

There is not, say they, a more dangerous Pest in any Government than Multiplicity of Religions; as it sets Neighbor at variance with his Neighbor, Father against Son, Husbands against their Wives, and the Prince against his Subjects. I answer, that this, far from making against me, is truly the strongest Argument for Toleration; for if the Multiplicity of Religions prejudices the State, it proceeds purely from their not bearing with one another, but on the contrary endeavoring each to crush and destroy the other by methods of Persecution. *Hinc prima mali labes*: Here's the Source of all the Evil. Did each Party industriously cultivate that Toleration which I contend for, there might be the same Harmony in a State compos'd of ten different Sects, as there is in a Town where the several kinds of Tradesmen contribute to each others mutual Support. All that cou'd naturally proceed from it wou'd be an honest Emulation between 'em which shou'd exceed in Piety, in good Works, and in spiritual Knowledg. The Strife among 'em wou'd only be, which shou'd most approve it self to God by its Zeal in the Practice of Vertue, which out-do the other in promoting the Interest of their Country, did the Prince protect 'em all alike, and maintain an even ballance by the distribution of his Favors and Justice. Now it's manifest, such an Emulation as this must be the Source of infinite publick Blessings; and consequently, that Toleration is the thing in the world best fitted for retrieving the Golden Age, and producing a harmonious Consort of different Voices, and Instruments of different Tones, as agreeable at least as that of a single Voice. What is it then that hinders this lovely Harmony arising from a Consort of various Voices and different Sounds? 'Tis this, that one Religion will exercise a cruel Tyranny over the Understanding, and force Conscience; that Princes will countenance the unjust Partiality, and lend the Secular Arm to the furious and tumultuous Outcrys of a Rabble of Monks and Clergymen: in a word, all the Mischief arises not from Toleration, but from the want of it.

Edition used: Pierre Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary on These Words of the Gospel, Luke 14.23, 'Compel Them to Come In, That My House May Be Full'*, Chap. 6 edited, with an Introduction by John Kilcullen and Chandran Kukathas (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005).

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