

# TOLERATION

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

VOLTAIRE

# On Toleration

## In Connection with the Death of Jean Calas

---

### SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE DEATH OF JEAN CALAS

THE murder of Calas, which was perpetrated with the sword of justice at Toulouse on March 9, 1762, is one of the most singular events that deserve the attention of our own and of later ages. We quickly forget the long list of the dead who have perished in our battles. It is the inevitable fate of war; those who die by the sword might themselves have inflicted death on their enemies, and did not die without the means of defending themselves. When the risk and the advantage are equal astonishment ceases, and even pity is enfeebled. But when an innocent father is given into the hands of error, of passion, or of fanaticism; when the accused has no defence but his virtue; when those who dispose of his life run no risk but that of making a mistake; when they can slay with impunity by a legal decree—then the voice of the

general public is heard, and each fears for himself. They see that no man's life is safe before a court that has been set up to guard the welfare of citizens, and every voice is raised in a demand of vengeance.

In this strange incident we have to deal with religion, suicide, and parricide. The question was, Whether a father and mother had strangled their son to please God, a brother had strangled his brother, and a friend had strangled his friend; or whether the judges had incurred the reproach of breaking on the wheel an innocent father, or of sparing a guilty mother, brother, and friend.

Jean Calas, a man of sixty-eight years, had been engaged in commerce at Toulouse for more than forty years, and was recognised by all who knew him as a good father. He was a Protestant, as were also his wife and family, except one son, who had abjured the heresy, and was in receipt of a small allowance from his father. He seemed to be so far removed from the absurd fanaticism that breaks the bonds of society that he had approved the conversion of his son [Louis Calas], and had had in his service for thirty years a zealous Catholic woman, who had reared all his children.

One of the sons of Jean Calas, named Marc Antoine, was a man of letters. He was regarded as of a restless, sombre, and violent character. This young man, failing to enter the commercial world, for which he was unfitted, or the legal world, because he could not obtain the necessary certificate that he was a Catholic, determined to end his life, and informed a friend of his intention. He strength-

ened his resolution by reading all that has ever been written on suicide.

Having one day lost his money in gambling, he determined to carry out his plan on that very day. A personal friend and friend of the family, named Lavaisse, a young man of nineteen, well known for his candid and kindly ways, the son of a distinguished lawyer at Toulouse, had come from Bordeaux on the previous day, October 12, 1761. He happened to sup with the Calas family. The father, mother, Marc Antoine, the elder son, and Pierre, the second son, were present. After supper they withdrew to a small room. Marc Antoine disappeared, and when young Lavaisse was ready to go, and he and Pierre Calas had gone down-stairs, they found, near the shop below, Marc Antoine in his shirt, hanging from a door, his coat folded under the counter. His shirt was unruffled, his hair was neatly combed, and he had no wound or mark on the body.

We will omit the details which were given in court, and the grief and despair of his parents; their cries were heard by the neighbours. Lavaisse and Pierre, beside themselves, ran for surgeons and the police.

While they were doing this, and the father and mother sobbed and wept, the people of Toulouse gathered round the house. They are superstitious and impulsive people; they regard as monsters their brothers who do not share their religion. It was at Toulouse that solemn thanks were offered to God for the death of Henry III., and that an oath was taken to kill any man who should propose to recog-

nise the great and good Henry IV. This city still celebrates every year, by a procession and fireworks, the day on which it massacred four thousand heretical citizens two hundred years ago. Six decrees of the Council have been passed in vain for the suppression of this odious festival; the people of Toulouse celebrate it still like a floral festival.<sup>1</sup>

Some fanatic in the crowd cried out that Jean Calas had hanged his son Marc Antoine. The cry was soon repeated on all sides; some adding that the deceased was to have abjured Protestantism on the following day, and that the family and young Lavoisier had strangled him out of hatred of the Catholic religion. In a moment all doubt had disappeared. The whole town was persuaded that it is a point of religion with the Protestants for a father and mother to kill their children when they wish to change their faith.

The agitation could not end here. It was imagined that the Protestants of Languedoc had held a meeting the night before; that they had, by a majority of votes, chosen an executioner for the sect; that the choice had fallen on young Lavoisier; and that, in the space of twenty-four hours, the young man had received the news of his appoint-

<sup>1</sup> The condition of Toulouse will be best understood from a description of these processions which Voltaire gives elsewhere. In front walked the shoemakers, bearing the authentic head of a prince of Peloponnesus, who had been Bishop of Toulouse *during the lifetime* of Christ. After them came the slaters, carrying the bones of the fourteen thousand children slain by Herod; the old-clothes dealers, with a piece of the dress of the Virgin Mary; and the tailors, with the relics of St. Peter and St. Paul.—J. M.

ment, and had come from Bordeaux to help Jean Calas, his wife, and their son Pierre to strangle a friend, son, and brother.

The captain of Toulouse, David, excited by these rumours and wishing to give effect to them by a prompt execution, took a step which is against the laws and regulations. He put the Calas family, the Catholic servant, and Lavoisier in irons.

A report not less vicious than his procedure was published. He even went further. Marc Antoine Calas had died a Calvinist; and, if he had taken his own life, his body was supposed to be dragged on a hurdle. Instead of this, he was buried with great pomp in the church of St. Stephen, although the priest protested against this profanation.

There are in Languedoc four confraternities of penitents—the white, the blue, the grey, and the black. Their members wear a long hood, with a cloth mask, pierced with two holes for the eyes. They endeavoured to induce the Duke of Fitz-James, the governor of the province, to enter their ranks, but he refused. The white penitents held a solemn service over Marc Antoine Calas, as over a martyr. No church ever celebrated the feast of a martyr with more pomp; but it was a terrible pomp. They had raised above a magnificent bier a skeleton, which was made to move its bones. It represented Marc Antoine Calas holding a palm in one hand, and in the other the pen with which he was to sign his abjuration of heresy. This pen, in point of fact, signed the death-sentence of his father.

The only thing that remained for the poor devil who had taken his life was canonisation. Every-

body regarded him as a saint; some invoked him, others went to pray at his tomb, others sought miracles of him, and others, again, related the miracles he had wrought. A monk extracted some of his teeth, to have permanent relics of him. A pious woman, who was rather deaf, told how she heard the sound of bells. An apoplectic priest was cured, after taking an emetic. Legal declarations of these prodigies were drawn up. The writer of this account has in his possession the attestation that a young man of Toulouse went mad because he had prayed for several nights at the tomb of the new saint, and could not obtain the miracle he sought.

Some of the magistrates belonged to the confraternity of white penitents. From that moment the death of Jean Calas seemed inevitable.

What contributed most to his fate was the approach of that singular festival which the people of Toulouse hold every year in memory of the massacre of four thousand Huguenots. The year 1762 was the bicentenary of the event. The city was decorated with all the trappings of the ceremony, and the heated imagination of the people was still further excited. It was stated publicly that the scaffold on which the Calas were to be executed would be the chief ornament of the festival; it was said that Providence itself provided these victims for sacrifice in honour of our holy religion. A score of people heard these, and even more violent things. And this in our days—in an age when philosophy has made so much progress, and a hundred academies are writing for the improvement of

our morals! It would seem that fanaticism is angry at the success of reason, and combats it more furiously.

Thirteen judges met daily to bring the trial to a close. There was not, and could not be, any evidence against the family; but a deluded religion took the place of proof. Six of the judges long persisted in condemning Jean Calas, his son, and Lavoisier to the wheel, and the wife of Jean Calas to the stake. The other seven, more moderate, wished at least to make an inquiry. The discussions were long and frequent. One of the judges, convinced that the accused were innocent and the crime was impossible, spoke strongly on their behalf. He opposed a zeal for humanity to the zeal for severity, and became the public pleader for the Calas in Toulouse, where the incessant cries of outraged religion demanded the blood of the accused. Another judge, known for his violent temper, spoke against the Calas with the same spirit. At last, amid great excitement, they both threw up the case and retired to the country.

But by a singular misfortune the judge who was favourable to the Calas had the delicacy to persist in his resignation, and the other returned to condemn those whom he could not judge. His voice it was that drew up the condemnation to the wheel. There were now eight votes to five, as one of the six opposing judges had passed to the more severe party after considerable discussion.

It seems that in a case of parricide, when a father is to be condemned to the most frightful death, the verdict ought to be unanimous, as the



evidence for so rare a crime ought to be such as to convince everybody.<sup>1</sup> The slightest doubt in such a case should intimidate a judge who is to sign the death-sentence. The weakness of our reason and its inadequacy are shown daily; and what greater proof of it can we have than when we find a citizen condemned to the wheel by a majority of one vote? In ancient Athens there had to be fifty votes above the half to secure a sentence of death. It shows us, most unprofitably, that the Greeks were wiser and more humane than we.

It seemed impossible that Jean Calas, an old man of sixty-eight years, whose limbs had long been swollen and weak, had been able to strangle and hang a young man in his twenty-eighth year, above the average in strength. It seemed certain that he must have been assisted in the murder by his wife,

<sup>1</sup> I know only two instances in history of fathers being charged with killing their children on account of religion. The first is the case of the father of St. Barbara, or Ste. Barbe. He had had two windows made in his bath-room. Barbara, in his absence, had a third made, to honour the Holy Trinity. She made the sign of the cross on the marble columns *with the tip of her finger*, and it was deeply engraved on the stone. Her son came angrily upon her, sword in hand; but she escaped through a mountain, which opened to receive her. The father went round the mountain and caught her. She was stripped and flogged, but God clothed her in a white cloud. In the end her father cut off her head. So says the *Flower of the Saints*.

The second case is that of Prince Hermenegild. He rebelled against his father, the king, gave him battle (in 584), and was beaten and killed by an officer. As his father was an Arian, he was regarded as a martyr.

his son Pierre, Lavoisier, and the servant. They had not left each other's company for an instant on the evening of the fatal event. But this supposition was just as absurd as the other. How could a zealous Catholic servant allow Huguenots to kill a young man, reared by herself, to punish him for embracing her own religion? How could Lavoisier have come expressly from Bordeaux to strangle his friend, whose conversion was unknown to him? How could a tender mother lay hands on her son? How could the whole of them together strangle a young man who was stronger than all of them without a long and violent struggle, without cries that would have aroused the neighbours, without repeated blows and torn garments?

It was evident that, if there had been any crime, all the accused were equally guilty, as they had never left each other for a moment; it was evident that they were not all guilty; and it was evident that the father alone could not have done it. Nevertheless, the father alone was condemned to the wheel.

The reason of the sentence was as inconceivable as all the rest. The judges, who were bent on executing Jean Calas, persuaded the others that the weak old man could not endure the torture, and would on the scaffold confess his crime and accuse his accomplices. They were confounded when the old man, expiring on the wheel, prayed God to witness his innocence, and begged him to pardon his judges.

They were compelled to pass a second sentence in contradiction of the first, and to set free the mother, the son Pierre, the young Lavoisier, and

the servant; but one of the councillors pointing out that this verdict gave the lie to the other, that they were condemning themselves, and that, as the accused were all together at the supposed hour of the crime, the acquittal of the survivors necessarily proved the innocence of the dead father, they decided to banish Pierre Calas. This banishment seemed as illogical and absurd as all the rest. Pierre Calas was either guilty or innocent. If he was guilty, he should be broken on the wheel like his father; if he was innocent, they had no right to banish him. However, the judges, terrified by the execution of the father and the touching piety of his end, thought they were saving their honour by affecting to pardon the son, as if it were not a fresh prevarication to pardon him; and they thought that the banishment of this poor and helpless young man was not a great injustice after that they had already committed.

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

Pierre Calas, on leaving the city, met a priest, who compelled him to return to Toulouse. They confined him in a Dominican convent, and forced him to perform Catholic functions. It was part of what they wanted. It was the price of his father's blood, and religion seemed to be avenged.

The daughters were taken from the mother and put in a convent. The mother, almost sprinkled

with the blood of her husband, her eldest son dead, the younger banished, deprived of her daughters and all her property, was alone in the world, without bread, without hope, dying of the intolerable misery. Certain persons, having carefully examined the circumstances of this horrible adventure, were so impressed that they urged the widow, who had retired into solitude, to go and demand justice at the feet of the throne.<sup>1</sup> At the time she shrank from publicity; moreover, being English by birth, and having been transplanted into a French province in early youth, the name of Paris terrified her. She imagine that the capital of the kingdom would be still more barbaric than the capital of Languedoc. At length the duty of clearing the memory of her husband prevailed over her weakness. She reached Paris almost at the point of death. She was astonished at her reception, at the help and the tears that were given to her.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire nobly conceals his work. It was he who, from his exile near Geneva, sent for young Calas, made searching inquiries in Toulouse, and instructed the Parisian lawyers to appeal. He enlisted the interest of English and French visitors at Geneva, and there was "a rivalry in generosity between the two nations." After a long struggle with the Toulouse authorities the sentence was reversed at Paris amid general enthusiasm. The King very generously pensioned the widow and the other victims.—J. M.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Voltaire and to the progress of Rationalism at Paris, she was received with the greatest enthusiasm and generosity.—J. M.

M. de Beaumont, the famous advocate of the Parlement de Paris, undertook to defend her, and drew up a memorial signed by fifteen other advocates. M. Loiseau, not less eloquent, drew up a memoir on behalf of the family. M. Mariette, an advocate of the Council, drew up a judicial inquiry which brought conviction to every mind. These three generous defenders of the laws of innocence gave to the widow the profit on the sale of their memoirs. Paris and the whole of Europe were moved with pity, and demanded justice for the unfortunate woman. The verdict was given by the public long before it was signed by the Council.

The spirit of pity penetrated the ministry, in spite of the torrent of business that so often shuts out pity, and in spite of that daily sight of misery that does even more to harden the heart. The daughters were restored to their mother. As they sat, clothed in crape and bathed in tears, their judges were seen to weep.

They had still enemies, however, for it was a question of religion. Many of those people who are known in France as "devout"<sup>1</sup> said openly that it was much better to let an innocent old Calvinist be slain than to compel eight Councillors of Languedoc to admit that they were wrong. One even heard such phrases as "There are more magistrates than Calas"; and it was inferred that the Calas family ought to be sacrificed to the honour of the magistrates. They did not reflect that the honour of judges, like that of other men, consists in repair-

<sup>1</sup> In ancient Rome the *devoti* were those who devoted themselves to the good of the Republic.

ing their blunders. It is not believed in France that the Pope is infallible, even with the assistance of his cardinals<sup>1</sup>; we might just as well admit that eight judges of Toulouse are not. All other people, more reasonable and disinterested, said that the Toulouse verdict would be reversed all over Europe, even if special considerations prevented it from being reversed by the Council.

Such was the position of this astonishing adventure when it moved certain impartial and reasonable persons to submit to the public a few reflections on the subject of toleration, indulgence, and pity, which the Abbé Houteville calls "a monstrous dogma," in his garbled version of the facts, and which reason calls an "appanage of nature."

Either the judges of Toulouse, swept away by the fanaticism of the people, have broken on the wheel an innocent man, which is unprecedented; or the father and his wife strangled their elder son, with the assistance of another son and a friend, which is unnatural. In either case the abuse of religion has led to a great crime. It is, therefore, of interest to the race to inquire whether religion ought to be charitable or barbaric.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXECUTION OF JEAN CALAS

If the white penitents were the cause of the execution of an innocent man, the utter ruin of a family, and the dispersal and humiliation that attach

<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church did not discover the infallibility of the Pope until 1870, since which date his lips have remained, officially, closed.—J. M.

to an execution, though they should punish only injustice; if the haste of the white penitents to commemorate as a saint one who, according to our barbaric customs, should have been dragged on a hurdle, led to the execution of a virtuous parent; they ought indeed to be penitents for the rest of their lives. They and the judges should weep, but not in a long white robe, and with no mask to hide their tears.

We respect all confraternities; they are edifying. But can whatever good they may do the State outweigh this appalling evil that they have done? It seems that they have been established by the zeal which in Languedoc fires the Catholics against those whom we call Huguenots. One would say that they had taken vows to hate their brothers; for we have religion enough left to hate and to persecute, and we have enough to love and to help. What would happen if these confraternities were controlled by enthusiasts, as were once certain congregations of artisans and "gentlemen," among whom, as one of our most eloquent and learned magistrates said, the seeing of visions was reduced to a fine art? What would happen if these confraternities set up again those dark chambers, called "meditation rooms," on which were painted devils armed with horns and claws, gulfs of flame, crosses and daggers, with the holy name of Jesus surmounting the picture?<sup>1</sup> What a spectacle for eyes that are already fascinated, and imaginations that are as inflamed as they are submissive to their confessors!

There have been times when, as we know only

<sup>1</sup> A thrust at the Jesuits.—J. M.

too well, confraternities were dangerous. The Fratelli and the Flagellants gave trouble enough. The League<sup>1</sup> began with associations of that kind. Why should they distinguish themselves thus from other citizens? Did they think themselves more perfect? The very claim is an insult to the rest of the nation. Did they wish all Christians to enter their confraternity? What a sight it would be to have all Europe in hoods and masks, with two little round holes in front of the eyes! Do they seriously think that God prefers this costume to that of ordinary folk? Further, this garment is the uniform of controversialists, warning their opponents to get to arms. It may excite a kind of civil war of minds, and would perhaps end in fatal excesses, unless the king and his ministers were as wise as the fanatics were demented.

We know well what the price has been ever since Christians began to dispute about dogmas. Blood has flowed, on scaffolds and in battles, from the fourth century to our own days.<sup>2</sup> We will restrict ourselves here to the wars and horrors which the Reformation struggle caused, and see what was the source of them in France. Possibly a short and faithful account of those calamities will open the eyes of the uninformed and touch the hearts of the humane.

<sup>1</sup> The Catholic League for the suppression of Protestantism in France, in the second half of the sixteenth century, led to much war and bloodshed.—J. M.

<sup>2</sup> In his treatise *Dieu et les Hommes* Voltaire, after a very incomplete survey of history, puts the number of victims of religious wars and quarrels at 9,468,800.—J. M.



## THE IDEA OF THE REFORMATION

When enlightenment spread, with the renaissance of letters in the fifteenth century, there was a very general complaint of abuses, and everybody agrees that the complaint was just.

Pope Alexander VI. had openly bought the papal tiara, and his five bastards shared its advantages. His son, the cardinal-duke of Borgia, made an end, in concert with his father, of Vitelli, Urbino, Gravina, Oliveretto, and a hundred other nobles, in order to seize their lands. Julius II., animated by the same spirit, excommunicated Louis XII. and gave his kingdom to the first occupant; while he himself, helmet on head and cuirass on back, spread blood and fire over part of Italy. Leo X., to pay for his pleasures, sold indulgences, as the taxes are sold in the open market. They who revolted against this brigandage were, at least, not wrong from the moral point of view. Let us see if they were wrong in politics.

They said that, since Jesus Christ had never exacted fees, nor sold dispensations for this world or indulgences for the next, one might refuse to pay a foreign prince the price of these things. Supposing that our fees to Rome and the dispensations which we still buy<sup>1</sup> did not cost us more than five hundred thousand francs a year, it is clear that, since the time of Francis I., we should have paid, in two hundred and fifty years, a hundred and twenty million francs; allowing for the change of value in money, we may say about two hundred and

<sup>1</sup> To marry within certain degrees of kindred, etc.—J. M.

fifty millions [£10,000,000]. One may, therefore, without blasphemy, admit that the heretics, in proposing to abolish these singular taxes, which will astonish a later age, did not do a very grave wrong to the kingdom, and that they were rather good financiers than bad subjects. Let us add that they alone knew Greek, and were acquainted with antiquity. Let us grant that, in spite of their errors, we owe to them the development of the human mind, so long buried in the densest barbarism

But, as they denied the existence of Purgatory, which it is not permitted to doubt, and which brought a considerable income to the monks; and as they did not venerate relics, which ought to be venerated, and which are a source of even greater profit—in fine, as they assailed much-respected dogmas, the only answer to them at first was to burn them. The king, who protected and subsidised them in Germany, walked at the head of a procession in Paris, and at the close a number of the wretches were executed. This was the manner of execution. They were hung at the end of a long beam, which was balanced, like a see-saw, across a tree. A big fire was lit underneath, and they were alternately sunk into it and raised out. Their torments were thus protracted, until death relieved them from a more hideous punishment than any barbarian had ever invented.

Shortly before the death of Francis I. certain members of the Parlement de Provence, instigated by their clergy against the inhabitants of Merindol and Cabrières, asked the king for troops to support the execution of nineteen persons of the district

whom they had condemned. They had six thousand slain, without regard to sex or age or infancy, and they reduced thirty towns to ashes. These people, who had not hitherto been heard of, were, no doubt, in the wrong to have been born Waldensians; but that was their only crime. They had been settled for three hundred years in the deserts and on the mountains, which they had, with incredible labour, made fertile. Their quiet, pastoral life represented the supposed innocence of the first ages of men. They knew the neighbouring towns only by selling fruit to them. They had no law-courts and never warred; they did not defend themselves. They were slain as one slays animals in an enclosure.

After the death of Francis I.—a prince who is better known for his amours and misfortunes than his cruelty—the execution of a thousand heretics, especially of the Councillor of the Parlement, Dubourg, and the massacre of Vassy, caused the persecuted sect to take to arms. They had increased in the light of the flames and under the sword of the executioner, and substituted fury for patience. They imitated the cruelties of their enemies. Nine civil wars filled France with carnage; and a peace more fatal than war led to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, which is without precedent in the annals of crime.

The [Catholic] League assassinated Henry III. and Henry IV. by the hands of a Dominican monk, and of a monster who had belonged to the order of St. Bernard. There are those who say that humanity, indulgence, and liberty of conscience are

horrible things. Candidly, could they have brought about calamities such as these?

WHETHER TOLERATION IS DANGEROUS, AND AMONG  
WHAT PEOPLES IT IS FOUND

There are some who say that, if we treated with paternal indulgence those erring brethren who pray to God in bad French [instead of bad Latin], we should be putting weapons in their hands, and would once more witness the battles of Jarnac, Moncontour, Coutras, Dreux, and St. Denis. I do not know anything about this, as I am not a prophet; but it seems to me an illogical piece of reasoning to say: "These men rebelled when I treated them ill, therefore they will rebel when I treat them well."

I would venture to take the liberty to invite those who are at the head of the government, and those who are destined for high positions, to reflect carefully whether one really has ground to fear that kindness will lead to the same revolts as cruelty; whether what happened in certain circumstances is sure to happen in different circumstances; if the times, public opinion, and morals are unchanged.

The Huguenots, it is true, have been as inebriated with fanaticism and stained with blood as we. But are this generation as barbaric as their fathers? Have not time, the progress of reason, good books, and the humanising influence of society had an effect on the leaders of these people? And do we not perceive that the aspect of nearly the whole of Europe has been changed within the last fifty years?

Government is stronger everywhere, and morals have improved. The ordinary police, supported by numerous standing armies, gives us some security against a return to that age of anarchy in which Calvinistic peasants fought Catholic peasants, hastily enrolled between the sowing and the harvest.

Different times have different needs. It would be absurd to decimate the Sorbonne to-day because it once presented a demand for the burning of the Maid of Orleans, declared that Henry III. had forfeited his kingdom, excommunicated him, and proscribed the great Henry IV. We will not think of inquiring into the other bodies in the kingdom who committed the same excesses in those frenzied days. It would not only be unjust, but would be as stupid as to purge all the inhabitants of Marseilles because they had the plague in 1720.

Shall we go and sack Rome, as the troops of Charles V. did, because Sixtus V. in 1585 granted an indulgence of nine years to all Frenchmen who would take up arms against their sovereign? Is it not enough to prevent Rome for ever from reverting to such excesses?

The rage that is inspired by the dogmatic spirit and the abuse of the Christian religion, wrongly conceived, has shed as much blood and led to as many disasters in Germany, England, and even Holland, as in France. Yet religious difference causes no trouble to-day in those States. The Jew, the Catholic, the Greek, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Anabaptist, the Socinian, the Memnonist, the Moravian, and so many others, live like brothers in these

countries, and contribute alike to the good of the social body.

They fear no longer in Holland that disputes about predestination will end in heads being cut off. They fear no longer at London that the quarrels of Presbyterians and Episcopalians about liturgies and surplices will lead to the death of a king on the scaffold. A populous and wealthier Ireland will no longer see its Catholic citizens sacrifice its Protestant citizens to God during two months, bury them alive, hang their mothers to gibbets, tie the girls to the necks of their mothers, and see them expire together; or put swords in the hands of their prisoners and guide their hands to the bosoms of their wives, their fathers, their mothers, and their daughters, thinking to make parricides of them, and damn them as well as exterminate them.<sup>1</sup> Such is the account given by Rapin Thoyras, an officer in Ireland, and almost a contemporary; so we find in all the annals and histories of England. It will never be repeated. Philosophy, the sister of religion, has disarmed the hands that superstition had so long stained with blood; and the human mind, awakening from its intoxication, is amazed at the excesses into which fanaticism had led it.

We have in France a rich province in which the Lutherans outnumber the Catholics. The University of Alsace is in the hands of the Lutherans. They occupy some of the municipal offices; yet not the least religious quarrel has disturbed this province since it came into the possession of our kings. Why? Because no one has ever been persecuted in

<sup>1</sup> An exaggerated account of the Ulster rebellion.—J. M.

it. Seek not to vex the hearts of men, and they are yours.

I do not say that all who are not of the same religion as the prince should share the positions and honours of those who follow the dominant religion. In England the Catholics, who are regarded as attached to the party of the Pretender, are not admitted to office. They even pay double taxes. In other respects, however, they have all the rights of citizens.

Some of the French bishops have been suspected of holding that it redounds neither to their honour nor their profit to have Calvinists in their dioceses. This is said to be one of the greatest obstacles to toleration. I cannot believe it. The episcopal body in France is composed of gentlemen, who think and act with the nobility that befits their birth. They are charitable and generous; so much justice must be done them. They must think that their fugitive subjects will assuredly not be converted in foreign countries, and that, when they return to their pastors, they may be enlightened by their instructions and touched by their example. There would be honour in converting them, and their material interests would not suffer. The more citizens there were, the larger would be the income from the prelate's estates.

A Polish bishop had an Anabaptist for farmer and a Socinian for steward. It was suggested that he ought to discharge and prosecute the latter because he did not believe in consubstantiality, and the former because he did not baptise his child until it was fifteen years old. He replied that they would

be damned for ever in the next world, but that they were very useful to him in this.

Let us get out of our grooves and study the rest of the globe. The Sultan governs in peace twenty million people of different religions; two hundred thousand Greeks live in security at Constantinople; the *muphti* himself nominates and presents to the emperor the Greek patriarch, and they also admit a Latin patriarch. The Sultan nominates Latin bishops for some of the Greek islands, using the following formula: "I command him to go and reside as bishop in the island of Chios, according to their ancient usage and their vain ceremonies." The empire is full of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Monothelites; it contains Copts, Christians of St. John, Jews, and Hindoos. The annals of Turkey do not record any revolt instigated by any of these religions.

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

The government of China has not, during the four thousand years of its known history, had any cult but the simple worship of one God. Nevertheless, it tolerates the superstitions of Fo, and permits a large number of bronzes, who would be dangerous if the prudence of the courts did not restrain them.

It is true that the great Emperor Yang-Chin, perhaps the wisest and most magnanimous emperor that China ever had, expelled the Jesuits. But it was not because he was intolerant; it was because the



Jesuits were. They themselves give, in their curious letters, the words of the good prince to them: "I know that your religion is intolerant; I know what you have done in Manila and Japan. You deceived my father; think not to deceive me." If you read the whole of his speech to them, you will see that he was one of the wisest and most clement of men. How could he retain European physicians who, under pretence of showing thermometers and æolipiles at court, had carried off a prince of the blood? What would he have said if he had read our history and was acquainted with the days of our League and of the Gunpowder Plot?

It was enough for him to be informed of the indecent quarrels of the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and secular priests sent into his State from the ends of the earth. They came to preach the truth, and fell to anathematising each other. Hence the emperor was bound to expel the foreign disturbers. But how kindly he dismissed them! What paternal care did he not devote to their journey, and in order to protect them from insult on the way? Their very banishment was a lesson in toleration and humanity.

The Japanese were the most tolerant of all men. A dozen peaceful religions throve in their empire, when the Jesuits came with a thirteenth. As they soon showed that they would tolerate no other, there arose a civil war, even more frightful than that of the League, and the land was desolated. In the end the Christian religion was drowned in blood; the Japanese closed their empire, and regarded us only as wild beasts, like those which the English

have cleared out of their island. The minister Colbert, knowing how we need the Japanese, who have no need of us, tried in vain to reopen commerce with their empire. He found them inflexible.

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

Turn your eyes to the other hemisphere. Study Carolina, of which the wise Locke was the legislator. Seven fathers of families sufficed to set up a public cult approved by the law; and this liberty gave rise to no disorder. Heaven preserve us from quoting this as an example for France to follow! We quote it only to show that the greatest excess of toleration was not followed by the slightest dissension. But what is good and useful in a young colony is not suitable for a long-established kingdom.

What shall we say of the primitive people who have been derisively called Quakers, but who, however ridiculous their customs may be, have been so virtuous and given so useful a lesson of peace to other men? There are a hundred thousand of them in Pennsylvania. Discord and controversy are unknown in the happy country they have made for themselves; and the very name of their chief town, Philadelphia, which unceasingly reminds them that all men are brothers, is an example and a shame to nations that are yet ignorant of toleration.

Toleration, in fine, never led to civil war; intolerance has covered the earth with carnage. Choose, then, between these rivals—between the mother who would have her son slain and the mother who yields, provided his life be spared.

I speak here only of the interest of nations. While

respecting theology, as I do, I regard in this article only the physical and moral well-being of society. I beg every impartial reader to weigh these truths, verify them, and add to them. Attentive readers, who restrain not their thoughts, always go farther than the author.

#### HOW TOLERATION MAY BE ADMITTED

I venture to think that some enlightened and magnanimous minister, some humane and wise prelate, some prince who puts his interest in the number of his subjects and his glory in their welfare, may deign to glance at this inartistic and defective paper. He will supply its defects and say to himself: What do I risk in seeing my land cultivated and enriched by a larger number of industrious workers, the revenue increased, the State more flourishing?

Germany would be a desert strewn with the bones of Catholics, Protestants, and Anabaptists, slain by each other, if the peace of Westphalia had not at length brought freedom of conscience.

We have Jews at Bordeaux and Metz and in Alsace; we have Lutherans, Molinists, and Jansenists; can we not suffer and control Calvinists on much the same terms as those on which Catholics are tolerated at London? The more sects there are, the less danger in each. Multiplicity enfeebles them. They are all restrained by just laws which forbid disorderly meetings, insults, and sedition, and are ever enforced by the community.

We know that many fathers of families, who have made large fortunes in foreign lands, are ready to return to their country. They ask only the protection of natural law, the validity of their marriages, security as to the condition of their children, the right to inherit from their fathers, and the enfranchisement of their persons. They ask not for public chapels, or the right to municipal offices and dignities. Catholics have not these things in England and other countries. It is not a question of giving immense privileges and secure positions to a faction, but of allowing a peaceful people to live, and of moderating the laws once, but no longer, necessary. It is not our place to tell the ministry what is to be done; we do but ask consideration for the unfortunate.

How many ways there are of making them useful, and preventing them from ever being dangerous! The prudence of the ministry and the Council, supported as it is by force, will easily discover these means, which are already happily employed by other nations.

There are still fanatics among the Calvinistic populace; but it is certain that there are far more among the convulsionary [bigoted Catholic] populace. The dregs of the fanatical worshippers of St. Medard count as nothing in the nation; the dregs of the Calvinistic prophets are annihilated. The great means to reduce the number of fanatics, if any remain, is to submit that disease of the mind to the treatment of reason, which slowly, but infallibly, enlightens men. Reason is gentle and humane. It inspires liberality, suppresses discord,

and strengthens virtue; it has more power to make obedience to the laws attractive than force has to compel it. And shall we take no account of the ridicule that attaches to-day to the enthusiasm of these good people? Ridicule is a strong barrier to the extravagance of all sectarians. The past is as if it had never been. We must always start from the present—from the point which nations have already reached.

There was a time when it was thought necessary to issue decrees against those who taught a doctrine at variance with the categories of Aristotle, the abhorrence of a vacuum, the quiddities, the universal apart from the object. We have in Europe more than a hundred volumes of jurisprudence on sorcery and the way to distinguish between false and real sorcerers. The excommunication of grasshoppers and harmful insects has been much practised, and still survives in certain rituals. But the practice is over; Aristotle and the sorcerers and grasshoppers are left in peace. There are countless instances of this folly, once thought so important. Other follies arise from time to time; but they have their day and are abandoned. What would happen to-day if a man were minded to call himself a Carpocratian, a Eutychian, a Monothelite, a Monophysist, a Nestorian, or a Manichæan? We should laugh at him, as at a man dressed in the garb of former days.

The nation was beginning to open its eyes when the Jesuits Le Tellier and Doucin fabricated the bull *Unigenitus* and sent it to Rome. They thought that they still lived in those ignorant times when

the most absurd statements were accepted without inquiry. They ventured even to condemn the proposition, a truth of all times and all places: "The fear of unjust excommunication should not prevent one from doing one's duty." It was a proscription of reason, of the liberties of the Gallican Church, and of the fundamental principle of morals. It was to say to men: God commands you never to do your duty if you fear injustice. Never was common-sense more outrageously challenged! The counsellors of Rome were not on their guard. The papal court was persuaded that the bull was necessary, and that the nation desired it; it was signed, sealed, and dispatched. You know the results; assuredly, if they had been foreseen, the bull would have been modified. There were angry quarrels, which the prudence and goodness of the king have settled.

So it is in regard to a number of the points which divide the Protestants and ourselves. Some are of no consequence; some are more serious; but on these points the fury of the controversy has so far abated that the Protestants themselves no longer enter into disputes in their churches.

It is a time of disgust, of satiety, or, rather, of reason, that may be used as an epoch and guarantee of public tranquillity. Controversy is an epidemic disease that nears its end, and what is now needed is gentle treatment. It is to the interest of the State that its expatriated children should return modestly to the homes of their fathers. Humanity demands it, reason counsels it, and politics need not fear it.