

A Plea for Intolerance
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America, it is said, is suffering from intolerance. It is not. It is suffering from tolerance: tolerance of right and wrong, truth and error, virtue and evil, Christ and chaos. Our country is not nearly so much overrun with the bigoted as it is overrun with the broadminded. The man who can make up his mind in an orderly way, as a man might make up his bed, is called a bigot; but a man who cannot make up his mind, any more than he can make up for lost time, is called tolerant and broadminded. A bigoted man is one who refuses to accept a reason for anything; a broadminded man is one who will accept anything for a reason—providing it is not a good reason. It is true that there is a demand for precision, exactness, and definiteness, but it is only for precision in scientific measurement, not in logic. The breakdown that has produced this unnatural broadmindedness is mental, not moral. The evidence for this statement is threefold: the tendency to settle issues not by arguments but by words, the unqualified willingness to accept the authority of anyone on the subject of religion, and, lastly, the love of novelty.

Voltaire boasted that if he could find but ten wicked words a day he could crush the "infamy" of Christianity. He found the ten words daily, and even a daily dozen, but he never found an argument, and so the words went the way of all words and the thing, Christianity, survived. Today, no one advances even a poor argument to prove that there is no God, but they are legion who think they have sealed up the heavens when they used the word "anthropomorphism." This word is just a sample of the catalogue of names which serve as the excuse for those who are too lazy to think. One moment's reflection would tell them that one can no more get rid of God by calling Him "anthropomorphic" than he can get rid of a sore throat by calling it "streptococci." As regards the use of the term "anthropomorphism," I cannot see that its use in theology is less justified than the use in physics of the term "organism," which the new physicists are so fond of employing. Certain words like "reactionary" or "medieval" are tagged on the Catholic Church and used with that same disrespect with which a man may sneer at a woman's age. Mothers do not cease to be mothers because their sons grow up, and the Mother Church of the Christian world, which began not in Boston but in Jerusalem, is not to be dispossessed of her glorious title simply because her sons leave home. Some day they may be glad to return and their return will be the truest "homecoming" the world has ever seen.

Not only does the substitution of words for argument betray the existence of this false tolerance, but also the readiness of many minds to accept as an authority in any field an individual who becomes a famous authority in one particular field. The assumption behind journalistic religion is that because a man is clever in inventing automobiles, he is thereby clever in treating the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity; that a professor who is an authority on the mathematical interpretation of atomic phenomena is thereby an authority on the interpretation of marriage; and that an one who knows something about illumination can throw light on the subject of immortality, or perhaps even put out the lights on immortality. There is a limit to the transfer of training, and no one who paints beautiful pictures with his right hand can, in a day and at the suggestion of a reporter, paint an equally good one with his left hand. The science of religion has a right to be heard scientifically through its qualified spokesmen, just as the science of physics or astronomy has a right to be heard through its qualified spokesmen. Religion is a science despite the fact that some would make it only a sentiment.

Religion is not an open question, like the United Nations, while science is a closed question, like the addition table. Religion has its principles, natural and revealed, which are more exacting in their logic than mathematics. But the false notion of tolerance has obscured this fact from the eyes of many who are as intolerant about the smallest details of life as they are tolerant about their relations to God. In the ordinary affairs of life, these same people would never summon a Christian Science practitioner to fix a broken windowpane; they would never call in an optician because they had broken the eye of a needle; they would never call in a florist because they hurt the palm of their hand, nor go to a carpenter to take care of their nails. They would never call in a Collector of Internal Revenue to extract the nickel swallowed by the baby. They would refuse to listen to a Kiwanis booster discussing the authenticity of a painting, or to a tree-surgeon settling a moot question of law. And yet for the all-important subject of religion, on which our eternal destinies hinge, on the all-important question of the relations of man to his environment and to his God, they are willing to listen to anyone who calls himself a prophet. And so our journals are filled with articles for these "broadminded" people, in which everyone from Jack Dempsey [a famous boxer at the time] to the chief cook of

the Ritz Carlton tells about his idea of God and his view of religion. These same individuals, who would become exasperated if their child played with a wrongly colored lollipop, would not become the least bit worried if the child grew up without ever having heard the name of God.

Would it not be in perfect keeping with the fitness of things to insist on certain minimal requirements for theological pronouncements? If we insist that he who mends our pipes knows something about plumbing and that he who gives us pills knows something about medicine, should we not expect and demand that he who tells us about God, religion, Christ, and immortality at least say his prayers? If a violinist does not disdain to practice his musical scales, why should the modern theologian disdain to practice the elements of religion?

Another evidence of the breakdown of reason that has produced this weird fungus of broad-mindedness is the passion for novelty, as opposed to the love of truth. Truth is sacrificed for an epigram, and the Divinity of Christ for a headline in the Monday morning newspaper. Many a modern preacher is far less concerned with preaching Christ and Him crucified than he is his popularity with his congregation. A want of intellectual backbone makes him straddle the ox of truth and the ass of nonsense, paying compliments to Catholics because of "their great organization" and to sexologists because of their "honest challenge to the youth of this generation." Bending the knee to the mob and pleasing men rather than God would probably make them scruple at ever playing the role of a John the Baptist before a modern Herod. No accusing finger would be leveled at a divorce or one living in adultery; no voice would be thundered in the ears of the rich, saying with something of the intolerance of Divinity: "It is not lawful for you to live with your brother's wife." Rather would we hear: "Friend, times are changing! The acids of modernity are eating away the fossils of orthodoxy. If you're noble sex-urge to self-expression finds its proper stimulus and response in no one but Herodias, then in the name of Freud and Russell accept her as your lawful wife to have and to hold until sex do ye part."

Belief in the existence of God, in the Divinity of Christ, and in the moral law are considered passing fashions. The latest thing in this new tolerance is considered the true thing, as if truth were a fashion, like the hat, instead of an institution, like a head. At the present moment, in psychology the fashion runs towards Behaviorism, as in philosophy it runs towards Temporalism. And that it is not objective validity which dictates the success of a modern philosophical theory, is borne out by the statement a celebrated space-time philosopher of England made to the writer a few years ago, when he was asked where he got his system. "From my imagination," he answered. Upon being challenged that the imagination was not the proper faculty for a philosopher to use, he retorted: "It is, if the success of your philosophical system depends not on the truth that is in it, but on its novelty."

In that statement is the final argument for modern broad-mindedness: truth is novelty, and hence "truth" changes with the passing fancies of the moment. Like the chameleon who changes his colors to suit the vesture on which he is placed, so truth is supposed to change to suit the foibles and obliquities of the age, as if the foundations of thinking might be true for the pre-Adamites and false for the Adamites. Truth does grow, but it grows homogeneously, like an acorn into an oak; it does not swing in the breeze, like a weathercock. The leopard does not change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin, though the leopard be put in bars or the Ethiopian in pink tights. The nature of certain things is fixed, and none more so than the nature of truth. Truth maybe contradicted a thousand times, but that only proves that it is strong enough to survive a thousand assaults. But for any one to say, "Some say this, some say that, therefore there is no truth," is about as logical as it would have been for Columbus, who heard some say, "The earth is round," and other say, "The earth is flat," to conclude: "Therefore there is no earth at all."

It is this kind of thinking that cannot distinguish between a sheep and his second coat of wool, between Napoleon and his three-cornered hat, between the substance and the accident, the kind that has begotten minds so flattened with broadness that they have lost all their depth. Like a carpenter who might throw away his rule and use each beam as a measuring-rod, so, too, those who have thrown away the standard of objective truth have nothing left with which to measure but the mental fashion of the moment.

The giggling giddiness of novelty, the sentimental restlessness of a mind unhinged, and the unnatural fear of a good dose of hard thinking, all conjoin to produce a group of sophomoric latitudinarians who think there is no difference between God as Cause and God as a "mental projection"; who equate Christ and Buddha, St. Paul and John Dewey,

and then enlarge their broad-mindedness into a sweeping synthesis that says not only that one Christian sect is just as good as another, but even that one world-religion is just as good as another. The great god "Progress" is then enthroned on the altars of fashion, and as the hectic worshipers are asked, "Progress towards what?" The tolerant answer comes back, "More progress." All the while sane men are wondering how there can be progress without direction and how there can be direction without a fixed point. And because they speak of a "fixed point," they are said to be behind the times, when really they are beyond the times mentally and spiritually.

In the face of this false broad-mindedness, what the world needs is intolerance. The mass of people have kept up hard and fast distinctions between dollars and cents, battleships and cruisers, "You owe me" and "I owe you," but they seem to have lost entirely the faculty of distinguishing between the good and the bad, the right and the wrong. The best indication of this is the frequent misuse of the terms "tolerance" and "intolerance." There are some minds that believe that intolerance is always wrong, because they make "intolerance" mean hate, narrow-mindedness, and bigotry. These same minds believe that tolerance is always right because, for them, it means charity, broad-mindedness, American good nature.

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What is tolerance? Tolerance is an attitude of reasoned patience towards evil, and a forbearance that restrains us from showing anger or inflicting punishment. But what is more important than the definition is the field of its application. The important point here is this: Tolerance applies only to persons, but never to truth. Intolerance applies only to truth, but never to persons. Tolerance applies to the erring; intolerance to the error.

What has just been said here will clarify that which was said at the beginning of this chapter, namely, that America is suffering not so much from intolerance, which is bigotry, as it is from tolerance, which is indifference to truth and error, and a philosophical nonchalance that has been interpreted as broad-mindedness. Greater tolerance, of course, is desirable, for there can never be too much charity shown to persons who differ with us. Our Blessed Lord Himself asked that we "love those who calumniate for us," for they are always persons, but He never told us to love the calumny. In keeping with the Spirit of Christ, the Church encourages prayers for all those who are outside the pale of the Church, and asks that the greatest charity be shown towards them. As St. Francis de Sales was wont to say: "It is easier to catch flies with a drop of honey than with a barrel of vinegar."

If some of us who are blessed with its sacred privileges believed the same things about the Church that her slanderers believe, if we knew her only through the words of traitors or third-rate lies of dishonest historians, if we understood her only through those who were never cradled in her sacred associations, we would perhaps hate the Church just as much as they do. The bitterest enemies of the Church, those who accuse her of being unpatriotic, as Christ was accused of being before Pilate; of being unworldly, as Christ was accused of being before Herod; of being too dogmatic, as Christ was accused of being before Caiaphas; or being too undogmatic, as Christ was accused of being before Annas; of being possessed by the devil, as Christ was accused of being before the Pharisees — these do not really hate the Church. They cannot hate the Church any more than they can hate Christ; they hate only that which they mistakenly believe to be the Catholic Church, and their hate is but their vain attempt to ignore. Charity, then, must be shown to persons, and particularly to those outside the fold who by charity must be led back, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd.

Thus far tolerance, but no farther. Tolerance *does not apply to truth or principles*. About these things we must be intolerant, and for this kind of intolerance, so much needed to rouse us from sentimental gush, I make a plea. Intolerance of this kind is the foundation of all stability. The government must be intolerant about malicious propaganda, and during the World War it made an index of forbidden books to defend national stability, as the Church, who is in constant warfare with error, made her index of forbidden books to defend the permanency of Christ's life in the souls of men. The government during the war was intolerant about the national heretics who refused to accept her principles concerning the necessity of democratic institutions, and took physical means to enforce such principles. The soldiers who went to war were intolerant about the principles they were fighting for, in the same way that a gardener must be intolerant about the weeds that grow in his garden. The Supreme Court of the United States is intolerant about any private interpretation of the first principle of the Constitution that every man is entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the particular citizen who would interpret "liberty" in even such a small way as meaning the privilege to "go" on a red traffic-light, would find himself very soon in a cell where

there were no lights, not even the yellow — the color of the timid souls who know not whether to stop or go. Architects are as intolerant about sand as foundations for skyscrapers as doctors are intolerant about germs in their laboratories, and as all of us are intolerant of a particularly broad-minded, "tolerant," and good-natured grocer who, in making our bills, adds seven and ten to make twenty.

Now, if it is right — and it is right — for governments to be intolerant about the principles of government, and the bridge builder to be intolerant about the laws of stress and strain, and the physicist to be intolerant about the principles of gravitation, why should it not be the right of Christ, the right of His Church, and the right of thinking men to be intolerant about the truths of Christ, the doctrines of the Church, and the principles of reason? Can the truths of God be less exacting than the truths of mathematics? Can the laws of the mind be less binding than the laws of science, which are known only through the laws of the mind? Shall man, gifted with natural truth, who refuses to look with an equally tolerant eye on the mathematician who says two and two make five and the one who says two and two make four, be called a wise man, and shall God, Who refuses to look with an equally tolerant eye on all religions, be denied the name of "Wisdom," and be called an "intolerant" God?

Shall we say that the reflected rays of the sun are warm but the sun is not hot? This we are equivalently saying when we admit intolerance of the principles of science and deny it to the Father of science, Who is God. And if a government, with the inflexible principles of its constitution, distant from the foundation of government by miles and separated from it by lifetimes, can empower men to enforce that constitution, why cannot Christ choose and delegate men with the power of enforcing His Will and spreading His benedictions? And if we admit intolerance about the foundations of a government that at best looks after man's body, why not admit intolerance about the foundations of a government that looks after the eternal destiny of the spirit of man? For unlike human governments, "there is no other foundation upon which men can build than upon the name Jesus."

Why, then, sneer at dogmas as intolerant? On all sides we hear it said today, "The modern world wants a religion without dogmas," which betrays how little thinking goes with that label, for he who says he wants a religion without dogmas is stating a dogma, and a dogma that is harder to justify than many dogmas of faith. A dogma is a true thought, and a religion without dogmas is a religion without thought, or a back without a backbone. All sciences have dogmas. "Washington is the capital of the United States" is a dogma of geography. "Water is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen" is a dogma of chemistry. Should we be broad-minded and say that Washington is a sea in Switzerland? Should we be broad-minded and say that H₂O is a symbol for sulfuric acid?

We cannot verify all the dogmas of science, history, and literature, and therefore we are to take many of them on the testimony of others. I believe Professor Eddington, for example, when he tells me that "Einstein's law of gravitation asserts that ten principal coefficients of curvature are zero in empty space," just as I do not believe Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes when he tells me that "the cockroach has lived substantially unchanged on the earth for fifty million years." I accept Dr. Eddington's testimony because, by his learning and his published works, he has proved that he knows something about Einstein. I do not accept Dr. Barnes's testimony about cockroaches because he has never qualified in the eyes of the modern world as a cockroach specialist. In other words, I sift testimony and accept it on reason.

So also, my reason sifts the historical evidence for Christ; it weighs the testimony adduced by those who knew Him, and the testimony given by Himself. It fails to be swayed by those who start with a preconceived theory, rejecting all the evidence against their theory and accepting the residue as the Gospels. In the search, it comes across such works as those of Renan and Strauss, which are critical, but it also comes across such works as those of Fillion and Grandmaison: it knows the name of Loisy, but it also knows Lagrange; it knows the theory of Inge, but it also knows D'Herbigny. And this reason finally leads me to accept the testimony of Jesus Christ as the testimony of God. I then accept these truths — truths which I cannot prove, as was Professor Eddington's statement about Einstein — and these truths become dogmas.

There can thus be dogmas of religion as well as dogmas of science, and both of them can be revealed, the one by God, the other by man. Not only that — these fundamental dogmas, like the first principles [elements] of Euclid, can be used as raw material for thinking, and just as one scientific fact can be used as the basis of another, so one dogma can be used as the basis for another. But in order to begin thinking on a first dogma, one must be identified with it either

in time or in principle. The Church was identified with Christ in both time and principle; she began thinking on His first principles and the harder she thought, the more dogmas she developed. Being organic like life, not institutional like a club, she never forgot those dogmas; she remembered them and her memory is tradition. Just as a scientist must depend on the memory of the first principles of his science, which he uses as the ground for other conclusions, so too the Church goes back into her intellectual memory, which is tradition, and uses former dogmas as the foundation for new ones. In this whole process she never forgets her first principles. If she did she would be like the undogmatic dogmatists of the present day, who believe that progress consists in denying the fact, instead of building on it; who turn to new ideals because they have never tried the old; who condemn as "obscurantist" the truth that has a parentage, and glorify as "progressive" a shibboleth that knows not either its father or its mother. They are of the school that would deny the very nature of things: free the camel of his hump and call him a camel; shorten the neck of a giraffe and call him a giraffe; and never frame a picture, because a frame is a limitation and therefore a principal and a dogma.

But it is anything but progress to act like mice and eat the foundations of the very roof over our heads. Intolerance about principles is the foundation of growth, and the mathematician who would deride a square for always having four sides, and in the name of progress would encourage it to throw away even only one of its sides, would soon discover that he had lost all his squares. So too with the dogmas of the Church, of science, and of reason; they are like bricks, solid things with which a man can build, not like straw, which is "religious experience," fit only for burning.

A dogma, then, is the necessary consequence of the intolerance of first principles, and that science or that church which has the greatest amount of dogmas is the science or the church that has been doing the most thinking. The Catholic Church, the schoolmaster for twenty centuries, has been doing a tremendous amount of solid, hard thinking and hence has built up dogmas as a man might build a house of brick but grounded on a rock. She has seen the centuries with their passing enthusiasms and momentary loyalties pass before her, making the same mistakes, cultivating the same poses, falling into the same mental snares, so that she has become very patient and kind to the erring pupils, but very intolerant and severe concerning the false. She has been and she will always be intolerant so far as the rights of God are concerned, for heresy, error, untruth, affect not personal matters on which she may yield, but a Divine Right in which there is no yielding. Meek she is to the erring, but violent to the error. The truth is divine; the heretic is human. Due reparation made, she will admit the heretic back into the treasury of her souls, but never the heresy into the treasury of her wisdom. Right is right if nobody is right, and wrong is wrong if everybody is wrong. And in this day and age we need, as Mr. Chesterton tells us, "not a Church that is right when the world is right, but a Church that is right when the world is wrong."

The attitude of the Church in relation to the modern world on this important question may be brought home by the story of the two women in the courtroom of Solomon. Both of them claimed a child. The lawful mother insisted on having the whole child or nothing, for a child is like truth — it cannot be divided without ruin. The unlawful mother, on the contrary, agreed to compromise. She was willing to divide the babe, and the babe would have died of broad-mindedness.