

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.

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,¹ 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!

¹ [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’.¹

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

¹ 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;¹ 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

¹ [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,¹ 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

¹ [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;¹ 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

¹ [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.¹:

‘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;

¹ [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.¹

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.

¹ [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.'