



# Boston Catholic Journal

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## The Problem with Tolerance

### The Tolerance of Intolerance ...

### ... and the Intolerance of Tolerance

**What**, precisely, do we understand by the notion of “tolerance”? One dictionary defines it as follows:

“A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry.” (dictionary.com)

Quite reasonable, yes?

Well, no. Superficially it appears ... *just*, even magnanimous. Tolerance for one and all. What could be more fair?

Indeed, the very antithesis of tolerance is intolerance, a word most often uttered as an epithet by the morbidly “correct” and which, in fact, is even legally actionable in today’s multi-moral, multicultural morass.

Now I must ask you a question: You maintain that you are a tolerant person and that tolerance is a virtue (which you, of course, “correctly” exemplify) that is necessary both to the polity and the person. You are indignant, even outraged before any intimation of intolerance — so much so, in fact, that *you will not tolerate it*.

You will agitate, demonstrate, and litigate against it. You will stamp it out as a pestilence to an enlightened, democratic, and civil society. You are fond of the saying that, “*I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.*”<sup>1</sup> Will you, indeed? This, in many ways, is the signature of the problem.

## **“I will be tolerant of anything but intolerance.”**

Another way of saying this is, “I am intolerant of intolerance.”

Will you, then — or will you not — tolerate, even defend, my intolerance of your intolerance of intolerance? In other words, will you tolerate the one thing you categorically repudiate?

Let us look at some of the things we tolerate and do not tolerate. But before we do, it is important to understand beforehand that (despite your own exemplary instantiation of it) the notion of tolerance is not univocal. That is to say, the notion of tolerance is articulated differently through various cultural, political, historical, and religious prisms. The Muslim understanding and practice of the notion of tolerance, for example, vastly differs from our own, that is to say, from what we have come to understand as tolerance in post-Christian Western culture. There is no functional, or even logical absolute in our understanding of tolerance that does not embroil us in contradictions. Tolerance does not possess the apodictic nature of, say, our understanding of a Euclidean triangle as a polygon that has three vertices and as many angles, the sum of which always equals  $180^\circ$ . It is not a concept in the way of mathematical or geometric models. Such deductive models are self-incorporated and reflexive: their definition is in their proof and their proof is in their definition. Agreed?

Logic, geometry, and mathematics are, in a sense, conceptual paradigms of intolerance. One cannot have arrived at both a correct and incorrect answer simply because it is *polite* (despite current education theory). If you *choose to believe* that a triangle is a figure whose boundary consists of points equidistant from a fixed center, while I hold that such a configuration is a circle, one of us will be wrong. You are certainly free to believe this absurdity, but it nevertheless remains absurd.

## **Catholic-Bashing as a Paradigm of Intolerance**

The Catholic Church is now the most prominent target for the charge of intolerance. So, in all candor, let us openly ask the question: *is* the Catholic Church intolerant?

***Of course it is! GOD HIMSELF IS!***

What is more, the *Church* is intolerant of precisely those sorts of behaviors of which *God* is!

Among them — especially in last 50 years — those that provoke the most strident and abusive reproaches from a now militantly secularized society concern areas of human sexuality; specifically, homosexuality in all its evolving variants, contraception, cohabitation, pre-marital sex, abortion, adultery, human-cloning, and bestiality.

The Church does not tolerate these behaviors. It deems them not simply sinful, but *gravely sinful*. One cannot engage in any of these behaviors and expect the approbation of the Church **BECAUSE** one cannot engage in any of these behaviors and expect the approbation of God.

Your contention, really, is with God Himself.

Neither secular society, nor many Catholics themselves (those unfortunate Catholics who are the products of the complete dereliction and utter distortion in “progressive” catechetical programs over the past half century) understand the Church any more than they understand God. For the most part, the *prevailing* view of the Church is based upon a corporate enterprise model within a broad and differentiated market economy comprised of shareholders who invest it, in this case, with moral authority and in, turn receive dividends in power-sharing.

## Not a Democracy

Is this the model of the Church? NO! The Holy Catholic Church is *not* a democracy. Its laws and doctrines are not the result of a consensus among its quarreling children; nor do the laws and dogmas of the Church derive their moral authority by means of popular or even majority vote. The laws and the *binding dogmas* that define us as Catholics come from God, from Christ Himself; they derive from the teachings of His holy Apostles, from Sacred Scripture and from 2000 years of unbroken Tradition.

The *Magisterium*, or teaching authority of the Church, is articulated in the Deposit of Faith — *divinely revealed* truths that come to us, equally, from Sacred Scripture and Tradition. We do not believe the teachings of the Church *because* they are popular or because they have broad secular consensus and accord with prevailing social norms. We are *obligated* as Catholics to believe them ... and not simply those that accord with our own personal inclinations, those with which we are comfortable, or which we find pleasing to us — ***but all of them without exception***. Does that surprise you?

One is Catholic *because* one believes in God and in what His Holy Catholic teaches, and practices (or makes every effort to practice) what it teaches. Put another way, *because* one believes in God and in what His Holy Catholic Church teaches, and practices (or makes every effort to practice) what it teaches, one is deemed a Catholic. If our religious convictions *happen* to be popular or have broad secular consensus, and accord with prevailing *social* norms, it is quite beside the point.

Social norms have nothing to do with my being Catholic, although my being Catholic *should* exercise some influence on secular norms. Why? Because that, too, is part of my being Catholic: the mandate to openly profess Christ<sup>4</sup>, to live my life in Christ, and to eschew the world, the flesh, and the devil as inimical to my life in Christ and to my ultimate happiness in Heaven.

While I must love my neighbor and refrain from judgment, love of neighbor does not, in any way, obligate me to be complicit (by either act or omission) in his sins because they are approved by the state or endorsed by society at large. "*Love the sinner but hate the sin*" — you have heard this, yes? In fact, it is my obligation as a Catholic to raise my voice in protest against the growing enormities of a militantly secular society, a society *intolerant* of my Catholic Faith, and which would, were it possible — in an act of violent *intolerance* — attempt to stamp it out ... as intolerant.

## Ideological Intolerance

Religious intolerance, then, is no different from the intolerance expressed in competing and incompatible ideologies such as secularism, militant feminism, and aggressive homosexuality — ***even when they are irreconcilable***. Each of these ideologies is unwilling to tolerate the Church's most fundamental precepts, especially concerning human sexuality and life — just as the Church *cannot* tolerate as moral the defining principles articulated in these (most often complementary) ideologies. Upon what logical premises, then, do such ideologies repudiate institutions (the Church, in this case) as intolerant — which themselves are equally and reciprocally intolerant? It is a circular argument.

I cannot, and ought not, be coerced to accept, think, believe, and act upon what is in violation of my own conscience. Laws certainly can be enacted (such as the "racial" laws of Nazi Germany codified as the Nuremberg Laws beginning in 1935, the Penal Laws of 17th century Britain, or the Sharia Law of Islam) and enforced — but the freedom of the individual conscience cannot be coerced, no matter what measures are taken against it. It may be socially and politically *correct* to endorse homosexuality, radical feminism, abortion, contraception, bestiality, and militant secularism — but to be "*correct*" is not to be *moral*. The Nuremberg Laws were "*correct*" for 10 years ... but they were not moral. The putative *science* of eugenics — espoused by Margaret Sanger (the founder of Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in America — and ***borrowed from America***<sup>3</sup> long before it was considered and subsequently legislated in Nazi Germany — endorsed these laws. There was *scientific* consensus. There was *popular* consensus, ***both in America until 1977 and Germany until 1945***.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was this widespread social and scientific *consensus*<sup>5</sup> that was the impetus behind the unspeakable atrocities that followed. Such a state is ineluctably a state of tyranny, the tyranny of social and scientific consensus — which one encounters daily in the effort to stamp out any remaining vestiges of Christianity in Western culture and the patrimony of Catholicism in particular.

In sum, if I am intolerant because I am a practicing Catholic, embracing the *authentic* teachings of the Holy Catholic Church (with an unbroken history of 2000 years), through my refusal to endorse agenda deeply inimical to the Church, then you can no more insist that I be tolerant of (endorse) behavior inconsistent with, and antagonistic to the Church, than you — who claim to be tolerant — refuse to tolerate the teachings of the Church as inimical to your own convictions.

Nor can such a state of affairs be remediated — at all! There can be no “soul-searching”, no compromise and no dialectic that will coherently reconcile these contradictions. The Church *cannot* (which is to say, it is not within Her power or authority to) demur from the revealed truths and divine mandates which are, in essence, nothing less than Her *raison d’être*.

The Church *cannot* change on these issues and will not go away. She has an extraordinarily good history of surviving those who lay siege to Her ... and subsequently — or perhaps consequently — go by the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn B. Hall, an obscure early 20th century admirer of Voltaire, who himself never said this, although it is often attributed to him. It has become the mindless mantra of elitist progressives, who, generally, will prefer to jail you — and if possible dismember you — to defending you for dissenting with them.

<sup>2</sup> "Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" (St. Matthew 28.19-20) and "He that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in Heaven." (St. Matthew 10:33)

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics_in_the_United_States)

<sup>4</sup> While California had the highest number of sterilizations, North Carolina's eugenics program which operated from 1933 to **1977**, was the most aggressive of the 32 states that had eugenics programs.[34] An IQ of 70 or lower meant sterilization was appropriate in North Carolina.[35] The North Carolina Eugenics Board almost always approved proposals brought before them by local welfare boards.[35] Of all states, only North Carolina gave social workers the power to designate people for sterilization.[34] "Here, at last, was a method of preventing unwanted pregnancies by an acceptable, practical, and inexpensive method," wrote Wallace Kuralt in the *March 1967* journal of the N.C. Board of Public Welfare. "The poor readily adopted the new techniques for birth control." *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> "Extensive financing [for eugenics] by corporate philanthropies, specifically the **Carnegie Institution**, the **Rockefeller Foundation** and the Harriman railroad fortune. They were all in league with some of America's most respected scientists from such prestigious universities as **Stanford, Yale, Harvard and Princeton**. These academicians espoused race theory and race science, and then faked and twisted data to serve eugenics' racist aims." <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/article/Eugenics-and-the-Nazis-the-California-2549771.php>



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