

1647

***From, Simple Cobbler of Aggawamm***  
**Against Toleration**  
**Rev. Nathaniel Ward**

. . . First, such as have given or taken any unfriendly reports of us New-English, should doe well to recollect themselves. Wee have beene reputed a Colluvies of wild Opinionists, swarmed into a remote wildernes to find elbow-roume for our phanaticke Doctrines and practises: I trust our diligence past, and constant sedulity against such persons and courses, will plead better things for us. I dare take upon me, to bee the Herald of *New-England* so farre, as to proclaime to the world, in the name of our Colony, that all Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, and other Enthusiasts shall have free Liberty to keepe away from us, and such as will come to be gone as fast as they can, the sooner the better.

Secondly, I dare averre, that God doth no where in his word tolerate Christian States, to give Tolerations to such adversaries of his Truth, if they have power in their hands to suppress them.

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Not to tolerate things meerly indifferent to weak consciences, argues a conscience too strong: pressed uniformity in these, causes much disunity: To tolerate more then indifferents, is not to deale indifferently with God: He that doth it, takes his Scepter out of his hand, and bids him stand by. Who hath to doe to institute Religion but God? The power of all Religion and Ordinances, lies in their purity: their purity in their simplicity: then are mixtures pernicious. I lived in a City, where a Papist preached in one Church, a Lutheran in another, a Calvinist in a third - a Lutheran one part of the day, a Calvinist the other, in the same Pulpit: the Religion of that place was but motley and meagre, their affections Leopard-like. . . .

That State is wise, that will improve all paines and patience rather to compose, then tolerate differences in Religion. There is no divine Truth, but hath much Celestiall fire in it from the Spirit of Truth: nor no irreligious untruth, without its proportion of Antifire from the spirit of Error to contradict it: the zeale of the one, the virulency of the other, must necessarily kindle Combustions. Fiery diseases seated in the spirit, imbroile the whole frame of the body: others more externall and cool, are less dangerous. They which divide in Religion, divide in God; they who divide in him, divide beyond *Genus Generalissimum*, where there is no reconciliation, without atonement - that is, without uniting in him, who is One, and in his Truth, which is also one. . . .

And prudent are those Christians, that will rather give what may be given, then hazard all by yielding nothing. To sell all peace of Country, to buy some peace of conscience unseasonably, is more avarice than thrift, imprudence than patience: they deal not equally, that set any Truth of God at such a rate; but they deal wisely that will stay till the Market is fallen. . . .

Concerning Tolerations I may further assert.

## Simple Cobbler of Aggawamm - 2

That Persecution of true Religion, and Toleration of false, are the *jannes* and *jambres* to the Kingdome of Christ, whereof the last is farre the worst. . . .

*Frederick Duke of Saxon*, spake not one foote beyond the mark when he said. He had rather the Earth should swallow him up quick, then he should give a toleration to any opinion against any truth of God.

He that is willing to tolerate any Religion, or discrepant way of Religion, besides his own, unless it be in matters meerly indifferent, either doubts of his own, or is not sincere in it.

He that is willing to tolerate any unsound Opinion, that his own may also be tolerated, though never so sound, will for a need hang Gods Bible at the Devills girdle.

Every Toleration of false Religions, or Opinions hath as many Errours and sins in it, as all the false Religious and Opinions it tolerates, and one sound one more.

That State that will give Liberty of Conscience in matters of Religion, must give Liberty of Conscience and Conversation in their Morall Laws, or else the Fiddle will be out of tune, and some of the strings crack.

He that will rather make an irreligious quarrel with other Religions than try the Truth of his own by valuable Arguments, and peaceable Sufferings; either his Religion, or himself is irreligious.

Experience will teach Churches and Christians, that it is farre better to live in a State united, though a little Corrupt, then in a State, whereof some Part is incorrupt, and all the rest divided.

I am not altogether ignorant of the eight Rules given by Orthodox divines about giving Tolerations, yet with their favour I dare affirm,

That there is no Rule given by God for any State to give an affirmative Toleration to any false Religion, or Opinion whatsoever; they must connive in some Cases, but may not concede in any.

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That if the State of *England* shall either willingly Tolerate, or weakly connive at such Courses, the Church of that Kingdome will sooner become the Devils dancing-Schoole, than Gods Temple: . . . And what pity it is, that that Country which hath been the Staple of Truth to all Christendom, should now become the Aviary of Errors to the whole world, let every fearing heart judge.

I take Liberty of Conscience to be nothing but a freedom from sinne, and error. . . . And Liberty of Errour nothing but a Prison for Conscience. Then small will be the kindnesse of a State to build such Prisons for their Subjects.

### Simple Cobbler of Aggawamm - 3

The Scripture saith, there is nothing makes free but Truth, and Truth faith, there is no Truth but one: If the States of the World would make it their summoperous Care to preserve this One Truth in its purity and Authority it would cure you of all other Politicall cares. I am sure Satan makes it his grand, if not only task, to adulterate Truth; Falsehood is his sole Scepter, whereby he first ruffled, and ever since ruined the World. . . .

There is talk of an universall Toleration, I would talke as loud as I could against it, did I know what more apt and reasonable Sacrifice *England* could offer to God for his late performing all his heavenly Truths then an universall Toleration of all hellish Errors, or how they shall make an universall Reformation, but by making Christ's Academy the Devil's University, . . .

It is said, That Men ought to have Liberty of their Conscience, and that it is persecution to debarre them of it: I can rather stand amazed then reply to this: it is an astonishment to think that the braines of men should be parboiled in such impious ignorance; Let all the wits under the Heavens lay their heads together and find an Assertion worse then this (one excepted) I will petition to be chosen the universall Idiot of the world. . . .

Source: Theodore de la Guard [Nathaniel Ward], *The Simple Cobbler of Aggawamm in America*  
SOURCE: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bdorsey1/41docs/55-war.html>