



THE APOTHEOSIS OF TOLERATION

by Michael W. Johnson, Ph.D.

Apotheosis (pronounced ah-poth'-ē-ō'-sis) is a word not used in everyday conversation, but it is highly appropriate here. It is defined as the supreme exaltation of a person, principle, etc., as if to divine honors. In modern society, toleration – as it is understood today – has become just such a sacrosanct and unassailable principle.

Contrary to popular belief however, tolerance is not the highest virtue, but rather a most vicious vice. Toleration is often an excuse for moral cowardice. It is the inability to stand for anything, so by default one stands for everything – or nothing. Toleration is the vice that stands in opposition to the virtue of patience, which is the virtue of enduring present suffering in the firm hope of attaining a future good. Toleration often requires condoning an existing evil with the aim of *avoiding* suffering or at least *postponing* it until later, a tactic which can be gravely sinful as it reflects a consequentialist moral attitude, i.e. “the end justifies the means.”

The words *toleration* and *tolerance* are derived from the Latin verb *tolerare* – to suffer, bear, or endure. Originally in the early Roman Republic, *tolerare* referred to an individual who had to put up with the barbaric injustices of non-Roman peoples such as the Etruscans or Samnites. This is the sense that led to the first definition of *tolerate* – to endure or sustain pain or hardship, and *toleration* as the endurance of evil, suffering, etc. (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. XVIII, 1989). As the centuries passed for the Roman Empire, the word was twisted from a virtue of the early Romans into a vice of their descendants. The change is well captured in the Oxford dictionary’s third

definition of *toleration* as the action of allowing what is actually not approved.

In the field of political science, the modern concept of toleration is the handmaiden of anarchy and the delight of terrorists. This is because it is used to convince the populace that they must accept evil as part of a pluralist society. But far more importantly, its true purpose is as the seed-bed of tyranny. In their unbridled arrogance, anarchists unleash chaos upon societies that have heretofore accepted all manner of evil under the guise of tolerance.

After a while, however, society tires of the random violence and ceaseless uncertainty, and often allows a strongman to seize power provided that he suppresses the anarchists. Unfortunately, if the strongman is evil, people will lose their legitimate freedoms that are given to them under the purview of the Natural Law. Some excellent examples from the Twentieth Century of this phenomenon are Hitler and Lenin, who highlight the natural political progression of toleration from extreme anarchy to extreme tyranny.

This false toleration, as understood and promulgated by our society today, enables sin and engenders a multiplication of ever greater sin.

But it is in the field of theology that toleration becomes the vilest of vices, for it is the trademark of the devil. It goes without saying that Satan is the vilest of beings; thus any quality which adheres to him is likewise vile. This is a problem for Satan, so he wants human beings to think that toleration is a divine attribute. Consequently, he does everything in his power to *apothoseize* (pronounced ah-poth'-ē-ō'-sīz'; to glorify, exalt, even to deify) toleration – that is, make us think that toleration is an excellent virtue. In this endeavor, he is greatly aided by our corporeal nature. Since everyone delights in some

physical pleasure at one time or another, it is a simple task for the infernal spirits to represent sinful pleasure as an acceptable good and therefore morally justified. This trick of the devil sneaks into our minds the propensity to tolerate things we know are evil, which often translates to our toleration of other evils as well.

When tempted with the vice of diabolical toleration, we might ask ourselves the following question: Why are we taking this present form of earthly existence so seriously? It is surely not worth compromising what we know to be good and true only to suffer evil that takes us and others away from God. After only a short time, we will never see the pleasures or sufferings of this life again. This is not the entirety of life. In fact, I like to refer to it as pre-life. In 1246 AD, Our Lord revealed to Saint Lutgarde seven heavenly promises. These promises define *true life*, which we will never find on our journey through this "vale of tears":

Love without suffering.

Life without death.

Youth without age.

Riches without poverty.

Health without sickness.

***Joy without grief.
Everlasting peace under
the perpetual grace of God.***

It takes only a few seconds of reflection to conclude that such a life is infinitely preferable to what we currently experience, and is worth fighting for.

And what must we humans do to earn these seven wonderful promises? Simple. We must love Love. For God IS Love. And the way to love God is clear and unambiguous: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

However, the last thing Satan wants you to do is demonstrate your moral fiber by adhering to the Natural Law, obeying the Ten Commandments, and following the laws of Holy Mother Church. Instead, he wants you to cling to every imaginable pleasure in this life even to the extent of tolerating known evils. How tragic that so many of us are deluded by this diabolic façade of temporal pleasure behind which awaits and eternity of infinite and unimaginable suffering.

There is much more on the vice of toleration that could be written. Yet one distinction is most necessary, especially since our society, in its indolence, often fails to make proper and necessary distinctions.

It is one thing to tolerate an evil out of necessity. For example, there are some evils an individual is unable to rectify. Nevertheless, in such cases, the virtuous person will strive against the evil in accordance with his position and duties of state. Then there is the kind of tolerance all should denounce—which is the refusal to object appropriately, even in cases where only a personal or interior objection is possible. What is the tell-tale sign? In cases of "false tolerance," one begins to think, speak, and act as if the evil being tolerated is acceptable or, even worse, a positive good.

This false toleration, *as understood and promulgated by our society today*, enables sin and engenders a multiplication of ever greater sin. Our world is inundated in sin. Sin is a rejection of God. It is the act of not loving Him Who Is All Truth, Infinite Beauty, and Perfect Goodness.

Yet God Incarnate has proved that sin is overcome by the Perfect Act of Love—when He stretched out His arms upon the Cross and willingly *suffered* for our sake. Christ did not tolerate evil as our society does. Rather, all His thoughts, words, and actions were turned towards defeating evil. In His ultimate sacrifice, He permitted evil to be inflicted upon His Divine Person, precisely to conquer it! On account of love, He suffered the punishment of all sin so that we might forever enjoy True Life with Him.

This is what each one of us must do. Thou shalt not tolerate evil out of apathy or by deceptively considering it acceptable or good. Rather, one must make reparation for the evil committed by oneself and others. Let each one then patiently persevere with faith, hope and *love of God*, by taking up his cross and following Him, and *never* falsely tolerating evil.

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