prevailing religion. In England the Catholics, who are regarded as attached to the party of the Pretender, are not admitted to office; they even pay double taxes; but apart from that they have all the **rights** of citizens.

Some of the French bishops have been suspected of holding that it is neither honourable nor profitable to have Calvinists in their dioceses; and this is said to be one of the greatest obstacles to tolerance. I cannot believe it. The episcopal body in France is composed of well-born gentlemen who think and act with a nobility that befits their birth. They are charitable and generous—we should grant them that much. They must surely reflect that exiled Calvinists will not be converted ·to Catholicism· in foreign countries, and that when they return to their pastors ·in France· they could be enlightened by their instructions and touched by their example. There would be honour in converting them, and it wouldn’t *cost* anything: the more citizens there were, the larger the income from the prelate’s estates.

A Polish bishop had an **a** Anabaptist to handle his finances and a **b** Socinian as his steward. He was urged to discharge and prosecute **b** one because he did not believe in consubstantiality—·i.e. that the three persons of the Trinity are one substance·—and **a** the other because he did not baptise his child until it was 15 years old. He replied that they would be damned for ever in the next world, but that they were necessary to him in this.

Let us leave our little corner and study the rest of our globe. The Sultan governs peacefully twenty peoples with

different religions; 200,000 Greeks live safely in Constantino-ple; the Mufti himself nominates the Greek patriarch and presents him to the emperor; and a Latin patriarch is also allowed there. The Sultan nominates Latin bishops for some of the Greek islands, using the following formula: 'I command him to go and reside as bishop in the island of Chios, according to their ancient usage and their vain ceremonies.' That empire is full of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Monothelites; it contains Copts, Christians of St. John, Jews, and Zoroastrians. The Turkish [see Glossary] annals do not record any revolt instigated by any of these religions.

Go to India, Persia, Tartary, and you will find the same tolerance and tranquillity. Peter the Great patronised all the cults in his vast empire. Commerce and agriculture profited by this, and the body politic never suffered from it.

The government of China has not, during the four thousand years of its known history, had any cult but the simple worship of one God. Nevertheless, it tolerates the superstitions of Buddha and a multitude of Buddhist priests, who would be dangerous if the wisdom of the law-courts hadn't always restrained them.

It is true that the great Emperor Yung-Chin, perhaps the wisest and most magnanimous emperor that China ever had, expelled the Jesuits. But it was not because *he* was intolerant; it was because *they* were. They themselves report. . . .the words of this good monarch to them: 'I know that your religion is intolerant; I know what you have done in Manila and Japan. You deceived my father; don't think you can deceive me in the same way.' Anyone who reads the whole of the speech he graciously made to them will find him to be the wisest and most clement of men. How could he retain European physicians who, under pretence of showing thermometers and wind-pumps at court, had kidnapped a royal prince? And what would this Emperor have said if he

had read our history and was acquainted with the days of our League [see Glossary] and of the gunpowder plot?

It was enough for him to be informed of the indecent quarrels of the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and secular priests sent into his domains from the ends of the earth. They came to preach the truth, and fell to cursing one another. So the Emperor had to expel the foreign disturbers. But how kindly he dismissed them! What paternal care he devoted to their journey, and to protecting them from insult on the way! Their very banishment was a lesson in tolerance and humanity.

The Japanese were the most tolerant of all men: twelve peaceful religions were established in their empire. The Jesuits came with a thirteenth, but soon showed that they would not tolerate any of the others, and we know what came of that: the country was desolated by a civil war even more frightful than those of the ·Catholic· League. In the end the Christian religion was drowned in torrents of blood; the Japanese closed their empire off from the rest of the world, and regarded us only as wild beasts, like the ones the English have cleared out of their island. The minister Colbert—knowing how we need the Japanese, who have no need of us—tried in vain to reopen trade-links with their empire. He found them inflexible.

Thus the whole of our continent shows us that we must neither preach nor practise intolerance.

Turn your eyes to the other hemisphere. Study Carolina, of which the wise ·philosopher John· Locke was the legislator [through his employer the first Earl of Shaftesbury]. Any father of a family who had seven people in his household could establish there a religion of his choice, provided that those seven agreed with him about it. This liberty gave rise to no disorder. God save us from using this example to encourage having a separate cult for each household! I cite it only to show that

the greatest possible excess of tolerance was not followed by the slightest dissension.

What shall we say of the peaceful primitives who have been derisively called ‘Quakers’, who—with customs that are perhaps ridiculous—have been so virtuous and have unsuccessfully preached *peace* to the rest of mankind? There are 100,000 of them in Pennsylvania. Discord and controversy are unknown in the happy homeland they have made for themselves; and the very name of their town Philadelphia, which constantly reminds them that men are brothers, is an example and a shame to nations that have yet to learn tolerance.

In short: **a** tolerance never led to civil war; **b** intolerance has covered the earth with carnage. Choose, then, between these rivals—between **b** the mother who would have her son slain and **a** the mother who yields him provided his life is spared.

I speak here only of the interest of nations. While having a proper respect for theology, I am attending here only to the physical and moral well-being of society. I beg every impartial reader to weigh these truths, sharpen them, and expand to them. Attentive readers who discuss their thoughts among themselves always get further than the author.

## 5. How tolerance may be admitted

I venture to think that some enlightened and magnanimous minister, some humane and wise prelate, some monarch who knows that his interest consists in the number of his subjects and his glory consists in their welfare, may deign to glance at this badly structured and defective paper. He will improve it by his own insights, and say to himself: ‘What would I risk in seeing my land cultivated and enriched by a

larger number of industrious workers, the revenue increased, the State more flourishing?’

Germany would be a desert strewn with the bones of Catholics, Evangelicals, Calvinists and Anabaptists, slain by each other, if the peace of Westphalia ·in 1648· had not at last brought freedom of conscience.

We have Jews in Bordeaux and Metz and in Alsace; we have Lutherans, Molinists [see Glossary], and Jansenists [see Glossary]; can we not allow and control Calvinists in about the same conditions as Catholics are tolerated at London? The more sects there are, the less dangerous each of them is; multiplicity weakens them; they are all restrained by just laws that forbid disorderly meetings, insults and sedition, and are constantly enforced by the police.

We know that many heads of families who have made large fortunes in foreign lands are ready to return to their homeland. All they ask for is

- the protection of natural law,
- the validity of their marriages,
- security as to the condition of their children,
- the right to inherit from their fathers, and
- their personal freedom.

They do not ask for public chapels, or the right to municipal offices or to dignities, which Catholics do not have in England or in many other countries. It is not a question of giving immense privileges and secure positions to a faction, but of allowing a peaceful people to live, and of moderating the laws that may once have been necessary but are no longer so. It is not for me to tell the ministry what is to be done; I merely plead to it on behalf of the unfortunate.

How many ways there are of making them useful, and of preventing them from ever being dangerous! The prudence of the ministry and the Council, supported by force, will easily discover these ways that are already employed so

successfully by other nations.

There are still fanatics among the Calvinist populace, but there are certainly even more among the convulsionaries [see Glossary]. The dregs of the crazed people at the cemetery of St. Medard count as nothing in the nation, whereas the dregs of the Calvinist prophets are annihilated. The great means to reduce the number of maniacs, if any remain, is to submit their mental disease to the treatment of reason, which slowly but surely enlightens men. Reason

- is gentle,
- is humane,
- inspires leniency,
- eliminates discord,
- strengthens virtue, and
- has more power to make obedience to the laws attractive than force has to compel it.

And shall we take no account of the ridicule that attaches today to the enthusiasm [see Glossary] of these good folk? This ridicule is a strong barrier to the extravagance of all sectarians. The past is as if it had never been. We must always start from the present—from the point nations have already reached.

There was a time when it was thought necessary to issue decrees against those who taught a doctrine at variance with •the categories of Aristotle, •the abhorrence of a vacuum, •the quiddities, •the universal apart from the object. We have in Europe more than a hundred volumes of jurisprudence on sorcery and how to distinguish false sorcerers from real ones. The excommunication of grasshoppers and insects harmful to crops has been much practised, and still survives in certain rituals. But the practice is over; Aristotle and the sorcerers and grasshoppers are left in peace. There are countless instances of these follies, once thought so important; others arise from time to time; but once they

have made themselves felt and people have had their fill, they vanish. If today a man called himself a Carpocratian, a Eutychean, a Monothelite, a Monophysite, a Nestorian or a Manichean or the like, what would happen? He would be laughed at, like a man dressed in the doublet-and-high-collar style of a century ago.

The French nation was beginning to open its eyes when the Jesuits Le Tellier and Doucin put together the bull [= 'papal edict'] *Unigenitus* and sent it to Rome for adoption by the Pope. They thought that they still lived in those ignorant times when the most absurd statements were accepted without inquiry. They went so far as to condemn the proposition, a truth of all times and all places:

The fear of unjust excommunication should not prevent anyone from doing his duty.

They were proscribing reason, the liberties of the Gallican Church [see Glossary], and the foundations of morality. They were saying to men:

God commands you never to do your duty if you fear being treated unjustly for doing so.

Never was common sense more outrageously challenged! The counsellors of Rome were not on their guard. The papal court was persuaded that the bull was necessary, and that the nation desired it; it was signed, sealed, and dispatched. You know the results; if they had been foreseen, the bull would surely have been modified. There were angry quarrels, which the prudence and goodness of the king have settled.

So it is with regard to many of the points that divide the Protestants from us. Some are of no consequence; others are more serious, but even with them the fury of the controversy has abated so far that the Protestants themselves no longer preach about the controversy in any of their churches.

So we can seize on this time of disgust, of satiety, or rather of reason, as an historical benchmark and a guarantee of

public tranquillity. Controversy is an epidemic disease that is near its end, and this plague that we are now cured of requires only gentle treatment. It is in the State's interests that its expatriated sons should return modestly to the home of their father; humanity demands this, reason counsels it, and politicians need not fear it.

## 6. Whether intolerance a matter of natural law, and of human law

[In this little chapter, 'law' translates *droit*. But this can also mean 'right', and is translated as 'right' in the first paragraph. Perhaps 'right' would be better elsewhere in the chapter, but probably not.] Natural law is the law indicated to all men by nature. You have reared your child; he owes you respect as his father, gratitude as his benefactor. You have a right to the products of the soil that you have cultivated with your own hands. You have given or received a promise; it ought to be kept.

Human law must in every case be based on this natural law; and all over the earth the great principle—the universal principle of both—is: *Do not do to others what you would not want to be done to you*. Now, I don't see how a man guided by this principle could say to another: *Believe what I believe—which you cannot believe—or you will perish*, which is what men say in Portugal, Spain and Goa. In some other countries they are now content to say: *Believe, or I detest you; believe, or I will do you all the harm I can; monster, you don't share my religion so you have no religion; you should be a thing of horror to your neighbours, your city, your province*.

If it were a matter of natural<sup>1</sup> law to behave like that, the Japanese should detest the Chinese, who would abhor the

Siamese; the Siamese in turn would persecute the Tibetans, who would fall upon the Indians; a Mogul would tear out the heart of the first Malabarian he met; the Malabarian could slaughter the Persian, who could massacre the Turk; and all together would fling themselves against the Christians, who have so long devoured each other.

So the 'law of intolerance' is absurd and barbaric; it is the law of tigers; except that it is even more horrible, because tigers tear and mangle only so as to have food, whereas we wipe each other out over paragraphs.

## 7. Whether intolerance was known to the Greeks

The peoples that history has given us some slight knowledge of all regarded their different religions as links that bound them together; it was an association of the human race. There was a kind of law of hospitality among the gods, as among men. When a stranger reached a town, his first act was to worship the gods of the country; even the gods of enemies were venerated. The Trojans offered prayers to the gods who were fighting for the Greeks.

Alexander went to the deserts of Libya to consult the god Ammon, whom the Greeks called 'Zeus' and the Romans 'Jupiter', though each had their own Zeus or Jupiter back at home. When a town was besieged, sacrifices and prayers were offered to the gods of the town to secure their favour. Thus in the very middle of war, religion united men and sometimes moderated their fury, though at times it commanded them to do things that were inhuman and horrible.

I may be wrong, but it appears to me that not one of the

<sup>1</sup> The original says *humain*; evidently a slip.



ancient civilised nations restricted the freedom of thought. They all had a religion, but it seems to me that they applied it to their gods as they did to men. All of them recognised one supreme god, but they associated with him a prodigious number of lesser divinities. They had only one ·over-arching· cult, but they permitted a host of special systems ·within it·.

The Greeks, for instance, religious though they were, were happy with the Epicureans' denial of Providence and of the existence of the soul. Not to mention other sects which all offended against the idea one ought to have of the creative Being, yet were all tolerated.

Socrates, who came closest to a knowledge of the Creator, is said to have paid for it, and died a martyr to the Deity; he is the only man the Greeks put to death for his opinions. If that was really the cause of his condemnation, however, it is not to the credit of intolerance, since they •punished only the man who alone gave glory to God and •honoured those who had the most unworthy notions of the Divinity. The enemies of tolerance ought not, I think, to cite in their favour the odious example of the judges of Socrates.

Besides, he was evidently the victim of a furious party, angered against him. He had made irreconcilable enemies of the sophists, orators and poets who taught in the schools, and even of all the private tutors in charge of the children of distinguished men. He himself admits, in his discourse reported by Plato, that he went from house to house proving to the tutors that they were simply ignorant—conduct unworthy of one whom an oracle had declared to be the wisest of men. A priest and a councillor of the Five Hundred were put forward to accuse him. I must confess that I do not know what the precise accusation was; I find only vagueness in his apology [see Glossary]; he is reported as saying in a

general way that he was accused of instilling into young men maxims against religion and government. That is how calumniators always go about things, but a court should demand accredited facts and precise, detailed charges, and the trial of Socrates does not provide us with these. We know only that at first there were 220 votes in his favour. So the court of the Five Hundred included 220 philosophers; that is a lot; I doubt if so many could be found anywhere else. The majority at length condemned him to drink the hemlock; but let us remember that when the Athenians returned to their senses they regarded the accusers and the judges with horror; that Melitus, the chief author of the sentence, was condemned to death for this injustice; and that the others were banished, and a temple was erected to Socrates. Never was philosophy so well avenged and so much honoured. The case of Socrates is really the most terrible argument that can be used against tolerance<sup>1</sup>. The Athenians had an altar dedicated to foreign gods, to gods they could not know. Is there a stronger proof not only of their indulgence to all nations but also of respect for their cults? . . .

## 8. Whether the Romans were tolerant

The ancient Romans, from Romulus until the days when the Christians disputed with the priests of the Empire, you don't see a single man persecuted for his views. Cicero doubted everything; Lucretius denied everything; yet they incurred not the least reproach. Licence even went so far that Pliny, the naturalist, began his book by saying that there is no god, or that if there is one it is the sun. Cicero, speaking of the lower regions, says 'No old woman is so stupid as to believe in them' (*Non est anus tam excors quae credat*). Juvenal says:

<sup>1</sup> The original has *intolérance*; surely a slip. See the end of the preceding paragraph.

‘Children do not believe it’ (*Nec pueri credunt*). They sang in the theatre at Rome ‘There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing’ (*Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil*). We should abhor these maxims, or at the most forgive a people whom the light of the gospels had not reached; they are false, they are impious; but we should conclude that the Romans were very tolerant, since the maxims never excited the slightest murmur.

The great principle of the Senate and people of Rome was ‘Offences against the gods are the business of the gods’ (*Deorum injurias diis curae*). This sovereign people thought only of conquering, governing and civilising the world. They were our legislators and our conquerors; and Caesar, who gave us roads, laws, and games, never sought to compel us to abandon our Druids for him, though he was the chief priest of the nation that had conquered us.

The Romans did not profess all cults, or publicly endorse them all, but they permitted them all.<sup>1</sup> Under Numa they had no material object of worship, no pictures or statues; though soon after that they erected statues to ‘the gods of the great nations’, this being something they learned from the Greeks. The law of the Twelve Tables, *Deos peregrinos ne colunto* (Foreign gods shall not be worshipped) means only that *public* worship shall be given only to the superior or inferior divinities approved by the Senate. Isis had a temple at Rome until Tiberius destroyed it. [He reports Josephus’s account of why Tiberius did that, expresses scepticism about it, and continues:] But whether or not that anecdote is true, it is certain that the Egyptian superstition had raised a temple in Rome, with official permission. The Jews engaged

in commerce there since the time of the Punic war, and had synagogues there in the days of Augustus. They kept them almost always, as in modern Rome. Is there a clearer proof that tolerance was regarded by the Romans as the most sacred rule in the law of nations?

We are told that as soon as the Christians appeared they were persecuted by these same Romans—who didn’t persecute anyone. It seems to me that this statement is entirely false, and I need only quote St. Paul himself in disproof of it. In the *Acts of the Apostles* we read that when St. Paul was accused by the Jews of wanting to destroy the Mosaic Law through JESUS-CHRIST, St. James advised St. Paul to have his head shaved and to go to the temple with four Jews to have himself purified, ‘so that all the world will know that everything said about you is false, and that you still keep the Law of Moses’.

Then Paul, a Christian, set out to go through all the Judaic ceremonies over seven days; but before the seven days were over, some Jews from Asia recognised him; and, seeing that he had entered the temple with gentiles as well as with Jews, cried out against this ‘profanation’. He was seized and taken before the Roman Governor Felix; and later on taken before the tribunal of Festus. A crowd of Jews demanded his death; Festus replied to them: ‘It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before the accused man faces his accusers and is free to defend himself.’ These words are the more remarkable for a Roman magistrate who seems to have had nothing but contempt for Paul. Deceived by the false light of his own reason, he took Paul for a fool, and told him to his face that he was demented, saying *Multae te*

<sup>1</sup> [One edition of this work inserts here something that is too good not to borrow, a quotation from Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall* etc.: ‘The various modes of worship that prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful.’]

*litterae ad insaniam convertunt* ·('Much learning makes you mad'·. Thus, in giving his protection to a stranger for whom he had no esteem, Festus was listening only to the Roman law's idea of fairness.

Thus the Holy Spirit—by inspiring the *Acts of the Apostles*—testifies that the Romans were not persecutors and were just. It was not the Romans who rose up against St. Paul, but the Jews. St. James, the brother of Jesus, was stoned by the order of a Jewish Sadducee, not of a Roman. The Jews alone stoned St. Stephen; and when St. Paul held the cloaks of the executioners, he was certainly not acting as a Roman citizen would.

The first Christians had no reason to quarrel with the Romans; their only enemies were the Jews, from whom they were beginning to separate. We know the implacable hatred that sectarians always have for those who leave their sect. No doubt there was tumult in the synagogues of Rome. Suetonius says in his life of Claudius: *Judaeos impulsore Christo assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit* ·(As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Christ, he expelled them from Rome)·. He was wrong in saying that they were instigated by Christ—he couldn't know the details about a people so much despised at Rome as the Jews were—but he was not wrong about what prompted the quarrels. Suetonius wrote in the reign of Hadrian, in the second century; at that time the Christians were not distinct from the Jews in Roman eyes. That passage from Suetonius shows that the Romans, far from oppressing the first Christians, were controlling the Jews who persecuted them. They wanted the synagogue of Rome to be as accepting of its separated brethren as the Senate was of the synagogue itself. The banished Jews returned soon afterwards, and even attained high honours in spite of the laws that excluded them from any such, as Dion Cassius and Ulpian tell us. Is it

possible that after the ruin of Jerusalem the emperors should lavish honours on the Jews, and persecute Christians, who were regarded as a Jewish sect, hand them over to the executioner or to wild animals?

It is said that Nero persecuted them. Tacitus tells us that they were accused of setting fire to Rome, and were abandoned to the fury of the people. Was that on account of their religious belief? Certainly not. Shall we say that the Chinese who were slain by the Dutch a few years ago in the suburbs of Batavia were sacrificed on account of religion? However much a man may wish to deceive himself, it is impossible to ascribe to intolerance the disaster that befell a few half-Jewish, half-Christian people in Rome under Nero.

·START OF AN END-NOTE ON ROMAN HISTORIANS·

Tacitus says: '... whose dreadful crimes led to their being commonly called "Christians"'. It is hard to believe that the label 'Christian' was already known in Rome; Tacitus wrote during the reigns of Vespasian and Domitian; he referred to Christians in the way they were referred to at *his* time. I would venture to say that the words *odio humani generis convicti* could in Tacitus's style as well mean 'convicted of being hated by mankind' as '... of hating all mankind'.

What did these first missionaries do in Rome? They tried to win a few souls, teaching them the purest morality; they did not rebel against any power; their hearts were humble, like their social status and their situation; they were hardly known, hardly separated from the other Jews. How could mankind, knowing nothing of them, hate them? and how could they be convicted of hating mankind?

When London burned, the Catholics were blamed for it; but this was after the wars of religion, and after the gunpowder plot of which a number of Catholics—unworthy of being Catholics—had been convicted.

The first Christians at the time of Nero were certainly not in that situation. It is very difficult to penetrate the darkness of history. Tacitus gives no reason for the suspicion that Nero himself had arranged to set Rome on fire; there would have been better reason to suspect that Charles II had burned London: he would at least have had an excuse—the blood of his royal father, executed on a scaffold in the sight of a populace demanding his death. But Nero had no excuse or pretext for burning Rome, and had nothing to gain from it. These crazy rumours can be the inheritance of the populace in any country; in our own time we have heard some that are just as stupid and just as unfair.

Tacitus, who was so well acquainted with the nature of princes, must also have known the nature of the people—always vain, always excessive in their fleeting but violent opinions, unable to see anything, and able to say anything, believe anything, forget anything.

Philo says that Sejanus persecuted them [i.e. the Jews] under Tiberius, but that after Sejanus's death the Emperor restored all their rights to them. They had the rights of Roman citizens, despised though they were by the Roman citizens; they shared in the distributions of grain, and once when the distribution was on the Sabbath their part in it was postponed to another day. All this was probably because of the sums of money they had paid to the State; for in every country they have purchased tolerance, and have very quickly arranged to get reimbursed for what it has cost them. . . .

I will add that Philo regards Tiberius as a wise and just monarch. I am sure that he was just only to the extent that justice served his interests; but the good things Philo says about him make me a little sceptical about the horrors that Tacitus and Suetonius accuse him of. It does not seem to me likely that an infirm 70-year-old would retire to the

island of Capri to indulge in elaborate and barely natural debauches that even the most debauched of the Roman youth had not encountered. Neither Tacitus nor Suetonius knew this Emperor; they enjoyed gathering rumours that were running through the people; Octavius, Tiberius, and their successors had been odious because they ruled over a people who should have been free: the historians enjoyed defaming them, and these historians were taken at their word because back then there were no memoirs, diaries, documents. Also, the historians did not *cite* anyone; they could not be contradicted; they chose whom to defame; they decided what the judgment of posterity would be.

It is up to the wise reader to see •the point at which one should distrust the truthfulness of historians; •what credit one should give to what solemn authors, born in an enlightened nation, affirm about public events; and •what limits to one's credulity should be set regarding anecdotes that these same authors pass on without any evidence.

•END OF NOTE ON ROMAN HISTORIANS•

## 9. The martyrs

There *were* Christian martyrs in later years. It is very hard to learn the precise grounds on which they were condemned; but I venture to think that under the first Caesars none were put to death on purely religious grounds. All religions were tolerated. How could the Romans have sought out and persecuted obscure members of one cult at a time when they permitted all other religions?

Titus, Trajan, the Antonines, and Decius were not barbarians. Can we think that they deprived the Christians alone of a liberty that the whole •known• world enjoyed? Would they have ventured to charge the Christians with having secret

mysteries, when the mysteries of Isis, Mithra and the Syrian goddess—all alien to the Roman cult—were freely permitted? There must have been other reasons for the persecution; what led to the shedding of Christian blood must have been particular animosities supported by reasons of State.

For instance, when St. Lawrence refused to give to the Roman prefect Cornelius Secularis Christian money that he held in safe keeping, the prefect and Emperor would naturally be angry. They did not know that St. Lawrence had distributed the money to the poor, and done a charitable and holy act. They regarded him as a rebel, and had him put to death.

Let us consider the martyrdom of St. Polyeuctes. Was he condemned just because of his religion? He enters the temple where thanks are being ceremonially given to the gods for the victory of the Emperor Decius. He insults the sacrificing priests, and overturns and breaks the altars and statues. In what country in the world would such an attack be pardoned? The Christian who in public tore down the edict of the Emperor Diocletian, and drew the great persecution upon his brethren in the last two years of that monarch's reign, had a zeal that was not guided by knowledge, and had the misfortune to bring disaster to his people. This *unthinking* zeal that often broke out, and was condemned even by some of the Fathers of the Church, was probably the source of all the persecutions.

(I do not, of course, compare the early Protestants with the early Christians; I do not put error alongside truth. But Forel, the predecessor of Calvin, did at Arles the same thing that St. Polyeuctes had done in Armenia. The statue of St. Antony the Hermit was being carried in procession, and Forel and some of his people beat and scattered the monks who carried it, and threw St. Antony in the river. He deserved the death that he escaped because he had time to get away. . . .)

Could the Romans have allowed the infamous Antinous to be raised to the rank of the secondary gods, yet mangled and given to the beasts all those whose had been accused only of quietly worshipping one just God? Could they have recognised a sovereign God, master of all the secondary gods—as we see in their formula *Deus optimus maximus*—yet hunted down those who worshipped one sole God?

It is not credible that under the emperors there was any inquisition against the Christians, i.e. that men were sent among them to interrogate them on their beliefs. That is a topic on which the Romans never troubled either Jew, Syrian, Egyptian, Celtic bards, Druids or philosophers. So the martyrs were men who made an outcry against 'false gods'. It was a very wise and very pious thing to refuse to believe in them; but if, not content with worshipping God in spirit and in truth, they broke out violently against the established cult, however absurd it was, we have to admit that they were themselves intolerant.

Tertullian says in his *Apology* that the Christians were regarded as seditious. The charge was unjust, but it shows that what stimulated the zeal of the magistrates was not only their religion. He says that the Christians refused to decorate their doors with laurel branches in the public rejoicings for the victories of the emperors; this mischievous conduct could easily be seen as a treasonable offence.

The first period of juridical severity against the Christians was under Domitian, but it was generally restricted to banishment for less than a year: *Facile coeptum repressit restitutis quos ipse relegaverat* ('He quickly repressed the work, restoring those whom he had banished'), says Tertullian. Lactantius, whose style is so vehement, agrees that the Church was peaceful and flourishing from Domitian to Decius. This long peace, he says, was broken when 'that execrable animal Decius began to vex the Church'.

I shan't discuss here the learned Dodwell's view about how few martyrs there were; but if the Romans had so greatly persecuted the Christian religion, if the Senate had put to death so many innocents with unheard-of tortures—plunging Christians in boiling oil and exposing totally naked girls to the beasts in the circus—how is it that they left untouched all the earlier bishops of Rome? St. Irenaeus can count among them only one martyr, Telesphorus, in the year 139; and we have no proof that this Telesphorus was put to death. Zepherinus governed the flock at Rome for twenty-eight years, and died peacefully in 219. It is true that nearly all the early popes are inscribed in the ancient martyrologies; but back then the word 'martyr' was given its correct meaning, signifying a witness, not someone put to death.

It is hard to reconcile this persecuting fury with the Christians' being free to hold—according to ecclesiastical writers—fifty-six Councils in the first three centuries.

There were persecutions; but if they were as violent as we are told, it is probable that Tertullian, who wrote so vigorously against the established ·Roman· cult, would not have died in his bed. We know of course that the emperors didn't read his *Apology*; an obscure work, composed in Africa, won't have reached those who were ruling the world. But it must have been known to those who were in touch with the proconsul of Africa; it must have brought plenty of hatred towards its author; yet he did not suffer martyrdom.

Origen taught publicly at Alexandria, and was not put to death. This same Origen, who spoke so freely to both pagans and Christians—announcing Jesus to the former and denying a God in three persons to the latter—says expressly in the third book of his *Against Celsus* that 'there have been very few martyrs, and those at long intervals; although the Christians run about the towns and villages, doing all they can to get everyone to accept their religion.'

This continual running about was certainly wide open to accusations of sedition from hostile priests, yet these missions were tolerated despite the Egyptian people, always turbulent, fractious and cowardly; a people that killed a Roman for slaying a cat, and were always contemptible, whatever the admirers of the pyramids may say.

·START OF AN END-NOTE ABOUT THE EGYPTIANS·

This assertion should be supported. It must be agreed that since fables gave way to history, the Egyptians have been revealed as a people who were as cowardly as they were superstitious. Cambyse took over Egypt by means of a single battle; Alexander governed there without any fighting, without any town taking the risk of waiting for a siege; the Ptolomeys took it over without striking a blow; ·Julius· Caesar and Augustus subjugated it just as easily. Omar took the whole of Egypt in a single campaign; the Mamelukes. . . . were masters of it after Omar; it was they and not the Egyptians who defeated the army of St. Louis and took that king prisoner. Finally, when the Mamelukes had become Egyptians—i.e. soft, cowardly, incompetent, flighty—as is natural for people who live in that climate, it took them only three months to come under the yoke of Selim I, who had their Sultan hanged and annexed Egypt as a province of the Turkish Empire—which it will continue to be· until the time when other barbarians take it over.

[He repeats from Herodotus various absurd fables concerning ancient Egypt, and comments on one of them:] It is as though a king of France were to set out from Touraine to conquer Norway! There's no point in repeating these tales, as they occur in thousands of volumes; that doesn't make them any more probable. . . .

As for the pyramids and other antiquities: all they show is the pride and bad taste of the monarchs of Egypt, and

the slavery of an incompetent people using their arms and shoulders—all they had of value—to satisfy the vulgar ostentation of their masters. The government of this people, at the very time when it is supposed to be so strong, appears to be absurd and tyrannical. It is claimed that all lands belong to the Egyptian monarchs. Fine work for such slaves—conquering the world!

The supposed deep knowledge of the Egyptian priests is yet another of the most enormous absurdities in ancient history—i.e. in fable. Folk who claimed that in the course of 11,000 years the sun twice rose in the west, and twice set in the east, doubtless knew much more than the author of the *Almanach de Liège*! The religion of those priests who governed the state was not comparable with that of the least civilised peoples in America; they are known to have worshipped crocodiles, monkeys, cats, onions; and it may be that over the whole earth today the only cult that is so absurd is that of the grand Lama.

Their arts are not much better than their religion; there is not a single tolerable statue from ancient Egypt. The only good works that have come from Egypt were made in Alexandria, under the Ptolemies and under the Caesars, by artists from Greece. They needed a Greek to teach them geometry.

The illustrious Bossuet in his *Discourse on Universal History* addressed to the son of Louis XIV, rhapsodises over Egyptian merit. He may dazzle a young prince, but the learned world has not been favourable. It is a most eloquent declamation, but an historian should be a philosopher rather than an orator.

I should add that I offer these thoughts about the Egyptians only as a conjecture. What other name could be given to *anything* that is said about antiquity?

·END OF NOTE ABOUT THE EGYPTIANS·

Who could have done more to raise the priests and the government against Origen than his pupil St. Gregory Thaumaturgus? He had seen during the night an old man sent by God, and a woman shining with light; the woman was the Holy Virgin and the old man St. John the Evangelist. John dictated to him a creed, which Gregory went out to preach. On his way to Neocaesarea he passed by a temple where oracles were given, and where he had to shelter from the rain for a night; while there he made many signs of the cross. In the morning the sacrificing priest was astonished that the spirits that had previously responded to him would no longer present him with oracles. When he called, the devils came and said that they would come no more; they told him they could not go on living in the temple because Gregory had spent the night there and made signs of the cross. The priest had Gregory seized, and Gregory said: 'I can expel the spirits from wherever I like, and drive them into wherever I like.' 'Send them back into my temple, then', said the priest. So Gregory tore off a little piece from a book he had in his hand and wrote on it: 'Gregory to Satan : I order you to return to this temple.' The message was placed on the altar, and the demons obeyed and gave the oracles as before; though later on, as is well known, they stopped.

St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us these facts in his *Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*. The priests in charge of the idols must indeed have been incensed against Gregory and wanted in their blindness to denounce him to the authorities; yet their greatest enemy never suffered persecution.

It is said in the history of St. Cyprian that he was the first Bishop of Carthage to be condemned to death. His martyrdom occurred in 258, which means that through a very long period no Bishop of Carthage was killed because of his religion. The history does not tell us what calumnies were launched against St. Cyprian, what enemies he had,

and why the proconsul of Africa was angry with him. St. Cyprian writes to Cornelius, Bishop of Rome: 'A short time ago there was a popular disturbance at Carthage, and the cry was twice raised that I should be thrown to the lions.' It is very probable that the excitement of the fierce populace of Carthage was the cause of Cyprian's death; and it is very certain that the Emperor Gallus did not condemn him on religious grounds from so far away, since he did not lay a hand on Cornelius, who lived under his eyes.

So many hidden causes are woven in with the apparent cause, so many unknown springs drive the persecution of a man, that it is impossible centuries later to disentangle the hidden source of the misfortunes even of distinguished men, let alone of an individual who could not have been known to anyone outside his own party.

Observe that St. Gregory Thaumaturgus and St. Denis, Bishop of Alexandria, who were not put to death, lived at the same time as St. Cyprian. Given that they were at least as well known as that Bishop of Carthage, why were they left in peace? And why was St. Cyprian put to death? Doesn't it look as though *he* fell a victim to personal and powerful enemies, under the pretext of calumny or reasons of state that are often associated with religion, and that *they* were fortunate enough to escape the malice of men?

It is impossible that the mere charge of being a Christian led to the death of St. Ignatius under the clement and just Trajan, since Christians were allowed to accompany and console him during his voyage to Rome. [Voltaire has here a long note giving detailed reasons for rejecting almost everything that has been recorded about St. Ignatius's supposed martyrdom, and also St. Polycarp's. He ends it thus: 'Anyone could be forgiven for finding in these histories more piety than truth.'] Seditions were common at Antioch, always a turbulent city, where Ignatius was the secret bishop of the

Christians. Possibly these seditions, maliciously imputed to the innocent Christians, brought them under the scrutiny of the government—deceived here, as so often!

St. Simeon, for instance, was charged before the Persian king Sapor with being a Roman spy. The story of his martyrdom tells that King Sapor ordered him to worship the sun, but we know that the Persians did not worship the sun; they regarded it as a symbol of the good principle [see Glossary], Oromases, the divine creator whom they did recognise.

However tolerant we may be, we cannot help being indignant with the rhetoricians who accuse Diocletian of persecuting the Christians as soon as he ascended the throne. Let us call as a witness Eusebius of Caesarea, whose testimony cannot be dismissed. Constantine's favourite, his panegyrist, the violent enemy of preceding emperors, should be believed when he says something in defence of them. Here are his words: 'The emperors for a long time gave the Christians proof of their goodwill. They entrusted provinces to them; several Christians lived in the palace; they even married Christian women. Diocletian married Prisca, whose daughter was the wife of Maximianus Galerius' and so on.

Let this decisive testimony teach us to stop throwing libels around; let us consider whether the persecution set afoot by Galerius after 19 years of clement and benevolent reign was due to some intrigue that is unknown to us.

Let us see the utter absurdity of the story of the Theban legion who were all massacred on religious grounds. •It is ridiculous to say that the legion came from Asia by the great St. Bernard Pass; •it is impossible that it should be brought from Asia to quell a sedition in Gaul—a year after the sedition had been repressed; •it is equally impossible that 6,000 infantry and 700 cavalry were slaughtered in a pass in which 200 men could block a whole army. The account



of this supposed butchery begins with an evident imposture: 'When the earth groaned under the tyranny of Diocletian, Heaven was peopled with martyrs.' Well, this episode is supposed to have taken place in 286, a time when Diocletian favoured the Christians most and the empire was at its happiest. Finally—a point that might spare us all this discussion—*there never was a Theban legion!* The Romans had too much pride and common sense to make up a legion of Egyptians, who served in Rome only as slaves; as though there had been a Jewish legion! We have the names of the thirty-two legions that were the chief strength of the Roman Empire, and there is no Theban legion among them. Let us relegate this fable to the same category as the acrostic verses of the Sibyls that foretold the miracles of JESUS-CHRIST, and so many other forgeries that false zeal came up with to dupe the credulous.

## 10. Danger of false legends. Persecution

Lies have imposed on men for too long; it is time to pick out the few truths we can trace amid the clouds of legends that cover Roman history since Tacitus and Suetonius, and have almost always enveloped the annals of other nations.

How can we believe, for instance, that the Romans—a grave and severe people who gave us our laws—condemned Christian virgins, young women of rank, to prostitution? That story reflects ignorance of the austere dignity of our legislators, who punished so rigorously the frailties of their vestal virgins. The *Sincere Acts* of Ruinart describe these indignities; but should we believe those *Acts* as we do the *Acts of the Apostles*? According to Bolland, the *Sincere Acts* say that there were in the town of Ancyra seven Christian virgins, each about seventy years old; that the governor

Theodectes condemned them to be handed over to the young men of the town; but that when no-one wanted them (not surprisingly) he compelled them to assist, entirely naked, in the mysteries of Diana—which in fact no-one ever came to without wearing a veil. St. Theodotus—who was an inn-keeper, but was not less zealous on that account—prayed ardently to God to let these holy spinsters die, lest they should succumb to temptation. God heard his prayer: the governor had them thrown into a lake, with stones around their necks, and they at once appeared to Theodotus and begged him 'not to allow them to be eaten by fishes'.

The holy publican and his companions went during the night to the shore of the lake, which was guarded by soldiers. A heavenly torch went before them, and when they came to the place where the guards were, a celestial cavalier, heavily armed, chased the guards away with his lance in his hand. St. Theodotus pulled the bodies of the virgins out of the lake. He was brought before the governor—and the celestial cavalier did not save him from being decapitated. I keep repeating that I venerate the real martyrs, but it is not easy to believe this story of Bolland and Ruinart.

Should I report here the story of the young St. Romanus? He was thrown into the fire, says Eusebius, and Jews who were present insulted JESUS-CHRIST for allowing his followers to be burned, whereas God had saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace. The Jews had hardly spoken when Romanus emerged in triumph from the flames. The emperor ordered that he should be pardoned, telling the judge that he did not want to get into a quarrel with God. Curious words for Diocletian! [After some ugly stuff about the cutting off of tongues, Voltaire concludes:] If Eusebius really wrote such idiocies, if they are not later additions to his work, how can we base anything on his history?

We are given the martyrdom of St. Felicitas and her seven children, sent to death by the wise and pious Antoninus—so we are told, without being told the source of this story. It is very likely that some writer, more zealous than truthful, tried to imitate the history of the Maccabees. The narrative begins: ‘St. Felicitas was a Roman who lived in the reign of Antoninus’, which makes it clear that the author was not a contemporary of St. Felicitas; he says that the praetor sat to judge them at his tribunal in the Campus Martius; but the tribunal was held at the Capitol, not in the Campus Martius. . . . That alone shows the truth of the supposition that the whole story is spurious.

Again, it is said that after the trial the emperor entrusted the execution of the sentence to various judges; which is quite opposed to all procedure at that time or at any other. . . .

Notice that in these accounts of the martyrs, composed solely by the Christians themselves, it is nearly always reported that crowds of Christians went freely to the prison of the condemned, followed him to the scaffold, received his blood, buried his body, and worked miracles with his relics. If it were the religion alone that was persecuted, would not the authorities have arrested these declared Christians who assisted their condemned brethren and were accused of making spells with the remains of the martyred bodies? Would they not have been treated as *we* treated the Waldensians, the Albigenses, the Hussites, the various sects of Protestants? We slew them and burned them to death in crowds, without distinction of age or sex. In the reliable accounts of the ancient persecutions, is there anything that comes close to our massacre of St. Bartholomew or the Irish massacres? Is there a single one resembling the annual festival that is still held at Toulouse—a cruel festival that

should be abolished—in which a whole populace thanks God and congratulates itself in slaughtering 4,000 of its fellow-citizens two centuries ago?

I say it with a shudder, but it is true; it is we Christians who have been the persecutors, the executioners, the assassins!—and of whom? of our brothers. It is we who have destroyed a hundred towns, the crucifix or Bible in our hands, and have incessantly shed blood and lit flames, from the reign of Constantine to the outrages against the Camisards<sup>1</sup> of the Cévennes region of southern France, outrages which, thank God, no longer continue today.

We still occasionally send to the gibbet a few poor folk of Poitou, Vivarais, Valence, or Montauban. Since 1745 we have hanged eight of the men they call Preachers or Ministers of the Gospel, whose only crime was to have prayed to God for the king in their native dialect and given a drop of wine and a morsel of leavened bread to a few simple-minded peasants. Nothing is known of this in Paris, where pleasure is the only thing that matters, and people are ignorant of what happens in the provinces and abroad. These trials are over in an hour—less time than it takes to try a deserter. If the king were informed about them, he would put an end to them.

Catholic priests are not treated like that in any Protestant country. There are more than a hundred Catholic priests in England and Ireland; they are known, and were unmolested during the late war.

Will we French always be the last to embrace the wholesome opinions of other nations? They have amended their ways; when will we amend ours? •It took us sixty years to accept what Newton had demonstrated; •we are barely starting to save the lives of our children by inoculation; •we have only recently begun to act on sound principles of

<sup>1</sup> The original has *Cannibales*, presumably a slip.

agriculture. When will we begin to act on sound principles of humanity? How can we have the audacity to reproach the pagans with making martyrs, when we have been guilty of the same cruelty in the same circumstances?

Suppose we grant that the Romans put many Christians to death on purely religious grounds. In that case the Romans were very much to blame. Would we want to be similarly unjust? And when we are reproaching them for having persecuted, would we want to be persecutors?

If anyone were so lacking in good faith or so fanatical as to say to me:

‘Why do you come to expose our errors and faults?  
Why destroy our false miracles and false legends?  
They nourish the piety of many people; some errors  
are necessary; do not tear a chronic ulcer out of the  
body if that would bring the destruction of the body’,

here is what I would reply to him:

‘All these false miracles by which you shake the trust that should be given to real ones, all these absurd legends that you add to the truths of the Gospel, extinguish religion in men’s hearts. Too many people who want to be instructed and have not the time to instruct themselves adequately, say:

“The heads of my religion have deceived me, therefore there is no religion; it is better to cast oneself into the arms of nature than into those of error; I would rather depend on the law of nature than on the inventions of men.”

Others have the misfortune to go even further. They see that imposture put a curb on them, and they will not have even the curb of truth. They lean to atheism. They become depraved, because others have been false and cruel.’

These, assuredly, are the consequences of all the pious frauds and all the superstitions. Men usually only *half*-reason. It is a very poor argument to say:

- Voragine, the author of the *Golden Legend*, and the Jesuit Ribadeneira, compiler of *Flowers of the Saints*, wrote sheer nonsense; therefore there is no God.
- The Catholics have murdered a certain number of Huguenots, and the Huguenots in turn have murdered a certain number of Catholics; therefore there is no God.
- Men have used confession, communion, and all the other sacraments, to commit the most horrible crimes; therefore there is no God.

I would draw the opposite conclusion: Therefore there *is* a God who, after this transitory life in which we have known him so little, and committed so many crimes in his name, will deign to console us for so many horrible misfortunes. For, considering the wars of religion, the forty papal schisms (nearly all of which were bloody), the impostures that have nearly all been pernicious, the irreconcilable hatreds inflamed by differences of opinion, and seeing all the evils that false zeal has brought upon them, men have for a long time had their hell in this world.

## 11. Damage done by intolerance

*What?* Is each citizen to be allowed to trust only his own reason, and to believe whatever this enlightened or deluded reason dictates to him? Yes indeed,<sup>1</sup> provided he does not disturb the public order; for although he cannot choose whether to believe or not, he can choose whether to respect the usages of his country. If you say that it is a crime not to

<sup>1</sup> See Locke’s excellent letter on tolerance.

*believe* in the dominant religion, you will be condemning the first Christians, your fathers, and making the case for those whom you accuse of delivering them to the executioner.

You reply that there is a great difference; that all other religions are the work of man, and only the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church is the work of God. But, surely, does our religion's being divine imply that it should rule by hatred, fury, exile, the confiscation of goods, imprisonment, torture, murders, and ceremonial thanks to God for those murders? The more divine the Christian religion is, the less is it for man to command it; if God is its author, he will maintain it without your help. You know that intolerance produces only hypocrites or rebels—what a fearful pair of options! It comes down to this: Would you sustain by executioners the religion of a God who died at the hands of executioners, and who preached only gentleness and patience?

Please look at the frightful consequences of legally sanctioned intolerance. If it were allowed to despoil, cast in prison, and put to death a citizen who in a certain place would not profess the religion generally admitted in that place, how could the leaders of the State escape those penalties? Religion equally binds the monarch and the beggar; hence more than fifty doctors or monks have made the monstrous assertion that it was lawful to depose or kill any sovereign who dissented from the dominant religion, and the *parlements* [see Glossary] of our kingdom have repeatedly condemned these abominable judgments of abominable theologians. [Voltaire links this to a longish end-note •saying that the theologians in question have claimed in self-defence that their views were held by St. Thomas Aquinas, •explaining why they were right about that, and •asking rhetorically what sort of reception would have been given to 'the Angelic Doctor, the interpreter of the divine will, those being his titles', if he had talked like that in contemporary France.]

[Then a page concerning the issue in France, shortly after the death of Henry IV, of whether the King was independent of the Pope. Voltaire gives some of the details, but says that he is abbreviating them. He concludes:] I merely join all the citizens in saying that obedience was owed to Henry IV not because he was sanctified by the Pope at Chartres but because of his unchallengeable hereditary **right** to the crown, which he deserved on account of his courage and his goodness.

Let us be allowed to say that every citizen is entitled to inherit his father's property by the same **right**, and that we do not see that he should be deprived of it and dragged to the gibbet because he takes sides with one theologian against another [Voltaire names some, not very accurately].

It is well known that our dogmas were not always clearly explained or universally received in the Church. JESUS-CHRIST not having told us what the source of the Holy Ghost was, the Latin Church long believed with the Greek that it proceeded from the Father only; later on it added in the Creed that it also proceeded from the Son. Tell me: if the day after this decision a citizen preferred to keep to Creed of the previous day, would he have deserved to be put to death? Is it less unjust and cruel to punish today the man who thinks as people thought in former times? . . .

It is not long since the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary began to be generally accepted; the Dominicans still do not believe it. When will these Dominicans start to deserve penalties for heresy in this world and the next?

If we are to learn from anyone how to behave in these interminable disputes, it should certainly be the apostles and evangelists. There were the makings of a violent schism between St. Paul and St. Peter. [Details are given; Paul criticised Peter for smoothing his path among gentiles by hiding the fact that he was a circumcised Jew. Voltaire continues:]

There was matter here for a violent disagreement—the question of whether new Christians should Judaize themselves or not. . . . It is known that the first fifteen Bishops of Jerusalem were circumcised Jews who kept the Sabbath and avoided eating prohibited foods. If any Spanish or Portuguese bishop had had himself circumcised and kept the Sabbath, he would have been burned at the stake. And yet this fundamental issue did not spoil the peace among the apostles or among the first Christians.

If the evangelists had resembled modern writers, they would have had a large battlefield on which to fight one another. St. Matthew counts 28 generations from David to Jesus; St. Luke counts 41; and there is no overlap between the two lists of generations. Yet we find no dissension among their followers over these apparent contradictions, which were effectively reconciled by the fathers of the Church. Charity was not harmed, peace was preserved. What better lesson could there be, to keep us tolerant in our disputes and humble in the face of anything we don't understand?

St. Paul, in his epistle to some Jewish converts to Christianity in Rome, says at the end of the third chapter that faith alone glorifies, and works justify no-one. St. James, on the contrary, in the second chapter of his epistle to 'the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad', keeps saying that one cannot be saved without works. Here is a point that has separated two great sects among us, yet made no division among the apostles.

If the persecution of those with whom we dispute were a holy action, the man who had caused the killing of the most heretics would be the greatest saint in Paradise. The man who had been content to despoil and imprison his brothers, what a poor figure he would cut beside the zealot who had slain hundreds of them on St. Bartholomew's Day! Here is a proof of it.

The successor of St. Peter [i.e. the Pope] and his consistory cannot err; they approved, acclaimed, and consecrated the massacre of St. Bartholomew [see Glossary]; so this deed was holy; so of two equally pious assassins one who had ripped open twenty-four pregnant Huguenot women would have double the glory of the man who had ripped open only a dozen. By the same reasoning the Protestant fanatics of Cévennes should believe that they would be elevated in glory in proportion to the number of priests, monks, and Catholic women they had slain. This is a strange title to glory in Heaven!

## 12. Did divine law require intolerance in Judaism? Was it always practised?

‘Divine law’, I believe, stands for the precepts that God himself has given. He ordered the Jews to eat a lamb cooked with green vegetables, and ordered that guests should eat it standing up, staff in hand, in commemoration of the Passover; he commanded that in the consecration of the high priest blood should be applied to his right ear, right hand, and right foot; curious customs to us, but not to antiquity. He ordered them to put the iniquities of the people on the goat Azazel, and forbade them to eat scaleless fishes, pork, hares, hedgehogs, owls, griffins, etc.

He instituted feasts and ceremonies. All these things, which other nations found to be arbitrary and subordinate to the law of the land and to common usage, became a divine law for the Jews because God himself had ordered them; just as whatever we are commanded to do by JESUS-CHRIST, son of Mary, son of God, is a divine law for us.

Let us not inquire here into why God substituted a new law for the one he had given to Moses, and why he had laid more commandments on Moses than on the patriarch Abraham, and more on Abraham than on Noah.

·START OF AN END-NOTE ON ANIMALS·

Wanting to provide some useful Notes to this work, I offer the following remarks. It is said that God made a pact with Noah and with all the animals; yet he allowed Noah to eat anything that has life and movement, except for the blood, which he did not allow to be consumed. God adds that he will wreak vengeance on any animal that spills human blood. One can infer from these and several other biblical passages that animals have some *connaissances* [here = ‘states of awareness’]—which has been believed from antiquity until

today, by all reasonable men. God doesn’t make pacts with trees and stones, that have no feelings; but he makes them with animals, which he has graciously endowed with a capacity for feeling that is often more sensitive than ours, and with various ideas that are necessarily connected to this feeling. That is why he forbids the barbarity of feeding on animals’ blood, because the blood is the source of life and thus of feeling. Deprive an animal of all its blood and all its organs stop working. So there is a solid reason for Scripture to say in dozens of places that the soul—what was called ‘the sensitive soul’—is in the blood, a very natural idea that all peoples have accepted.

This idea is the basis for the sympathy we should have for animals. One of the Seven Laws of Noah, accepted among the Jews, forbids eating part of an animal that is still alive. [Then some comments on the cruelty that would make such a command necessary, after which:] God, while allowing that animals serve us as food, recommends some humanity towards them. It has to be agreed that there is something barbaric in making them suffer. As for slaughtering an animal that we have fed with our own hands—the only thing that reduces our horror at this is our being used to it. There have always been peoples who have drawn the line at it; and this attitude still exists in India, and none of the Pythagoreans in Italy and Greece ever ate meat. . . .

You would have to reject the natural light, it seems to me, to maintain that beasts are only machines. There is an obvious contradiction in maintaining that God gave the beasts all the organs of feeling but did not give them feelings.

Also, animals have different ways of expressing need, suffering, joy, fear, love, anger, and all their feelings and attitudes; if you haven’t noticed that, you haven’t paid enough attention to animals. It would be very strange if they so finely expressed feelings that they don’t have!

That remark provides active intellects with much food for thought concerning the power and goodness of the Creator, who endows with life, feeling, ideas and power beings he has **organised** with his omnipotent hand. We do not know

- how these **organs** are formed,
- how they develop,
- how anything comes to be alive, or
- by what laws feelings, ideas, memory are attached to this life.

This profound and eternal ignorance is inherent in our nature; yet in this state we dispute incessantly, persecuting one another like bulls fighting with their horns without knowing why they fight or how they have horns.

·END OF END-NOTE·

[Picking up from '. . . than on Noah.'] He seems to adjust himself to the times and to particular groups within the human race—a kind of paternal gradation. But these abysses are too deep for my feeble sight; I shall keep to my subject, and see first what intolerance was among the Jews.

It is true that in *Exodus*, *Numbers*, *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy* there are very severe laws against ·false· worship, and even more severe punishments for it. Many commentators work laboriously to reconcile Moses' words of with those of Jeremiah and Amos, and with the celebrated speech of St. Stephen in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Amos says that in the deserts the Jews worshipped Moloch, Remphan and Chiun. Jeremiah says explicitly that God asked for no sacrifice from their fathers when they came out of Egypt. St. Stephen says in his speech to the Jews: 'They worshipped the host of Heaven; they offered ·to the God of Israel· no slain beasts or sacrifices during forty years in the desert; they carried the tabernacle of the god Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan.'

Other critics infer from all this worship of foreign gods that these gods were tolerated by Moses, and in support of this they quote these words of *Deuteronomy*: 'When you are in the land of Canaan you will not do all the things that we do here today, where every man does what he pleases.'

They find encouragement in the fact that nothing is said of any religious act of the people in the desert: no Passover, no Pentecost, no mention of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, no settled public prayer; and to cap it all off, circumcision—the seal of God's covenant with Abraham—was not practised. . . .

There is no point in arguing here against the critics who maintain that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses; everything needing to be said on that subject was said long ago. and even if a small part of Moses' books *was* written in the time of the Judges or the Kings or the High Priests, that would not make the books less inspired or divine.

It is enough, it seems to me, that it is proved by Holy Scripture that—despite the extraordinary punishment drawn down on the Jews by the cult of Apis—they had complete liberty ·of worship· for a long time. Perhaps indeed the massacre of 23,000 men by Moses for ·worshipping· the golden calf set up by his brother led him to appreciate that •nothing was gained by severity, and that •he would have to close his eyes to the people's passion for foreign gods.

Sometimes he seems to transgress his own law. He forbade the making of images, yet set up a brazen serpent. Another deviation from the law occurred later in the temple of Solomon, who had twelve oxen carved to sustain the great basin of the temple, and in the ark were placed cherubim, one with the head of an eagle, one with the head of a calf; and it seems to have been this badly made calf-head, found in the temple by Roman soldiers, that led to the long-time belief that the Jews worshipped an ass.

The worship of foreign gods was prohibited in vain. Solomon was quite at his ease in idolatry. Jeroboam, to whom God gave ten parts of the kingdom, sets up two golden calves, and rules for twenty-two years, combining in himself the dignities of monarch and high priest. The little kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam puts up altars and statues to foreign gods. The holy king Asa does not destroy the ‘high places’. The high priest Urijah erects in the temple, in the place of the altar of holocausts, an altar for the king of Syria ·to worship at·. In short, we don’t see here any restraint in matters of religion. I know that the majority of the Jewish kings murdered each other, but that was always to further a material interest, not on account of belief. . . .

It is objected that the Jewish people were very ignorant and barbaric. In the war with the Midianites [Voltaire has a note stressing how tiny their territory was] Moses ordered that all the male children and all the mothers should be slain and the plunder divided. . . . Some commentators even claim that 32 girls were sacrificed to the Lord: *Cesserunt in partem Domini triginta duae animae* [‘The Lord’s tribute was 32 persons’].

The Jews did indeed offer human sacrifices to God; witness Jephthah’s sacrifice ·of his daughter· [see *Judges* 11:30–39], and witness the dismembering of King Agag by the priest Samuel. Ezekiel even tries to encourage them by promising that they will eat human flesh: ‘You will eat the horse and the rider; you will drink the blood of princes.’ We do not find in the whole history of this people any mark of generosity, magnanimity, or beneficence; but from the clouds of this long and frightful barbarism there always emerges a glimmer of universal tolerance.

Jephthah, who was inspired by God and sacrificed his daughter, said to the Ammonites: ‘What your God Chamos gave to you, isn’t it yours by right? Then let us take the land that our God has promised us.’ More could be said

about this; but this precise declaration at least shows clearly that God tolerated Chamos. The Holy Scripture does not say ‘What you think your God Chamos gave to you, don’t you think it is yours by right?’ It says very clearly ‘You have the right’—*tibi jure debentur*—which is the real meaning of the Hebrew *Otho thirasch*.

The story of Micah and the Levite, told in *Judges* 17 and 18, is another incontestable proof of the great liberty and tolerance that prevailed among the Jews. Micah’s mother, a rich Ephraimite woman, had lost eleven hundred pieces of silver. Her son, who had taken them, restored them to her, and she devoted them to the Lord, had images made of it, and built a small chapel. A Levite served the chapel, receiving ten pieces of silver, a tunic, and a cloak every year, besides his food; and Micah said ‘Now I know the Lord will do me good, seeing I have in my home a Levite as my priest’.

However, six hundred men of the tribe of Dan, who wanted to seize some town of the district to settle in, and had no Levite priest to secure the favour of God for their enterprise, went to Micah’s house and took his clerical garment, his idols, and his Levite, despite this priest’s remonstrances and despite the cries of Micah and his mother. They then proceeded with confidence to attack the town of Laish, and put everything in it to fire and sword, as was their custom. They gave the name ‘Dan’ to Laish in memory of their victory, and set Micah’s idol on an altar; and, what is still more remarkable, Moses’ grandson Jonathan was the high priest of this temple, in which the God of Israel and Micah’s idol were worshipped.

After the death of Gideon, the Hebrews worshipped Baal-Berith for nearly twenty years, and gave up the cult of Adonai [i.e. the God of Israel]; and no leader or judge or priest cried for vengeance. Their crime was great, I admit; but if even this idolatry was tolerated, how many differences *within* the true



cult must have been tolerated?

Some allege as a proof of intolerance that when the Lord himself had allowed his ark to be taken by the Philistines in a battle, his only punishments were •a secret disease resembling haemorrhoids, •overthrowing the statue of Dagon, and •sending a multitude of rats into their countryside; but—this being where serious intolerance is supposed to show up—when the Philistines sent back the ark drawn by two cows that had calves, and offered to God five golden rats and five golden haemorrhoids,<sup>1</sup> the Lord slew seventy elders of Israel and 50,000 of the people for looking at the ark. The answer to that is that the Lord's punishment was not for any belief, for any difference within the religion, or for idolatry.

If the Lord had wanted to punish idolatry, he would have slain all the Philistines who dared to take his ark and who worshipped Dagon; but instead he slew 50,070 of his own people solely because they looked at his ark, which they ought not to have looked at. So different are the laws, the *moeurs*, and the economy of the Jews from anything we know today; so far are God's inscrutable ways above our own! The judicious Don Calmet writes: 'The rigorous punishment of this large number of men will seem excessive only to those who have not understood how far God wanted to be feared and respected among his people, and whose opinions about God's views and designs are based wholly on the dim lights of their own reason.'

God is not punishing a foreign cult, but a profanation of his own, an indiscreet curiosity, an act of disobedience, possibly a spirit of revolt. Clearly such chastisements belong to God only in the Jewish theocracy. It cannot be repeated too often that those times and those *moeurs* have no relation to our own.

Again, when in later years the idolatrous Naaman asked Elisha if he were allowed to accompany his king to the temple of Rimmon and worship there with him, didn't Elisha—the man who had had children devoured by bears—merely say 'Go in peace'?

And there is more: the Lord orders Jeremiah to...go to the kings of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre and Sidon and to say on behalf of the Lord: 'I have given all your lands to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant.' Here an idolatrous king is declared to be God's servant and favourite.

[A long, wearisome paragraph about the monetary value assigned to things that the Lord, through Jeremiah, tells the Jewish king Zedekiah to give to the king of Babylon. Voltaire is sure that the reported amount is exaggerated, but thinks that even an eighth of it would be an 'astonishing' gift 'from God to an idolatrous king'. He concludes:] But treasures are nothing in the eyes of God; the title of 'servant' given to Nebuchadnezzar is the real and inestimable treasure.

God is equally favourable to the king we call 'Cyrus'. He calls him his 'Christ', his 'anointed', though he was not anointed in the ordinary meaning of the word, and although he followed the religion of Zoroaster; he calls him his 'shepherd', though he was a usurper in the eyes of men. There is no greater mark of favour in the whole of Scripture.

You read in *Malachi* that 'from east to west the name of God is great among the nations, and pure oblations are everywhere offered to him'. God takes care of the idolatrous Ninevites as he does of the Jews; he threatens and pardons them. Melchizedech, who was not a Jew, sacrificed to God. The idolatrous Balaam was a prophet. So Scripture tells us that God not only tolerated other peoples but took a paternal care of them. And we dare to be intolerant!

<sup>1</sup> [That really is what the Bible says: 1 Samuel 6:4.]

### 13. Extreme tolerance of the Jews

Hence under Moses, under the judges, under the kings you keep finding instances of tolerance. There is more: Moses says several times that ‘God punishes the fathers in the children, down to the fourth generation’; this threat was for a people to whom God had not revealed the immortality of the soul, or the penalties and rewards of another life. These truths were not made known either in the Decalogue or any law in *Leviticus* or *Deuteronomy*. They were dogmas of the Persians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Cretans; but they had no part in the religion of the Jews. Moses does not say ‘Honour your father and your mother if you want to go to Heaven’ but ‘Honour your father and your mother so as to live long on the earth’. He threatens the Jews only with bodily maladies and other material evils [and he goes into some of the imaginatively sordid details, for which see *Deuteronomy* 28.] Nowhere does he tell them that their immortal souls will be tortured or rewarded after death. God, who himself led his people, punished or rewarded them *immediately* for their good or bad actions. Everything was temporal. As the learned Bishop Warburton has pointed out, God had no need *then*—when he was their king, and dispensed justice on the spot—to reveal to them a doctrine that he was saving for the time when he would no longer be governing his people.

Those who ignorantly maintain that Moses taught the immortality of the soul deprive the New Testament of one of its greatest advantages over the Old Testament. It is certain

that the law of Moses spoke only of temporal chastisement, down to the fourth generation. However, despite the precise formulation of this law and God’s express declaration that he would punish down to the fourth generation, Ezekiel tells the Jews the very opposite. He tells them that the son will *not* bear the iniquity of his father; and he even goes so far as to make God say that he had given them ‘statutes that were not good’.<sup>1</sup>

The book of Ezekiel was nevertheless inserted into the canon of writers inspired by God. The book was always accepted, despite its outright contradiction of Moses. It is true that the synagogue did not allow anyone to read it until he was thirty years old, as St. Jerome tells us; but that was for fear of the young men’s being corrupted by the too candid depictions in chapters 16 and 23 of the licentious conduct of the two sisters Aholah and Aholibah.

When the immortality of the soul was at length admitted, . . .

·START OF A LONG END-NOTE·

Those who think they have found in the Pentateuch the doctrine of Heaven and Hell as we understand it have been strangely misled. . . . The Vulgate translated a Hebrew word meaning ‘pit’ by *infernum*, this was translated into French as *Enfer* [= ‘hell’], which led people to think that the ancient Hebrews had the Greeks’ notion of Hades, which other nations had also known under other names.

In *Numbers* 16 we are told that the earth opened its mouth under the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel’s view eventually prevailed in the Synagogue; but there were always Jews who while believing in eternal punishments *also* believed that God punishes children for the sins of their fathers. Today they are punished down to the *fiftieth* generation, and still have eternal penalties to fear. How can the descendants of Jews who were not complicit in the death of JESUS-CHRIST. . . . be temporally punished through their children, who are as innocent as their fathers? This temporal punishment—or rather this way of life different from other peoples, engaging in business without having a fatherland—cannot be regarded as a punishment when compared with the eternal pains that they will suffer because of their lack of belief, which they can avoid by a sincere conversion.

swallowed them along with their tents and their goods, hurling them alive into an underground sepulchre; and this passage certainly has nothing to say about the souls of these three Hebrews, or about the torments of Hell or eternal punishment.

It is strange that in the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*'s entry on *Enfer* the ancient Hebrews are said to have recognised the reality of Hell. If they did, that would be an intolerable contradiction in the Pentateuch. . . . The Dictionary cites *Deuteronomy* 32 [which Voltaire quotes in its entirety, commenting:] Is there the least connection between these words and the idea of infernal punishment as we understand it? . . .

The author of this entry also cites a passage from *Job* 24 [an obscure affair which Voltaire quotes, denying that it provides the faintest evidence that] Moses had taught the Jews the clear and simple doctrine of punishments and rewards after death. The book of *Job* has no relation to the Laws of Moses. Indeed, *Job* was probably not Jewish; that was the opinion of St. Jerome. . . . The word 'Satan', which occurs in *Job*, was not known by the Jews and occurs nowhere in the Pentateuch. The Jews learned this name in Chaldea, along with the names 'Gabriel' and 'Raphael', unknown before their captivity in Babylon. So it was very clumsy to cite *Job* on this topic.

The last chapter of *Isaiah* is also cited: 'And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.' Their being

- thrown onto the garbage dump,
- exposed to the view of passers-by until they are disgusted by them, and

•eaten by worms

does not mean that Moses taught the Jews the dogma of the immortality of the soul! And the words 'Their fire shall not be quenched' does not mean that the corpses that are exposed to the view of the populace suffer the eternal pains of Hell.

How can someone cite a passage from *Isaiah* to prove that the Jews of Moses' time had received the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? In terms of the ancient Hebrew dating system [in which a year's number is supposed to mark its distance from the start of the world], Moses lived around the year 2500, whereas *Isaiah* prophesied in the year 3380, nearly eight centuries later! To claim to prove that an author had a certain opinion by citing a passage, by an author eight centuries later, in which that opinion is not mentioned—this is an insult to common sense or a mere joke. . . .

[Voltaire says that when the Jews did come to believe in the immortality of the soul, they were still 'not enlightened regarding its spiritual nature'. He then cites three Church Fathers saying outright that the soul is an airy material thing with a size and shape, and remarks defensively that 'really their theology is fundamentally quite sound': they didn't grasp 'the incomprehensible nature of the soul', but they were sure of its immortality and had a Christian view of it.]

We know that the soul is spiritual, but we haven't the least idea of what *spirit* is. We have a very imperfect grasp of what matter is, and it's impossible for us to have a clear idea of anything that isn't matter. Knowing very little about things that affect our senses, we cannot, unaided, know *anything* about what is out of the reach of the senses. We transfer certain words from our ordinary language into the depths of metaphysics and theology, to give ourselves some faint idea of things that we cannot conceive of or express; we try to prop ourselves up with these words, so as to maintain if we can our feeble understanding in these unknown regions.

So we avail ourselves of the word *esprit* [regularly translated as 'spirit'] which corresponds to 'breath' and 'wind', to stand for something that is not material; and this word 'breath', 'wind', *esprit*—carrying us despite ourselves to the idea of a substance that is light and agile—pushes us on into doing what we can to conceive pure spirituality. But we never arrive at a clear notion; we don't even know what we mean by the word 'substance'. Strictly and literally, it means 'that which is under' [Latin *sub* = 'under', *stans* = 'standing']; and that itself warns us that it is incomprehensible, for what is it for something to be *under*? It is not for us in this life to share in God's secrets. Plunged here into deep darkness, we fight one another, striking out wildly in the middle of this night, without knowing exactly why we are fighting.

Any reasonable man who thinks carefully about all that will conclude that we ought to be indulgent towards the views of others, and to deserve indulgence in our turn.

These remarks bear on the question of whether men should be tolerant of one another; for in showing how wrong both sides have always been, they show that at all times men ought to have treated one another with indulgence.

·END OF LONG END-NOTE·

[picking up from 'at length admitted . . . ' on page 31] which probably began about the time of the Babylonian captivity, the Sadducees continued to believe that there were no punishments and rewards after death, and that the power of feeling and thinking perished with us, like the power of walking and digesting. They denied the existence of angels. They differed from the other Jews much more than Protestants differ from Catholics, yet they remained in the communion of their brethren. Some of their sect even became high priests.

The Pharisees believed in predestination and in the transmigration of souls. The Essenians thought that the souls

of the just went to the Fortunate Islands, and those of the wicked into a kind of Tartarus. They offered no sacrifices, and met in a special synagogue apart from the others. In short, anyone who looks closely into Judaism will be astonished to find the greatest tolerance in the midst of the most barbaric horrors. It is a contradiction, indeed; nearly all nations are governed by contradictions. It's a fortunate contradiction that brings gentler *mœurs* to a people with bloody laws.

## 14. Whether intolerance was taught by Jesus-Christ

Let us now see whether JESUS-CHRIST set up sanguinary laws, enjoined intolerance, ordered the building of dungeons of the inquisition, or instituted the ceremony of burning at the stake.

There are, if I am not mistaken, only a few passages in the gospels from which the persecuting spirit might infer that intolerance and constraint are lawful. One is the parable in which the kingdom of Heaven is compared to a king who invites people to the wedding-feast of his son (*Matthew 22*). The king says to them, by means of his servants: 'My oxen and my poultry are killed; everything is ready; come to the wedding.' Some go off to their country houses, ignoring the invitation; others go about their business; others assault and kill the king's servants. The king sends his army against those murderers, and destroys their town. He then sends out on the high road to bring in to the feast all who can be found. One of these sits at table without being dressed appropriately for a wedding, and is put in irons and cast into outer darkness.

It is clear that, as this allegory concerns only the kingdom

of Heaven, it certainly does not give a man the right to strangle or imprison a neighbour who comes to dine with him not wearing a festive garment! I know of no case in history of a prince having a courtier hanged on that ground; nor is it to be feared that if an emperor sends his pages to invite the princes of his empire to dine with him, the princes will kill the pages.

The invitation to the feast means selection for salvation; the murder of the king's envoys represents the persecution of those who preach wisdom and virtue.

The other parable (*Luke* 14) tells of an ordinary man who invites his friends to a grand supper. When he is ready to sit at table, he sends his servant to inform them. One pleads that he has bought an estate and is going to visit it; as one does not go to see an estate during the night, this excuse does not seem genuine. Another says that he has bought five pairs of oxen, and must try them; his excuse is as weak as the other—one does not try oxen at dinner-time. A third replies that he has just married; and that is certainly a good excuse. The would-be host angrily orders the blind and the lame to be brought to the feast; then, seeing that there are still empty places, says to his servant: 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.'

It is true that this is not explicitly said to depict the kingdom of Heaven. There has been too much misuse of the words 'Compel them to come in'; but it is obvious that a single manservant could not forcibly compel all the people he meets to come and dine with his master; and guests who were thus forced to be there would not make the dinner very agreeable! According to the most respected commentators, 'Compel them to come in' merely means 'Beg, entreat, urge them to come in'. Pray tell me, what do this request and this dinner have to do with persecution?

Taking all this literally, must a man be blind, lame and

compelled by force, to be in the bosom of the Church? Jesus says in the same parable: 'Do not have to dinner your friends or your wealthy relatives.' Has it ever been inferred from this that we must not dine with our relatives and friends when they have acquired a little money?

After the parable of the feast JESUS-CHRIST says: 'If any man comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his brothers, his sisters, and even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple etc. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first count the cost?' Is there anyone in the world so unnatural as to conclude that one must hate one's father and mother? Isn't it easy to see that the meaning is 'Do not hesitate between me and your dearest affections'?

The passage in *Matthew* 18 is quoted: 'Anyone who does not hear the Church, let him be as a heathen and as a tax-collector.' This does not say outright that heathens and collectors of the king's taxes should be persecuted; they are cursed, it is true, but they are not handed over to the secular arm. Instead of losing any of the prerogatives of citizenship, these farmers of taxes have received the greatest privileges. It is the only profession condemned in Scripture, and the one most in favour with governments. Why, then, should we not be as indulgent to our erring brethren, the heathens, as to the tax-gatherers? . . .

The always-mischievous persecuting spirit seeks further justification of itself in •the driving of the merchants from the temple and •the sending of a legion of demons from the body of a possessed man into the bodies of two thousand unclean animals. But who doesn't see that these are instances of the justice that God himself metes out for a contravention of the law? The Sanhedrin and the priests allowed merchants in the temple to provide materials for the sacrifices; but it was a lack of respect for the house of the Lord to change it into a merchant's shop. The God to whom the sacrifices were

made might, though hidden in a human form, destroy this profanation; he might also punish those who introduced into the country such enormous herds of animals forbidden by a law which he deigned to observe himself. These cases have no relation whatever to persecution on account of dogma. The spirit of intolerance must be very poor in argument if these foolish pretexts are the best it can do!

Nearly all the other words and actions of JESUS-CHRIST teach gentleness, patience, and indulgence. The father who welcomes back the prodigal son; the worker who comes at the last hour and is paid the same as the others; the charitable Samaritan; he tells his disciples that they need not fast; he himself pardons the woman who has sinned; he contents himself with recommending fidelity to the adulterous woman. He even deigns to participate in the innocent joy of wedding guests in Cana: already somewhat inebriated, they ask for more wine, and he is willing to work a miracle in their favour, turning water into wine for them.

He does not exclaim even against Judas, who is going to betray him; he commands Peter never to use the sword; he reproaches the sons of Zebedee who, after the example of Elias, wanted to bring fire from Heaven down on a town that refused him shelter.

In the end he died a victim to malice. If one may venture to compare the sacred with the profane—God with a man—his death, humanly speaking, has much in common with that of Socrates. The Greek philosopher was a victim to the hatred of the sophists, priests, and leaders of the people; the law-giver of the Christians was destroyed by the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the priests. Socrates could have escaped death, and was not willing to; JESUS-CHRIST offered himself voluntarily. The Greek philosopher not only pardoned his

calumniators and his wicked judges, but begged them to treat his children in the way they treated him if his children should ever be so fortunate as to deserve their hatred;<sup>1</sup> the legislator of the Christians, infinitely superior, begged his father to forgive his enemies.

If JESUS-CHRIST seemed to fear death, and suffered such extreme anguish that he sweated blood—the strongest and rarest symptom of fear—this was because he deigned to stoop to all the weakness of the human body that he had put on. His body trembled—his soul was unshakable. He taught us that true strength and grandeur consist in supporting the evils under which our nature succumbs. It is a splendid act of courage to run towards death while fearing it.

Socrates had treated the sophists as ignorant men, and convicted them of bad faith; Jesus, using his divine rights, treated the Scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, fools, blind and wicked men, serpents, and vipers.

Socrates was not accused of trying to found a new sect; nor was JESUS-CHRIST. It is said that the chief priests and all the Council tried to get false testimony against Jesus so as to put him to death.

Well, they may have wanted false testimony, but they did not accuse him of having publicly preached against the law. He was in fact obedient to the Law of Moses from his childhood until his death; he was circumcised on his eighth day like all the other children. He was later baptised in the Jordan, but that was a sacred ceremony among the Jews, as among all the peoples of the orient. . . .

Jesus obeyed the Law in everything; he observed all the Sabbath days; he abstained from forbidden foods; he celebrated all the festivals; and he had celebrated Passover even before he died. He was not accused of having any new

<sup>1</sup> [This bizarre plea must come from Voltaire's being misled by some *extremely* bad French translation of the end of Socrates' *Apology*.]

opinion, or of observing any foreign rite. Born an Israelite, he lived his life as an Israelite.

Two witnesses came forward and accused him of having said that he could destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days [(*Matthew* 26)]. The worldly Jews couldn't make any sense of such a statement, but it was not an accusation of wanting to found a new sect.

The high priest questioned him, and said: 'I command you by the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, son of God.' We are not told what the high priest understood by 'son of God'. This phrase was sometimes use to mean 'man who is just', as the phrase 'son of Belial' was used to mean 'wicked man'. The crude Jews had no idea of the sacred mystery of a Son of God, God himself come to earth.

·START OF END-NOTE·

It was in fact impossible or at least very difficult for the Jews to understand, without the help of a particular revelation, this ineffable mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, God himself. *Genesis* 6 calls sons of powerful men 'sons of God', in the way great cedars are called 'cedars of God' in the Psalms. Samuel says that a 'fear of God' came over the people, that is, a great fear; a great wind, 'a wind of God'; Saul's illness, 'evil spirit from God'. Yet it seems that when Jesus called himself the 'son of God', the Jews understood him quite literally; but if they regarded these words as blasphemy, that may be further evidence of their ignorance of the mystery of the incarnation and of God, Son of God, sent to earth for the salvation of men.

·END OF NOTE·

Jesus replied to him: 'You have said it; but I tell you that you will soon see the son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, coming in the clouds of Heaven.'

The angry Sanhedrin regarded this reply as blasphemous. They no longer had the right to punish; they brought Jesus before the Roman Governor of the province, and lyingly accused him of disturbing the public peace, of saying that there was no no need to pay tribute to Caesar, and of calling himself King of the Jews. . . .

When the Governor, Pilate, learned that he was a Galilean, he sent him straight to Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee. Herod thought it was impossible that Jesus should have aimed to be a political leader or claimed to have royal status; he treated him with contempt and sent him back to Pilate, who feebly condemned him so as to quieten the tumult that had arisen against himself. . . . The Governor Festus later showed in his dealings with the apostle Paul more generosity than Pilate did.

I now ask: is it tolerance or intolerance that is of divine right? If you wish to be like JESUS-CHRIST, be martyrs, not executioners.

## 15. Declarations against intolerance

[This chapter mainly consists of a couple of dozen short statements against intolerance, mostly by French writers, followed by this:] Passages like these could fill an enormous book. These days our histories, our treatises, our sermons, our works on morality, our catechisms, are all suffused with—and all *teach*—this sacred duty of forbearance. What mysterious force, what failure of thinking, would lead us to deny in practice a theory that we daily proclaim? When our actions belie our morality, that is because we believe there is some advantage for us in acting contrary to our teaching; but there's certainly no advantage in persecuting those who don't share our opinions, making them hate us. So there

is, I repeat, something *absurd* about intolerance. You may say that those who have something to gain from upsetting ·people's· consciences are not absurd. The following little chapter is aimed in their direction.

## 16. A dying man talks with a healthy man

A citizen was dying in a provincial town; a man in good health came to attack his last moments, and said to him:

‘Wretch! •think as I do, right now; •sign this statement; •confess that five propositions are in a book that neither you nor I have ever read; •accept right now Lamfran’s opinion against Bérenger’s; •embrace the second Nicean Council against the Council of Frankfurt; •explain to me on the spot how the words “My father is greater than I am” mean precisely “I am as great as he is”.

‘Tell me how the Father transmits everything to the Son except his fatherhood, or I’ll have your body thrown out with the garbage; your children won’t inherit anything, your wife will be deprived of her dowry, and your family will beg for bread—which people like me won’t give them.’

The dying man: ‘I can hardly take in what you are saying to me; your threats reach my ears in a confused form, they trouble my soul, they make my death frightful. In God’s name, have pity on me!’

The barbarian: ‘Pity! I can’t have pity on you unless you agree with me on everything.’

The dying man: ‘Alas! You know that in these last minutes all my senses are coming apart, all the doors to my understanding are shut, my ideas are disappearing, my thought is dying. Am I in a condition for argument?’

The barbarian: ‘Well, if you can’t believe what I want you to believe, *say* that you believe it; I’ll settle for that.’

The dying man: ‘How can I perjure myself to please you? In a moment I am due to appear before God, who punishes perjury.’

The barbarian: ‘It doesn’t matter. You will have the pleasure of being buried in a cemetery; and your wife and children will have enough to live on. Die a hypocrite: hypocrisy is a fine thing; it is, as someone said, a homage that vice pays to virtue. A little hypocrisy, my friend—what does that cost you?’

The dying man: ‘Alas! You despise God, or you don’t recognise him; because you are demanding at the point of death a lie—you who will soon enough receive your own judgment from him, and will have to answer for that lie.’

The barbarian: ‘What? You insolent fellow! I don’t recognise God?’

The dying man: ‘Excuse me, my brother, but I’m afraid that you don’t know him. He whom I worship is at this moment restoring my forces to tell you with a dying voice that if you believe in God you should show charity towards me. He gave me my wife and my children; don’t you make them die of misery. As for my body: do what you like with it, I surrender it to you; but I urge you to believe in God!’

The barbarian: ‘Do, without quibbling, what I have told you to do; I want it; I order it.’

The dying man: ‘What interest have you in tormenting me so?’

The barbarian: ‘What! What interest? If I get your signature, that will be worth a good canonry.’

The dying man: ‘Ah, my brother! here is my last moment; I am dying; I shall beg God to touch you and convert you.’

The barbarian: ‘Devil take the wretched man who hasn’t signed! I shall sign for him, counterfeiting his writing.’

The following letter helps to make the same point.



## 17. Letter from a subordinate to the Jesuit Le Tellier

6 May 1714

Reverent Father: I am obeying the orders your reverence gave me to present the best means for delivering Jesus and his company [meaning: the 'Society of Jesus', the Jesuits] from their enemies. There are I believe no more than 500,000 Huguenots in the kingdom—some say 1,000,000, others say 1,500,000—but whatever the number is, here is my advice, submitted dutifully and very humbly.

(1) It is easy to round up all the preachers in one day, and to hang them all at once in one place, not only to edify the public but also for the splendour of the spectacle.

(2) I would have all the fathers and mothers assassinated in their beds, because if they were killed in the streets this could cause some tumult; some might even get away, which should be avoided at all costs. This project is absolutely required by our principles; for if *a heretic should be killed*, as so many great theologians have proved, then obviously *all heretics should be killed*.

(3) I would have all the ·Huguenot· girls immediately married to good Catholics, because the State must not be depopulated too much after the recent war; but with regard to boys aged 14 or 15, already indoctrinated with bad principles that we have no chance of destroying ·in them·, my opinion is that they should all be castrated, so that this wretched species is never reproduced. As for the smaller boys: they will be brought up in our colleges, and will be whipped into knowing by heart the works of Sanchez and Molina.

(4) I think (subject to correction) that all the Lutherans in Alsace should be treated in the same way, given that in 1704 I saw two old women of that territory *laughing* on the

day of the battle of Hochsted [which the French lost; a victory of Protestants over Roman Catholics, which the English call 'the battle of Blenheim'].

(5) The matter of the Jansenists [see Glossary] may seem a bit more awkward; there are I think at least 6,000,000 of them; but a spirit like yours shouldn't be daunted by that. I am counting as 'Jansenist' all the *parlements* [see Glossary] that so unworthily uphold the liberties of the Gallican [see Glossary] church. It is for Your Reverence to bring your customary prudence to bear on the question of how to get all these troublesome spirits to submit to you. The gunpowder plot failed because one of the plotters indiscreetly tried to save his friend's life; but you don't have to fear anything like that because you have no friend; it will be easy for you blow up all the *parlements* in the kingdom, using gunpowder. . . . I calculate that 36 barrels of powder will be needed for each *parlement*; given twelve of them, that comes to only 432 barrels; at 100 ecus each, that comes to 129,600 livres—a trifle for the Society's treasury.

Once the *parlements* have been blown up, you will have their work taken over by your people, who are perfectly instructed in the laws of the kingdom.

(6) It will be easy to poison Cardinal de Noailles, who is a simple man, and not suspicious of anyone.

Your Reverence will employ the same methods of conversion with the various recalcitrant bishops: their bishoprics will be given to Jesuits, on orders from the Pope. Then, with all the bishops on the right side, and all the priests skilfully chosen by the bishops—that's what I am advising, subject to our Reverence's good pleasure.

(7) The Jansenists are said to celebrate Communion, at least at Easter; so it would not be a bad idea to sprinkle their communion wafers with the drug that was used to give the Emperor Henry VII what he deserved. It may be

objected that in doing this one would risk giving rat-poison also to Molinists [see Glossary]. It is a strong objection; but every project has its drawbacks. . . . If we were held up by these little difficulties, we would never get anything done; and anyway if we are trying to do as much good as possible, we shouldn't be upset if this great good brings with it some negligible bad consequences.

We have nothing to reproach ourselves with. It has been demonstrated that all the so-called 'Reformed' people, all the Jansenists, are inheritors of hell; we are merely speeding up their taking possession of it. And it is equally clear that the Molinists are entitled to go to Heaven; so when we inadvertently and with no bad intention make them perish, we are accelerating their joy. In each case we are the agents of Providence.

As for those who might be a little upset at the number, Your Reverence can point out to them that in the roughly fourteen centuries between the Church's first flowering and 1707, theology has brought about the massacre of more than fifty million men; and that I am proposing to strangle, eviscerate or poison only about six and a half million.

[He anticipates the objection that his proposal to kill over six million in one year is vastly more drastic than fifty million over four centuries. He brushes this objection aside as 'puerile, even impious' because] by my procedure I am saving the lives of all Catholics to the end of the world. [The letter is then ceremonially signed off. We are not given the writer's name. Voltaire takes over:]

This project couldn't be carried out, because a lot of time was needed to set it up properly, and Father Le Tellier was exiled in the following year. But in the spirit of examining both sides of the case, we should explore what the cases are where it would be legitimate to carry out in part the views of Father Le Tellier's correspondent. It would obviously be

harsh to carry out his project in all its details; but we need to see what the situations are where people who don't share our opinion ought to be broken on the wheel, hanged, or sent to the galleys. That is the topic of the next chapter.

## **18. The only cases where intolerance is humanly lawful**

A government has the right to punish men's errors if they are crimes; they are crimes only when they disturb society; they do that when they engender fanaticism; so men must avoid fanaticism if they are to deserve tolerance.

If a few young Jesuits—knowing that the Church has a horror of those who are damned, that the Jansenists are condemned in a papal bull, and thus that the Jansenists are damned—proceed to burn a house of the Oratorian priests because the Oratorian Quesnel was a Jansenist, it is clear that these Jesuits ought to be punished.

Similarly, if the Jesuits have been parading improper maxims, if their institute is contrary to the laws of the kingdom, there's no way out of it: their society must be dissolved, and the Jesuits abolished and turned into citizens. The evil done to them is imaginary—the good is real. What hardship is there in wearing a short coat instead of a long robe, and being free instead of being a slave? In peace-time whole regiments are reformed in this way, without complaint; why do the Jesuits scream so loudly when *they* are reformed in the interests of peace?

If the Franciscan monks, carried away by a holy zeal for the Virgin Mary, try to destroy a church of Dominicans who believe that Mary was born in original sin, they will have to be treated in much the same way as the Jesuits.

We may say the same of the Lutherans and Calvinists. It's

all very well for them to say: 'We are following the promptings of our conscience; it is better to obey God than men; we are the true flock, and must exterminate the wolves.' It is evident that when they say this, *they* are wolves.

One of the most astonishing examples of fanaticism was that of a small Danish sect, whose principle was the best in the world: it was to secure eternal salvation for their brethren; but its consequences were peculiar. They 'knew' that all infants who die unbaptised are damned, and that those who are so fortunate as to die immediately after baptism enjoy eternal glory. So they proceeded to kill all the newly-baptised boys and girls they could find. No doubt this was procuring for them the greatest possible benefit: preserving them from sin, from the miseries of this life, and from Hell, and sending them straight to Heaven. But these charitable folk did not reflect that it is not lawful to do a little evil that a great good may follow; that they had no right over the lives of these little children; that the majority of parents are worldly enough to prefer keeping their sons and daughters with them to seeing them slaughtered so as to go to Paradise; and that the legal system has to punish homicide, even when it is done with a good intention.

The Jews would seem to have a better right than anyone to rob and kill us. Though there are a hundred instances of tolerance in the Old Testament, there are also some instances of severity and some laws supporting them. God sometimes commanded them to kill idolaters, sparing only the marriageable girls. They regard us as idolaters, and although we tolerate them today, if they got the upper hand they might kill everyone but our daughters.

They would, above all, be absolutely compelled to slay all the Turks [see Glossary], because the Turks occupy the lands of nine tribes [he names them], all of which were heading for damnation. Their territory, which was more than 75

miles long, was given to the Jews in several consecutive covenants. They ought to regain their possessions, which the Mohammedans have usurped for the last thousand years.

If the Jews reasoned like that today, it is clear that the only reply we should make would be to impale them.

These are almost the only cases in which intolerance appears reasonable.

## 19. Account of an angry dispute in China

In the early years of the reign of the great Emperor Kam-hi, a Mandarin of the city of Canton heard in his house a great noise coming from the next house. He inquired if anybody was being killed, and was told that the almoner of the Danish missionary society, a chaplain from Batavia, and a Jesuit were disputing. He had them brought to his house and served with tea and sweetmeats, and asked why they were quarrelling.

The Jesuit replied that it was very painful for him, someone who was always right, to have to do with men who were always wrong; that he had at first argued with the greatest restraint, but had at length lost patience.

The Mandarin very gently reminded them of how important it was that politeness be maintained in a dispute, told them that in China nobody became angry, and asked what the dispute was about.

The Jesuit answered: 'My lord, I leave it to you to decide. These two gentlemen refuse to submit to the decrees of the Council of Trent.'

'I am astonished', said the Mandarin. Then, turning to the refractory pair, he said: 'Gentlemen, you ought to respect the opinions of a large gathering. I do not know what the Council of Trent is, but a number of men are always better

informed than a single one. No-one ought to imagine that he knows better than anyone else, and that he has a monopoly of reason. So our great Confucius teaches; and, believe me, you will do well to submit to the Council of Trent.'

The Dane then spoke. 'His lordship speaks with the greatest wisdom', he said. 'We respect the great assemblies, as is proper, so we are in entire agreement with several that were held before the Council of Trent.'

'Oh, if that is the case,' said the Mandarin, 'I beg your pardon. You may be right. So you and this Dutchman are of the same opinion, against this poor Jesuit?'

'Not a bit', said the Dutchman. 'This Dutch fellow's opinions are almost as extravagant as those of the Jesuit over there, who is putting on such a show of sweet reasonableness. I can't bear either of them.'

'I can't make you out', said the Mandarin. 'Are you not all three Christians? Haven't all three of you come to teach Christianity in our empire? Ought you not, therefore, to hold the same doctrines?'

'It is this way, my lord', said the Jesuit; 'these two are mortal enemies of one another, and are both against me. Hence it is clear that they are both wrong, and I am right.' 'That is not quite clear', said the Mandarin. All three of you may be wrong. I would be interested to hear you all, one after the other.'

The Jesuit then made a rather long speech, during which the Dane and the Dutchman shrugged their shoulders; the Mandarin did not understand a word of it. Then the Dane spoke; his two opponents regarded him with pity, and the Mandarin still understood nothing. The Dutchman had the same effect. In the end they all spoke together, grossly insulting one another. The good Mandarin secured silence with great difficulty, and said to them: 'If you want us to tolerate your teaching here, begin by being yourselves neither

intolerant nor intolerable.'

When they went out the Jesuit met a Dominican friar, and told him that he had won, adding that truth always triumphed. The Dominican said: 'If I had been there, you would not have won; I would have convicted you of lying and idolatry.' The quarrel grew hot; the Dominican and the Jesuit came to blows. The Mandarin, on hearing of this scandalous conduct, sent them both to prison. A deputy mandarin said to the judge: 'How long does Your Excellency wish them to be kept in prison?' 'Until they agree', said the judge. 'Ah!' said the deputy, 'then they will be in prison for the rest of their lives.' 'Well,' said the judge, 'until they forgive each other.' 'They will never forgive each other', said the other; 'I know them.' 'Well, then', said the Mandarin, 'until they *pretend* to forgive each other'.

## 20. Whether it is useful to maintain people in superstition

Such is the weakness of the human race, and such its perversity, that it is certainly better for it to be subject to all conceivable superstitions (other than murderous ones) than to live without religion. Man has always needed a curb; and, although it was ridiculous to sacrifice to fauns, elves or water-nymphs, it was much more reasonable and useful to worship these fantastic images of the deity than to sink into atheism. An atheist who was argumentative, violent and powerful would be as great a scourge as a blood-soaked superstitious man.

When men do not have not sound notions of the Divinity, false ideas will take their place; just as in times of poverty those who have no genuine money make do with counterfeit. The pagan feared to commit a crime lest he should be

punished by false gods; the Hindu fears being punished by his Pagoda. Wherever there is a settled society, religion is necessary. The laws take care of open crimes; religion watches secret crimes.

But once men have come to embrace a pure and holy religion, superstition becomes not merely useless but very dangerous. We must not feed on acorns those to whom God offers bread.

Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy—the very foolish daughter of a very wise mother. These two daughters have for too long dominated the earth.

Back in our ages of barbarism, when there were scarcely two feudal lords with a New Testament in their homes, it may have been pardonable to present fables to the uneducated—i.e. to these feudal lords themselves, to their weak-minded wives, and to their brutish vassals. They were led to believe that St. Christopher had carried the infant Jesus across a river; they were fed stories of sorcery and diabolical possession; they had no trouble believing that St. Genou cured gout and that St. Clare cured sore eyes. The children believed in the werewolf, and their fathers in the girdle of St. Francis. The number of relics was incalculable.

The sediment of these superstitions remained among the people even when religion had been purified. We know that when M. de Noailles, Bishop of Chalons, had the supposed relic of the sacred navel of JESUS-CHRIST removed and thrown in the fire, the entire city of Chalons took legal action against him. But he was as brave as he was pious, and soon managed to convince the people of that territory that they could worship JESUS-CHRIST in spirit and truth without having his navel in a church.

The so-called 'Jansenists' contributed in no small way to gradually rooting out from the nation's mind most of the false ideas that dishonoured the Christian religion. People

stopped believing that it sufficed to pray for thirty days to the Virgin Mary to get everything they wanted, and to sin with impunity.

Eventually the bourgeoisie began to suspect that it was not St. Genevieve who gave or withheld rain, but that it was God himself who disposed of the elements. The monks were astonished to see that their saints no longer worked miracles. If the authors of the life of St. Francis Xavier returned to the world, they would not dare to say that this saint raised nine people from the dead, that he was at sea and on land at the same time, and that when his crucifix fell into the sea a crab restored it to him.

It is the same with excommunication. Historians tell us that when King Robert had been excommunicated by Pope Gregory V for marrying his godmother, the Princess Bertha, his servants threw out of the window the food served up to the king, and Queen Bertha gave birth to a goose in punishment for this incestuous marriage. I doubt that in our time the waiters of an excommunicated King of France would throw his dinner out of the window, or that the queen for a similar offence would give birth to a gosling!

If there are a few bigoted fanatics in dark corners of the suburbs, it is a disease which, like lice, attacks only the lowest of the populace. Every day in France reason penetrates into the shops of merchants as well into as the mansions of lords. The fruits of this reason should be cultivated, especially since it is now impossible to prevent them from developing. France, enlightened by the likes of Pascal, Nicole, Arnaud, Bossuet, Descartes, Gassendi, Bayle, Fontenelle, etc., cannot now be ruled as it was in the time of the likes of the religious polemicists Garrasse and Menot.

If the masters of error—I mean the grand masters—who were so long paid and honoured for brutalising the human species, ordered us today to believe that

- the seed must die in order to germinate,
- the earth stands motionless on its foundations,
- it does not travel around the sun,
- the tides are not a natural effect of gravitation,
- the rainbow is not due to the refraction and reflection of light

and so on, and based their decrees on ill-understood passages of Scripture, how would they be regarded by educated men? Would the label 'beasts' be too strong? And if these wise masters used force and persecution to secure the dominance of their insolent ignorance, would it be improper to speak of them as 'wild beasts'?

The more the superstitions of the monks are despised, the more the bishops are respected and the priests taken seriously; they do nothing but good, and the monkish superstitions from Rome would do great harm. But of all these superstitions isn't the most dangerous that of hating one's neighbour on account of his opinions? Isn't it obvious that it would be more reasonable to worship the sacred navel, the sacred prepuce, and the milk and dress of the Virgin Mary, than to detest and persecute one's brother ?

## 21. Virtue is better than knowledge

Fewer dogmas, fewer disputes; and fewer disputes, fewer miseries; if that is not true, I am wrong.

Religion is instituted to make us happy in this world and the next. What must we do to be happy in the next world? Be just. What must we do to be happy in this world, as far as the misery of our nature allows? Be indulgent.

It would be the height of folly to try to get all men to think

the same way in metaphysics. It would be easier to subdue the whole world by arms than to subdue all the minds in a single city.

Euclid easily persuaded all men of the truths of geometry. Why was this easy to do? Because every single one of them is an obvious corollary of the axiom *Two and two make four*. It is not quite like that with the mixture of metaphysics and theology.

When Bishop Alexander and the priest Arius began to argue over *how* the Logos emanated from the Father, the Emperor Constantine at first wrote to them as follows (as we find in Eusebius and Socrates of Constantinople): 'You are great fools to argue about things you cannot understand.'

If the two contending parties had been wise enough to agree that the emperor was right, the Christian world would have been spared three centuries of bloodshed.

What indeed can be more stupid and more horrible than to say this to men?

'My friends, it is not enough to be loyal subjects, obedient children, tender fathers, honest neighbours, and to practise every virtue, cultivate friendship, avoid ingratitude, and worship JESUS-CHRIST in peace; you must also know how something can be *engendered* from all eternity without being *made* from all eternity; and if you can't distinguish the *Homoousion* in the hypostasis,<sup>1</sup> we pronounce that you will be burned for ever, and in the meantime we shall cut your throats.'

Had such an attitude been presented to Archimedes, or Poseidonius, or Varro, or Cato, or Cicero, how would they have responded?

Constantine did not persevere in his resolution to impose

<sup>1</sup> [Meaning, roughly, 'if you can't see that the three persons of the Trinity are one substance'; Voltaire expresses it in metaphysical technical terms as a way of mocking the whole debate.]

silence on the contending parties. He could have invited the leaders of the hair-splitting to his palace; he could have asked them what authority they had to disturb the world:

‘Have you the title-deeds of the divine Family? What does it matter to you whether the *Logos* was made or engendered, provided men are loyal to him, preach a sound morality, and practise it as far as they can? I have done many wrong things in my time, and so have you. You are ambitious, so am I. The empire has cost me much knavery and cruelty; I have murdered nearly all my relatives. I repent, and want to make up for my crimes by bringing peace to the Roman Empire. Do not prevent me from doing the only good that can efface my earlier barbarism. Help me to end my days in peace.’

Perhaps he would have had no influence on the disputants; perhaps he was flattered to be presiding at a Council in a long red robe, his head covered with jewels.

Yet this it was that opened the gate to all the plagues that came from Asia upon the West. From every disputed verse of Scripture there issued a fury, armed with a sophism and a dagger, making all men mad and cruel. The marauding Huns and Goths and Vandals did infinitely less harm; and the greatest harm they did was to take part themselves in these fatal disputes.

## 22. Universal tolerance

One does not need great art and skilful eloquence to prove that Christians ought to tolerate each other—indeed, to regard all men as brothers. What? my brother the Turk? my brother the Chinese? the Jew? Emphatically *yes*; are we not all children of the same Father, creatures of the same God?

But these people despise us and regard us as idolaters! Well, I’ll tell them that they are quite wrong. It seems to me that I might at least *shake* the stubborn pride of a Mohammedan or a Buddhist priest by saying to them something like this:

‘This little globe, which is but a point, travels in space like many other globes; we are lost in this immensity. Man, about five feet high, is certainly a small thing in the created universe. One of these imperceptible beings says to some of his neighbours, in Arabia or South Africa: “Listen to me, for the God of all these worlds has enlightened me. There are nine hundred million little ants like us on the earth, but my ant-hill is the only one dear to God. He is horrified by all the others, to eternity; mine alone will be happy, and all the others will be eternally miserable.”’

They would then interrupt me, and ask who was the fool that talked this nonsense. I should be obliged to reply ‘It was you’. I would then try to calm them down, which would be difficult.

I would next speak to the Christians, and would venture to say to (for instance) a Dominican officer of the Inquisition: ‘Brother, you know that each province in Italy has its own dialect, and that people do not speak in Venice and Bergamo as they do in Florence. The *Accademia della Crusca* has fixed the language; its dictionary is a rule that ought not to be departed from; and the grammar of Buonmattei is an infallible guide that ought to be followed. But do you think that the Consul of the Academy—or in his absence Buonmattei—could in conscience order that all the Venetians and Bergamese who persisted in speaking their own dialect should have their tongues cut off?’

The inquisitor replies: ‘The two cases are very different. In our case it is a question of the salvation of your soul. It is

for your own good that the Directors of the Inquisition order

- that you be seized on the information of any one person, however infamous or criminal;
- that you have no advocate to defend you;
- that not even the name of your accuser shall be made known to you;
- that the Inquisitor shall promise you pardon and then condemn you; and
- that you shall then be subjected to five kinds of torture, and afterwards either flogged or sent to the galleys or ceremonially burned.

On this Father Ivonet [and he names eight other theologians] are explicit, and this pious practice admits of no exception.'

I would take the liberty of replying: 'Brother, you may be right. I am convinced that you wish to do me good. But could I not be saved without all that?'

It is true that these absurd horrors do not stain the face of the earth every day; but they have happened often enough for a record of them to fill a book much larger than the gospels that condemn them. Not only is it *cruel* to persecute in this brief life those who do not think as we do, but I suspect that it may be unduly *bold* to pronounce their eternal damnation. It seems to me inappropriate for transient atoms, such as we are, thus to get in ahead of the Creator's decrees. I am far from opposing the principle *Outside the Church there is no salvation*. I respect it, and all that it teaches; but do we *really* know all God's ways and the full range of his mercies? May we not *hope* in him as much as *fear* him? It is not enough to be loyal to the Church? Must each individual usurp the rights of the Deity, and decide before he does the eternal lot of all men?

When we wear mourning for a king of Sweden, Denmark, England, or Prussia, do we tell ourselves that we are wearing mourning for a damned person who burns eternally in hell? There are in Europe forty million people who are not of the Church of Rome. Shall we say to each of them 'Sir, seeing that you are certainly damned, I will not eat or deal or speak with you?'

What ambassador of France, presented in audience to the Sultan, will say in the depths of his heart: 'His Highness will certainly burn for all eternity because he has been circumcised'? If he really believed that the Sultan is God's mortal enemy and the object of his vengeance, could he speak to him? Ought he to be sent to him? What man could we do business with, what duty of civil life could we ever fulfil, if we really believed we were dealing with the damned?

Followers of a merciful God, if you had been cruel of heart; if in worshipping him whose whole law consisted in the words *Love God and your neighbour* you had burdened this pure and holy law with sophistry and unintelligible disputes; if you had lit the fires of discord for the sake of a new word or a single letter of the alphabet;<sup>1</sup> if you had attached eternal torment to the omission of a few words or ceremonies that other peoples could not know; I would say to you, weeping for mankind:

Come with me to the day on which all men will be judged, when God will deal with each according to his works. I see all the dead of former ages and of our own appearing side by side in his presence. Are you really sure that our Creator and Father will say to the wise and virtuous Confucius, to the lawgiver Solon, to Pythagoras, to Zaleucus, to Socrates, to Plato, to the

<sup>1</sup> [This refers to the infamous dispute over whether the three persons of the Trinity were *the same* substance or *similar* substances, *homousios* or *homoiousios*.]



divine Antonines, to the good Trajan, to Titus—the delights of the human race—and to Epictetus and to so many other men, *model* men:

‘Go, monsters! Go and submit to punishments that are infinite in intensity and duration, your torment being as eternal as I am’?

And that he will say to Jean Chatel, Ravailiac, Damiens, Cartouche, etc.<sup>1</sup>:

‘My beloved followers, who died with the prescribed formulae, stay at my right hand and share my empire and my happiness for ever’?

You shrink with horror from these words; and now that I have uttered them I have no more to say to you.

### 23. A prayer to God

So I don’t speak any longer to men, but to you, God of all beings, of all worlds, and of all ages; if it is permitted for weak creatures, lost in immensity and imperceptible to the rest of the universe, to venture to ask for something from you—who have given everything and whose decrees are immutable and eternal. Deign to look with an eye of pity on the errors that our nature leads us into! Let not these errors be our downfall! You have not given us hearts to hate one another and hands to kill one another; grant then that we may help each other to support the burden of this painful and transitory life! May the trifling differences among

- the garments that cover our frail bodies,
- the mode of expressing our insignificant thoughts,
- our ridiculous customs,
- our imperfect laws,

•our absurd opinions, and

•our various conditions [see Glossary], that appear so disproportionate in our eyes and so equal in yours

—may all these little shades of difference among the atoms called ‘men’ not be use by us as triggers for hatred and persecution! May those who worship you by the light of tapers at noonday look kindly on those who content themselves with the light of your sun! May those who wear a robe of white linen to teach their hearers that you are to be loved not detest those who say the same thing wearing long cloaks of black wool! May it be accounted the same to worship you in a dialect formed from an ancient language or in a newer dialect! May those who, clothed in crimson or violet, **a** rule over a little parcel of a heap of this world’s mud, and **b** possess some round fragments of a certain metal, enjoy without pride what they call **a** ‘grandeur’ and **b** ‘riches’, and may the rest look on them without envy; for you know that nothing in these vanities should inspire envy or pride.

May all men remember that they are brothers! May they abhor the tyranny over souls, as they execrate the thievery that takes by force the fruits of peaceful industry! And if the scourge of war is inevitable, let us not mutually hate and destroy each other in the midst of peace; but rather make use of the moment of our existence to join in praising, in a thousand different languages, from Siam to California, the goodness of you who gave us this moment!

### 24. Postscript

While I was engaged in writing this treatise, with the sole purpose of making mankind more benevolent and charitable, someone else was writing with a completely opposite purpose;

<sup>1</sup> [Assassins in the cause of the Church]

for each man has his own way of thinking. This man has published a little Code of persecution under the title of *Religion's Harmony with Humanity* (a typographical error; read it as 'Inhumanity').

The author of this holy diatribe relies on St. Augustine, who first preached charity and then later—having reached a position of power, and being generally apt to change his mind—preached persecution. He also quotes Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux, who persecuted the famous Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, whom he accused of having said in print that God was worthy to be loved for his own sake.

I grant that Bossuet was eloquent; and I grant also that the Bishop of Hippo [Augustine], though sometimes he doesn't argue well, was more elegant than the other African writers; and I will take the liberty of addressing them both in the spirit of Armande, in Molière's *Learned Ladies*: 'When you claim to take someone as a model, you should focus on the most pleasing parts of his character.'

I will say to the Bishop of Hippo: My lord, you have had two opinions; allow me to abide by the first of them; I really think it is the better one.

I will say to the Bishop of Meaux: My lord, you are a great man, and I find you to be at least as learned as St. Augustine and much more eloquent; but why did you so torment your brother prelate, who was as eloquent as you in his own way, and more likable?

The author of the holy diatribe on inhumanity is not a Bossuet or an Augustine; he seems to be just right as an inquisitor; I would like to see him at the head of that fine tribunal in Goa. He is also a statesman, and parades several great political principles. 'If you have to deal with many heretics', he says, '*manage* them, persuade them; but if there are only a few, then make use of the gallows and the galleys; you'll find that this works well.'

Thank God, I am a good Catholic; I don't have to fear what the Huguenots call martyrdom; but if this man ever becomes Prime Minister, as he seems in his diatribe to think he may, I hereby notify him that I will leave for England the day he is appointed.

In the meantime, I can only thank Providence for allowing that those of his sort are always wretched reasoners. He goes as far as listing Bayle among the advocates of intolerance; because Bayle agrees that incendiaries and rogues should be punished, our man—by a skillful and intelligent inference—concludes that honest and peaceable persons should be persecuted with fire and sword.

Almost the whole of his book is an imitation of the *Apology for St. Bartholomew's day*. It is the work of that apologist himself or of his echo. Either way, we must hope that neither the master nor the disciple will ever have a part in governing the state.

But if they do come have state authority, I shall present to them from a distance the following pleading based on a sentence on page 93 of the holy diatribe: 'Is the welfare of the whole nation to be sacrificed to the welfare of a twentieth part of it?':

Suppose that in fact there are twenty Roman Catholics in France to one Huguenot; I don't want the Huguenot to eat these twenty Catholics; but then why should these twenty Catholics eat this Huguenot? And why should this Huguenot be prevented from marrying? Aren't there bishops, abbots and monks who have estates in Dauphiné, in Gévaudan, in the regions of Agde and Carcassonn? And these bishops, these abbots, and monks—don't they have farmer tenants who have the misfortune to not believe in transubstantiation? Is it not the interest of bishops, abbots, monks and the general public that these farmers should have

large families? Will only those who take communion together be allowed to make children? Surely there is neither justice nor honesty in this!

This author says: 'The revocation of the Edict of Nantes [see Glossary] has not produced as many inconveniences as have been attributed to it.' Well, if anyone *has* attributed to it more bad effects than it actually produced, that was an exaggeration; nearly all historians do exaggerate; but so do controversialists trying to wipe out the evils they are accused of. On this matter let us not trust either the ·Catholic· professors of Paris or the ·Calvinist· preachers of Amsterdam.

Let us take as our judge the Count d'Avaux, ambassador from France to Holland in 1685–8. He reports in his memoirs that just one man offered to reveal upwards of 20,000,000 livres that the persecuted Huguenots had managed to send out of France. Louis XIV replies to M. d'Avaux: 'The accounts I daily receive of the prodigious numbers of those who are converted convince me that even the most obstinate will follow the example of the others ·by converting to Catholicism and returning to France·.'

This letter of the king's plainly shows that he was very confident of the extent of his power. He was told every morning: 'Sire, you are the greatest monarch upon earth; you have only to declare your opinion and the whole world will be proud to accept it.' Péllisson, who

- had accumulated a prodigious fortune as chief clerk of the Treasury,
- spent three years in the Bastille as an accomplice of Fouquet,
- went from being a Calvinist to being a Roman Catholic deacon and beneficed priest,
- published prayers for the mass and verses to Iris, and
- had acquired the post of comptroller and converter in chief of the heretics

used to produce each quarter a long list of recantations purchased at the rate of seven or eight crowns each, and convinced his king that he could, when he wanted to, convert all the Moslems at the same price. People reported to the king in order to deceive him: could he resist the seduction?

This same Count d'Avaux also tells the king that a man named Vincent kept upwards of 500 workmen employed near Angoulême, and that if he left the kingdom it would create much hardship. He also mentions two regiments already raised by French refugee officers to serve the Prince of Orange; he speaks of the sailors in three ·French· ships who had deserted in order to serve in that Prince's ships. As well as those two regiments, the Prince was forming a company of refugee cadets, commanded by two captains. This ambassador, in an 1686 letter, says that he can no longer conceal the uneasiness it gives him to see French manufactures being established in Holland, from which they will never return.

Combine all these testimonies with those of all the royal deputies in 1698, and judge whether the revocation of the Edict of Nantes has not done more harm than good, despite the opinion of the worthy author of *Religion's Harmony with Inhumanity*. . . .

I confess that I was afraid I was going too far in making public the letter written to Father Le Tellier by a parish priest who proposed using barrels of gunpowder [see page 38]. I said to myself 'I won't be believed; this letter will be regarded as a forgery'; but fortunately my scruples were removed when I read in *Religion's Harmony with Inhumanity* these gentle words: 'The entire extirpation of the Protestants in France would not weaken that kingdom more than a blood-letting would weaken a patient with a sound constitution.' This pious priest, who has just told us that the Protestants make about a twentieth part of the nation, now favours shedding

the blood of that twentieth part and likens that operation to a minor blood-letting! . . .

Now, if this worthy gentleman proposes killing a *twentieth* part of the nation, might not Father Letellier's friend have proposed blowing up, stabbing, poisoning a *third*? So it is very likely that the letter to Father Le Tellier was genuine.

The holy author concludes that intolerance is an excellent thing 'because we do not find it explicitly condemned by JESUS-CHRIST'. But neither did JESUS-CHRIST condemn those who would set the whole of Paris ablaze; is that a reason to canonise all arsonists?

And so it comes about that when the gentle and benevolent voice of •nature is heard on one side, its enemy •enthusiasm howls •on the other•; and while peace is presenting itself to mankind, intolerance is forging weapons. O you arbiters of nations who have given peace to Europe, *choose* between the spirit of peace and the spirit of murder.

## 25. Sequel and Conclusion

On 7 March 1763 the entire Council of State assembled at Versailles, with all the ministers of the government present and the Chancellor presiding, to hear a report on the affair of the Calas family by M. de Crosne, the Masters of Requests. He spoke with the impartiality of a judge, with the precision of one perfectly well acquainted with the case, and with the simple and truthful eloquence of an orator and statesman, the only eloquence suitable to such an assembly. The gallery of the palace was filled with a prodigious crowd of all ranks, waiting for the decision of the council. In a short time the King was informed that the Council had unanimously ordered the *parlement* of Toulouse to transmit to them the whole account of its proceedings, together with its reasons

for the sentence condemning John Calas to die on the wheel. His Majesty approved the council's judgment.

So justice and humanity still reside among men! and principally in the Council of a deservedly beloved King. The affair of an unhappy family of private citizens occupied His Majesty, his ministers, the Chancellor, and the entire Council, and was discussed as thoughtfully as any great affair of war and peace could be. All the judges were guided by a love of equity and a concern for the welfare of mankind. All praise be given to the merciful God who alone inspires equity and all the virtues!

I declare that I have never met •the unfortunate Calas, whom the eight justices of Toulouse condemned to death on the most frivolous evidence, against the ordinances of our kings and against the laws of all nations; or •his son, Marc Antoine, whose unusual death led those eight judges into error; or •the mother, as respect-worthy as she is unfortunate; or •her innocent daughters, who travelled about 600 miles to lay their disaster and their virtue at the foot of the throne.

God knows that in writing out my thoughts on tolerance, in regard to Jean Calas, who was murdered by the spirit of intolerance, I have been actuated only by a concern for justice, truth and peace.

I did not intend to offend the eight judges of Toulouse in saying that they were wrong, as the entire Council of State thinks they were. On the contrary, I have been opening a way for them to excuse themselves before the whole of Europe, which they could do by

- acknowledging that their justice was misled by ambiguous evidence and the clamor of an enraged populace,
- asking for the widow's forgiveness, and
- making what amends they can for the complete ruin

of an innocent family, by

•joining those who are supporting them in their affliction.

They have put the father to death unjustly; let them then be as fathers to his children, provided those fatherless children are willing to accept from them this poor token of repentance. It would be appropriate for the judges to offer this and for the injured family to refuse it.

But it is principally for Sieur David, chief of the Toulouse judiciary and the first instigator of this persecution of innocence, to set the example of remorse. He insulted the father when he was dying on the scaffold. This was an unheard-of act of cruelty; but because God forgives, men should also forgive those who make atonement for their offences.<sup>1</sup>

Someone in Languedoc has written me a letter, dated 20.ii.1763, which includes this: ‘Your treatise on tolerance seems to me to be full of humanity and truth; but I am afraid it will bring more harm than help to the Calas family. It may gall the eight judges who favoured death on the wheel; they will apply to the *Parlement* to have your book burnt; and the fanatics (there always *are* fanatics) will respond with an outcry against the voice of reason.’

My answer was as follows: ‘The eight judges of Toulouse may, if they please, have my book burnt; nothing is easier. The *Provincial Letters* of Pascal were burned; and they were certainly much better than this work. Everyone is at liberty to burn in his own house the books and papers that displease him.

‘My treatise cannot possibly help or harm the Calas family, whom I do not know. The King’s Council, impartial and firm, bases its judgments on the laws, on equity, on the rules of evidence, and on due procedure; it won’t be influenced

by a bit of writing that has no legal status and draws on ideas concerning the value of tolerance that have nothing to do with the matter that the Council is judging, namely, whether one judicial procedure was handled properly.

‘If anyone published big *books* for or against the eight judges of Toulouse, and for or against tolerance, neither the Council nor any other court of justice would look upon these books as documents in the case.

‘I agree that there are fanatics who will set up the cry against me, but I maintain that there are many sensible readers who will use their reason.

‘I hear that the *Parlement* of Toulouse and some other courts of justice have a legal system all of their own. They admit fourths, thirds, and sixths of a proof; so that with six hearsays on one side, three on the other, and four-fourths of a presumption, they construct three complete proofs; and on the basis of this fine construction they mercilessly condemn a man to be broken on the wheel. The slightest acquaintance with the art of reasoning would lead them to a different method. A so-called ‘half-proof’ can only be a suspicion. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a real half-proof; either a thing is proved or it is not; there is no half-way.

‘A hundred thousand suspicions cannot combine to make a regular proof, any more than a hundred thousand zeros can compose a number.

‘There are quarter-tones in music, even if they can’t be executed; but there are no quarter-truths or quarter-reasonings.

‘Two witnesses agreeing in the same deposition are judged to make a proof; but that is not enough: these two witnesses should be without passion, without prejudice, and above all their testimony should be consonant with reason.

<sup>1</sup> [Not very long after these events, Sieur David de Beaudrigue was turned out of office and then committed suicide.]

'It would be no use four solemn persons saying that they saw an infirm old man seize a vigorous young fellow by the collar and toss him forty feet out of a window; obviously these four witnesses should be sent to a madhouse.

'Well, the eight judges of Toulouse condemned Jean Calas on a much more improbable accusation; for there was no witness who claimed to have *seen* this feeble 68-year-old take an extremely robust 28-year-old and single-handedly *hang* him. Fanatics testified merely that other fanatics had told them that they had heard yet *other* fanatics say that Jean Calas had hanged his son with the aid of supernatural strength. So an absurd sentence was based on absurd accusations.

'The only remedy for such jurisprudence is this: from now on, someone must get himself better educated before he is allowed to buy the right to judge men.' [This concludes Voltaire's reply to the letter from Languedoc.]

This treatise on tolerance is a petition that humanity humbly presents to power and wisdom. I am sowing seed that may one day produce a harvest. Let us wait for the goodness of the King, the wisdom of his ministers, and the spirit of reason that is starting to spread its light everywhere.

Nature says to all men: [This speech runs to the end of the work.] I have made you all weak and ignorant, to vegetate for a few minutes on earth and to fertilise it with your corpses. Since you are weak, help one another; since you are ignorant, enlighten and support one another. If you were all of the same way of thinking (which you certainly never will be) except for one man who thought differently, you should forgive him, for it is I who make him think the way he does. I have given you arms to cultivate the earth, and a little light of reason to steer by; I have planted in your hearts a seed of compassion to help you to assist one another to get through life. Do not smother that seed; do not corrupt it; know that

it is divine, and do not substitute the wretched debates of the schools for the voice of nature.

It is I alone who unite you all, in spite of yourselves, by your mutual needs, even in the midst of the cruel wars that you undertake so lightly, wars that are a continual scene of error, dangers and misfortunes. It is I alone who, in a nation, prevent the fatal effects of the interminable disagreements between the nobility and the judiciary, between those two bodies and the clergy, between the townsman and the farmer. They don't know the limits of their rights, but in the long run they all in spite of themselves hear my voice speaking to their hearts. It is I alone who maintain equity in the law courts, where without me everything would be at the mercy of indecision and whims, in the midst of a confused mass of laws that are

- often made haphazardly to meet a passing need,
- different from province to province, from town to town,
- and
- nearly always contradictory in a single place.

I alone can inspire justice, while the laws inspire only chicanery: he who hears me always judges well; and he who seeks only to reconcile contradictory opinions gets lost.

There is an immense edifice whose foundation I laid with my own hands. It was solid and simple; all men could enter it with safety; but they wanted to add to it the most bizarre, crude and useless ornaments; the building is falling into ruin on all sides; men gather up the stones to throw at one another's heads; I cry out to them, 'Stop! Clear away this dreadful debris that you have created, and live peacefully with me in the unshakable mansion that I created.'