

**Historical Perspectives on Toleration:
The Dutch Republic in the 16th and early 17th century.**

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On July 7, 2005, a set of synchronized attacks targeting London's transit system was orchestrated by a group of terrorists linked to an international Islamic terrorist organization known as Al-Qaeda. Clearly, one of the billions of questions that stirred in the minds of individuals across the globe reflecting on this event is connected to the notion of tolerance. In response to BBC news' correspondent Mike Baker on the question of teaching tolerance in schools (in the wake of recent bombings in London in July of 2005), Tali Avishay (a teacher from Jerusalem) said that, "For me the solution is definitely not to negate one religion or culture, but rather to seek ways to improve **quality of life** [my bold] for all groups as well as communication and respect between them". In another commentary about tolerance and the London bombings on BBC, a Muslim named Z. Patel defines toleration: "The way I define tolerance is this; I think we should in the first instance try and accept people's differing views, life choices, etc. If we find we cannot accept them then we should tolerate them. For example, as a Muslim I cannot accept homosexuality, as the Holy Scriptures forbid it. However, I would not treat a gay person any differently to a straight person in any given situation. I don't have to agree with their life choice but I don't have the right (as a fellow human being) to discriminate against them." Avishay and Patel are formulating a commonly held conception of toleration. Both responses on toleration work from the perspective of enabling individuals to maintain their beliefs, while limiting their ability to act in a harmful way against another, based on those same beliefs. Fundamental is the assumption that there is or should be a gap between thought and action. Balancing belief and action is precarious and works from the assumption that the idea of toleration transcends or is mutually exclusive from religion and carries with it political, legal, economic, and other "human rights", especially the "right to life". Regardless of ideological preference, one should not violate or interfere with the ability of someone to get a job, seek justice, or express his/her beliefs. These 'rights' are individual rights and, albeit espoused to be

universal by many, are still delimited by lines of political sovereignty. This is a “modern” notion of toleration and is usually attributed by scholars to be one of the hallmarks of the “modern” nation—a nation following a European historical pattern having more definite origins in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In a characteristic example, Somerville, a historian who has written an online piece on “The United Provinces in the Seventeenth Century “, notes that Holland by the 17th century was a “state...[that] tolerated many different religions.” Yet, when looking at events in a “modernizing” nation such as the Dutch Republic (United Provinces) or at an icon of Dutch toleration such as Desiderius Erasmus in this period, it becomes evident that toleration, in its ‘modern’ form, hasn’t fully formed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Instead, “Erasmian toleration” was distinct, framed by a altogether different and unified Christian world, while either intolerance or a limited, local and embryonic form of toleration (compared to its ‘modern’ form) is evinced when looking at the trial of Oldenbarnevelt (Holland’s *Landsadvocaat*) and during the stadholderate of Frederick Hendriks because of internal political structure of the Dutch Republic.

Undoubtedly a central figure within discussions about the origins and nature of toleration, Erasmus had a view of toleration framed in the greater idea of Christendom, based on scholarly critique and reform, where ultimate authority lay within the idea of the church and a church hierarchy. Erasmus was born in Rotterdam, educated in the county of Holland, and spent many years in Brabant. So, it is possible for someone to examine his ideas and intentions from the perspective of being born and raised as a “Nederlander”. Moreover, there were nascent and even quasi-patriotic forms, resembling a “national consciousness”, in the European world even before Erasmus’ time. A simply example of this type of “national consciousness” might be seen in the protracted conflicts between England and France in the Hundred Years War. Nevertheless, it would be anachronistic and premature to speak of a well-formed idea of a nation-state and popular allegiance to that state. Next, one must consider the fact that Erasmus himself did not accept patriotic constructs. Erasmus’ chief ally in Holland, Cornelius Aurelius, who helped to “pioneer the introduction of humanist studies in Holland” was also one of the major promoters of the Batavian myth (Israel 44). The Batavians, according to Tacitus, had fomented a successful rebellion against the Romans. The myth was used as justification for the preeminence and uniqueness for “Holland as a political, moral, and cultural entity” (Israel 57). Erasmus’

unwillingness to adopt the Batavian myth when it entered into humanist debates about national identity indicates that he saw himself outside of a “Nederland’s” identity. James Tracy, a scholar on Erasmus, notes that “one of Erasmus’s root notions, and one that takes many forms in his works, is the idea of Christian civility, involving a spiritual commonwealth made up of learned believers”. At the very least, then, Erasmus’ identity and, thus the focal point for his worldview, lay within the idea that he was a Christian. Notably, this perspective was pronounced early in the young Erasmus, before the divisions associated with the Protestant Reformation. In these early years, Erasmus himself insisted “he belonged to all Christendom” (Israel 53).

And within Christendom at the time, there was a humanistic revival of classical learning in which Erasmus had found a place as a scholar and a critic for the cause of Christianity. In much of Europe, there was a cultural impulse to revive classical learning in the fifteen and sixteenth century. In the geographical context of the Low Countries, in which Erasmus was born and raised, this was the rule rather than the exception. Erasmus was very affected by the new philological methods designed to rediscover the classical past, pioneered by the Italians. Aside from his personal experience in Italy (1506-1509), a young Erasmus was inspired by individuals like Rudolph Agricola, who returned from Italy and taught others to study classical Latin, Greek, and practice critical philology (Israel 43). Moreover, Erasmus’ early studies at the Latin school at Deventer provided the seeds for his interest in promoting humanism in the north, critical like the south but with an emphasis on religion. A noted historian on the Dutch Republic, Jonathan Israel emphasizes that Deventer was the “leading center of humanist printing in northern Europe” and the Latin school in which Erasmus studied was a center point for Dutch humanism (82). Also, it is impossible to avoid considering the influence of other celebrated Dutch humanists (John Colet, Thomas More) who were close friends of Erasmus and reinforced his desire to revive classical letters in a discriminating manner.

Humanist scholarship, however, remained empty for Erasmus unless it had a meaningful center and developed a greater devotion to Christ. Erasmus’ humanism was synthesized with his early experiences of the *Devotio Moderna*, a lay movement originating in the Netherlands that laid stress on the development of the inner life of the individual. Individuals accepting the Modern Devotion worked on spiritual transformation by imitating the life of Christ. Manifesting itself into The Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, a Church-approved teaching order that

fostered monastic vocations, the elements of Modern Devotion would play a major role in shaping the mindset of a young Erasmus who went to this school. Some of his interests, such as his paraphrasing of Lorenzo Valla's methods of correct usage of the classical forms of writing, do indicate his esteem for the elements of classical revival, by itself. Nevertheless, the majority of his writings provide greater evidence of Erasmus' desire to merge his early life experiences with the Modern Devotion and his interest in humanism. Consequently, his writings, from *The Handbook of the Christian Knight* (1503) to *Ecclesiastes* (1535), there is a visible leaning and preference for scholarship directed toward leading individuals to a 'philosophy of Christ' or to reform Christian society as a whole. Indeed, following from his humanist leanings and his influences by *Devotio*, Erasmus was highly critical of Christian society, with particularly ill feelings about the obsession with ritual and outward forms amongst monastic orders. Erasmus wanted to "inject into the vitals" the teachings of Christ by studying and meditating on the Scriptures, using the spiritual interpretation favored by the "ancients" to make the text pertinent to moral concerns"(Tracy). Jonathan Israel notes that "a striking feature of Erasmus' philosophy of Christ is its idealization of the "literate" individual" but, at the same time, also notes that he was a "zealot filled with a vision of Christendom" (46, 45, respectively).

Ironically, this "zealot" for "Christendom" is sometimes misperceived as intentionally undermining the doctrines of the Church, the idea of a Church and the church hierarchy. In fact, many of Erasmus endeavors were quite the opposite, supporting the Papacy, the Church and its doctrines. One instance in which he philosophically and apologetically buttresses the papacy is "in a letter to Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio: 'As to the sovereignty [*monarchia*] of the pope I have never doubted; but whether that sovereignty was recognized in Jerome's day or exercised is a doubt I have raised somewhere when prompted by the context, I think in my published notes to Jerome' (Tracy). When Erasmus was working on a revision of the *New Testament*, he obtained a letter from Pope Leo X for authorization. Moreover, there are numerous examples of his defense of church doctrine or church interpretation of scripture. Erasmus instructed his printer to stop printing works by Luther when he noticed a misinterpretation by Luther on a reading of St. Paul (Tracy). In his *De Libero Arbitrio*, Erasmian scholar James Tracy again reports that Erasmus "defended the place of human free choice in the process of salvation and argued that the consensus of the church through the ages is authoritative in the interpretation of Scripture". On the other hand, it would be foolish to assume that Erasmus didn't work for a transformation of

the church. Jonathan Israel observes out that he wanted a “stripping away the whole façade of false piety”. Erasmus’ criticism, however, must be qualified. His criticism was directed at the method of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and empty practices within the church, rather than doctrines of the Church or the fundamental structures of the Church itself. He was interested in reforming the Church from within, through education, finding value in revising the training of preachers in the ‘philosophy of Christ’ or in promoting the intellectualism of humanistic studies to purify the Church. And, there were other like-minded souls within the Church with similar views who supported Erasmus. One could make a laundry list of possible allies or sympathizers: John Fisher of Rochester, William Warham of Canterbury, Alfonso de Fonseca (archbishop of Toledo), Alonso Marique of Seville (the Grand Inquisitor), and Bishop Piotr Tomicki, to name a few (Tracy). Wouldn’t it seem strikingly odd if thousands and thousands of individuals within one institution didn’t have some variance of opinion? Yet, cast within the polemics of an age of crisis for the Church, it was Erasmus, one of the leading scholars of the Church, who would be associated with having “laid the egg that Luther hatched”. Erasmus responded to such criticism by admitting that there is truth of the charge, but said “he had expected quite another kind of a bird“(wikipedia). In fear after being attacked, a Dominican doctor of divinity would cite blame on Erasmus rather than noting the fanaticism of his attacker or the origins of incitement from his own extreme theological criticism. Erasmus writings would be placed on the *Index of Forbidden Books* later, after his death, as the Church flexed its post-Tridentine muscle, while also making a serious attempt at similar sorts of reform urged by Erasmus.

The type of “toleration” espoused by Erasmus would be very different than what existed afterwards. Although there were many voices, much like Erasmus, who were calling for changes, Erasmus’ vision was grounded on a unified church. The Church was one; deviations from the faith were few, if not weak and easily suppressed. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to argue that Erasmus was attempting to create a political circle within “Christendom” that was autonomous or divorced from the larger populace. Rather, the substance of Erasmus’ writings, although perceived by some as a threat, was to clarify and cleanse an orthodox position; its purpose was to seek greater alignment between the beliefs of the Church and the behavior of individuals within it. Erasmian toleration had to do with critical understanding and living a model life, not power. Whether it was Charles V (the Holy Roman Emperor), Henry VIII (the king of England and only up to a point), or a stadholder in the

Netherlands—all claimed allegiance to the one faith, irrespective of whether or not their actions were validated by others as following from the principles of that same faith. There was an accommodation reached religiously and politically; Christendom still existed, at least in the European sphere and, at a minimum, theoretically. Luther, on the other hand, to safeguard his movement would have to ally with German princes. Questions of power were inevitable. Much would change after the success of Luther's reformation. There were numerous orthodoxies within the formerly unified Christian world. These new and subsequent orthodoxies within the European sphere would have to work for their success. Questions of toleration would have to be informed by questions of the allowance of multiple orthodoxies, political realignment, and sovereignty, at the very least. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the conspicuous pattern was to devolve religion into collective and manageable areas of power. Many historians draw attention to a "confessionalization" process that begins in the sixteenth century, where strict, public standards of religious orthodoxy were imposed. Notably, in the "Holy Roman Empire", the ruler determined the religion of his subjects (*cujus region ejus religio*) or, in France, there were islands of Calvinism in a sea of Gallicanism (Edict of Nantes). There was political accommodation for a collective form of religious liberty, not necessarily tied to the conscience or political rights of an individual, but tied to sovereign or state power.

In this larger European context, an examination of the nature of toleration in the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is rife with complications. Toleration in this period has to be framed in the context of the Dutch revolt from its former central government in Spain and the gradual formation of the practical mechanisms for a working government and lines of sovereignty. First, the causes of the Dutch revolt from their Spanish sovereign were just as likely to be associated with the infringement of political rights and privileges, as well as the religious right for Calvinists to practice their religion. It was clearly a Calvinist revolt; the aid and influence of the Calvinists in supporting the Geuzen is striking. The Geuzen were the largely Calvinist guerrilla and privateering forces who initiated the military actions for the revolt. The iconoclasm in the *beeldenstorm* in the Netherlands during the summer of 1566, in which churches were cleaned of images and Catholic religious statues were razed, also indicates the degree to which Calvinists played a role in the revolt. Interestingly, the eventual leader of the revolt, William the Silent, converted to Calvinism when he became conscious of the religious influences in the revolt. Then, the religious and political

(as well as other) motivations for the struggle against Spanish intrusion were inextricably linked. It would have been difficult for an individual, after the revolt took root, to maintain to be an open and clear advocate of toleration in religion, especially the religion of the intruders (Spain's Catholicism), without arousing scrutiny about the political allegiance of that same individual. Secondly, because religious and political motivations were intertwined, other religions might be also seen as a threat to the new social and political order. Apart from Catholicism, other religions also influenced the Dutch population, including Lutheranism, varieties of Anabaptism, and varieties of Spiritualism. Moreover, later a split within Calvinism, centered on the notion of predestination, would add to the manifold controversies about toleration within the nascent Dutch state.

Likewise, adding to these problems initially for the Dutch Republic was the ambiguity in the language of would-be constitution, the Union of Utrecht, and the divergence between principles and practice, which would juxtapose questions of sovereignty with toleration. A number of clauses in the Union of Utrecht are ambiguous, open to different interpretations, or ignored. With regard to toleration, the following articles and highlighted areas are notable (Rowan 69-74):

- Article I: “Firstly, the aforesaid **provinces will form an alliance, confederation, and union among themselves**, as they do hereby form an alliance, confederation, and union, in order to **remain joined together for all time, in every form and manner, as if they constituted only a single province**...Nevertheless, **each province and the individual cities, members, and inhabitants thereof shall each retain undiminished its special and particular privileges, franchises, exemptions, rights, statutes, laudable and long practiced customs**, usages and all its rights, and each shall not only do the others no damage, harm, or vexation, but shall help to maintain, strengthen, confirm, and indeed protect the others in these by all proper and possible means....**differences...shall be decided by means of the ordinary courts of justice, by arbiters, or by friendly agreement**...

- Article II: “The Alliance is to be maintained **against attempts** upon it made in the name of the Peace of Ghent or under the pretext of **re-establishing Roman Catholicism...**”
- Article III: That the aforesaid provinces shall also be bound to assist each other in the same way and to help each other against all foreign and **domestic lords, princes, lands, provinces, cities, or members thereof...**”
- Article IX: “...no treaties of truce or peace shall be made or wars begun, nor any taxes or contributions...except with the general advice and consent of the aforesaid provinces...**other matters affecting the maintenance of this Confederation shall be made according to the opinions and votes of the majority...**in the event that the provinces cannot reach agreement in matters...**then the difference will be referred to and provisionally submitted to the stadholders now in office...**”
- Article XIII: “As to **matters of religion**, the **States of Holland and Zeeland shall act according to their own pleasure**, and the **other Provinces of this Union shall follow the rules set down in the religious peace drafted by Archduke Matthias...with the advice of State and the States General, or shall establish such general or special regulations in this matter as they shall find good and most fitting for the repose and welfare of the provinces, cities and individual Members thereof**, and the preservation of the property and rights of each individual, whether churchman or layman, and no other Province shall be permitted to interfere or make difficulties, provided that **each person shall remain free in his religion and that no one shall be investigated or persecuted because of his religion**, as is provided in the Pacification made at Ghent..”

The stipulations of the Union of Utrecht left practical and immediate decisions having to do with religion convoluted and open to interpretation. According to Article XIII, individuals should be ‘free in his religion’ as provided by the Pacification of Ghent. According to the

Pacification of Ghent, there should be full freedom and security” especially and including religion”. Understandably, there is a clear and contradictory limitation in Article II, with an historical bias against Catholicism, the religion of their ‘oppressors’. Next, the ambiguity of what is “good and most fitting the repose of the provinces” in matters of religion can be argued from a variety of viewpoints. In addition, it is important to note that if conflicts did arise, the question of how they would be resolved may become problematic. Article IX indicates that “other matters” (and religion could be considered such a matter) that affect the maintenance of the “confederation” could be judged by majority vote, while differences would be adjudicated by the stadholder in office. Yet, at the same time, Article III wants to prevent any domestic “lord” or “province” from wielding too much power. Interestingly, certain characteristic patterns develop in the Dutch republic revolving specifically around ‘domestic lords’, ‘stadholders’ and preeminent ‘provinces’.

It was in practice that much of this freedom “in his religion” and power within the republic began to be defined. Jonathan Israel notes that “Regents [members of the civic government] had proclaimed the principle of religious freedom at beginning of Revolt” but “set it aside in the years after 1573” (372). Israel also notes that there was a difference between principle and practice: “all 7 provinces adhere to the same Church policy—Dutch reformed was the recognized, public church” but, in practice, “placards were enforced with divergent degrees of strictness and in different ways”. There were also questions of sovereignty. While, the provinces were supposed to “remain joined together for all time, in every form and manner, as if they constituted only a single province”, each province acted as a sovereign power through their provincial States, which were mainly represented by wealthy town burghers and nobles. The powers of a central government came to be exercised by a States-General, which was delimited in its actions because major decisions had to be made by unanimous vote. But, since it was composed of delegates from the provincial States, sovereignty was reduced to the provincial level. The only area that the States General had unquestioned sovereignty over was the Generality lands (areas outside provinces which had been gained to fortify the Dutch state and prevent further intrusion by the Spanish). Thus, G. Edmundson, a scholar on the Dutch Republic, characterizes the administration of the new state as a “many-headed system of government [of the Dutch Republic], whose divided sovereignty and hopelessly complicated checks and counter-checks appeared to forbid united action or strong counsels”. Although

sovereignty in the Dutch state might have appeared to be amorphous, certain patterns of power did develop. Power was apportioned to each of the provinces theoretically, but, in practice, Holland dominated the other provinces. Holland contributed to fifty nine percent of the budget for the United Provinces. Because of its wealth, Holland did and would continue to attempt to wield enormous influence within the Dutch Republic from the revolt to the end of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the stadholderate (who presided over their provincial states, controlled and commanded provincial armies, and appointed certain offices) became an office controlled and dominated by members of the House of Orange, with the same stadholder being elected in five out of the seven provinces for close to two hundred years. The stadholders could also select members of the town governments, from which provincial assemblies drew their power. Consequently, power struggles between the stadholder and the province of Holland and were one of the key dynamics that would determine the nature of toleration in the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

An immensely significant event providing evidence of this delicate balance of sovereignty and power between the province of Holland and the stadholder in the formative years of a nascent Republic, the trial of Oldenbarnevelt reveals that toleration was unformed, in its ‘modern’ sense. Interestingly, Oldenbarnevelt was one of the negotiators of the Union of Utrecht in 1579 and arguably one of the “founding fathers” of an independent Netherlands. Paradoxically, in May of 1619, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Holland’s *landsadvocaat*, was beheaded publicly for high treason but really for the “subversion” of the country's religion and policy of the state. His office was later renamed *raadpensionaris* (“great pensionary”), after his death, and individuals politically subordinate to the stadholder were chosen in order to set limitations to this office. Pensionaries originally were secretaries or legal advisers of the town corporations. But, as Holland’s *landsadvocaat*, Oldenbarnevelt exercised enormous power. Edmundson points to the significance of Oldenbarnevelt when he states that “The driving-wheel of the government was now [late 16th century] to be found in the predominance of the Province of Holland, as personified in the person of her Advocate, Oldenbarneveldt”. Furthermore, Edmundson indicates that he was practically a “Minister of all affairs”. Although theoretically working for Holland only, Oldenbarnevelt, in practice, managed much of the domestic policy for all of the Dutch Republic and exercised the powers of a foreign minister. Indeed, he negotiated financial terms with England (notably 250,000 pounds to secure towns) for the state, alliances

(Hanse towns, France, as examples) and guided major decisions. In fact, Oldenbarnevelt even engineered the ascension of Maurits, the stadholder of the majority of provinces and his future rival, to power. While Oldenbarnevelt managed the domestic and foreign policy for the republic, Maurits was its undisputed military leader. Maurits, especially from the 1590s to the period immediately before the Twelve Years Truce (1609-1621), was able to string together a number of military victories, which enhanced the prestige of the Dutch republic and established much of what would become the present day border of the Netherlands. Maurits, himself, became a “quasi-monarchical figure”, according to Israel, in the Dutch Republic (421). Scholars also indicate he cared very little for the nuances of politics, apart from maintaining unity within the Dutch Republic. Edmundson claims that “Maurice, slow and inert by nature, and averse from politics, was not the man to take the initiative in opposition to the Advocate”. Nevertheless, this was a precarious balance as long as each individual, Oldenbarnevelt or Maurits, remained within his sphere of power.

However, tensions began to emerge especially after Maurits proved incapable of fulfilling one of the military aims pressed by Oldenbarnevelt—uniting the northern and southern Netherlands. This military failure and Oldenbarnevelt’s pressure on Maurits, who was reluctant to choose this strategy, was the beginning of growing tension between Holland’s *landsadvocaat* and the stadholder. Maurits pointed out that “it [was] unsafe to denude the United Provinces of their entire field army, and expose it, when far away from its base in an enemy's country, to the risk of being cut off and possibly destroyed” (Edmundson). Accordingly, Jonathan Israel marks that “The Advocate’s relationship with Maurits, [was] deteriorating since 1600” (403). This was precisely the same time as military exploits into the southern Netherlands began. The relationship between these two individuals would feel greater stress over the issue of accepting a truce with Spain. Leading a province that, in particular, felt the burdens of military expenditure, Oldenbarnevelt argued for peace claiming “that the Republic’s financial position was no longer tenable” (Israel 400). It is uncertain the degree to which Maurits, and William Lewis (stadholder of Friesland) chose war because it would have “meant enforced idleness and great loss of emoluments” (Edmundson). Rather, Maurits and Lewis more than likely chose war because they were “good patriots” concerned about the general welfare of the Republic and dubious about Spanish intentions. Israel makes mention of the fact that “Maurits, in his open circulars to the Holland town councils, in the autumn of 1608, maintained that the truce would undermine the

Republic's security and perhaps even lead to the restoration of Spanish tyranny" (404). In either case, Oldenbarnevelt, certainly Holland, and the international status of the Dutch Republic, emerged triumphant to the detriment of Dutch long distance trade" and Zeeland's transit traffic to the south Netherlands (Israel 409). In terms of long distance trade, Israel notes that, during the Truce Years, Spain and Portugal were able to successfully intrude into areas controlled by the WIC while the VOC "lost momentum" in the East Indies (409). On the other hand, Holland, according to Israel, had lower costs, a rise in Levantine trade, and a resurgent trade in the Baltic. However, Oldenbarnevelt did not prove to have the last say. The power struggle within the Dutch Republic, found in the dynamic between the stadholder and Holland, would crystallize around an issue, which was concomitant with political issues at the time-religious toleration.

Oldenbarnevelt, in the interests of Holland, would support a revision of the Reformed faith (Arminianism), while Maurits would eventually and openly support the orthodox position (Gomarist), both individuals vying for dominant influence in the Dutch Republic and working to define the nature of toleration. In the two decades preceding the death of Oldenbarnevelt (who died in 1618), the questions of the Republic were not so broad as to allow someone to wonder whether other religions should be tolerated. Historian might point out that Catholicism was making a revival in the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. Israel notes the clear growth of Catholic priests in the Dutch Republic, especially during the truce years (378). Also, Israel discovers that placards for the Reformed Church as the public church were enforced differently. Expectedly, Catholicism was also making some headway in fringe areas, especially ones that bordered centers of Catholicism (prince-bishoprics of Cologne or Munster, for example). Or, in addition, areas that were reconquered by Spain were susceptible or impressed to Catholic influence. Nevertheless, the Calvinist church received the backing of the state; it was the only universally backed public church in the Netherlands. Hardly any regents were "openly Catholic" after the 1590s, claims Israel (369). Moreover, the structure and organization of the Dutch Reformed Church—into synods (councils, both national and provincial), classes (regional gatherings of preachers), and consistories (local councils made up of lay leaders and preachers)—matched superbly with the federalist structure of the Netherlands and allowed for its greater and immediate influence. Therefore, toleration, at best, was limited or framed around "freedom of conscience" rather than "freedom of practice" (Israel 373). Then, the

most intense debates with respect to “toleration”, before the death of Oldenbarnevelt were associated with the possibility of reform within the Calvinist faith. This type of reform within Calvinism would stem from academic debates between Gomarus and Arminius. The Dutch theologian at Leiden, Gomarus, defended the strict interpretation of the five principle points of orthodox Calvinism (wikipedia):

1. total depravity (i.e....in their natural state, men could not turn toward God...it is grace that allows men to be reborn).
2. unconditional election (God chooses based on His own mercy, not on the merits of men)
3. limited atonement (Christ’s death takes the penalty of sin away from those God has chosen)
4. irresistible grace (should be obvious)
5. perseverance of the saints (or popularly, “once saved, always saved”...your faith and gifts only grow)

Arminius, a newly elected chair of theology at Leiden, proposed a looser interpretation in which he allows for a conditional form of election, in which he allowed for the free will of man to participate in the grace and mercy of God.

In an age where religion and politics were indissoluble, this question of interpreting Calvin would spill over very quickly into the political arena, while defining the nature of toleration. Oldenbarnevelt, essentially wielding great domestic influence, supported the Armenian view. Interestingly, Israel’s research indicates that Arminius’ appointment was “urged by Johannes Uytenbogaert, a leading liberal Reformed preacher, and engineered by Oldenbarnevelt” (393). Oldenbarnevelt also pushed forward the famous Dutch Remonstrance of 1610, setting forth Arminian points of divergence from the strict, orthodox form of Calvinism. Edmundson points out that Oldenbarnevelt probably had “formed no very definite conclusions” with regard to these Church quarrels. On that note, it is unclear whether he was probably more of a politique (a head of a state who was more concerned with politic unity over religious conformity) or a ‘libertine’ (who wanted a certain freedom from restraints, particularly from social and religious norms and morals). Nonetheless, he was against those who “set up the authority of the Church against that of the State” (Edmundson). Fundamentally then, the

position of the Remonstrants had great meaning for the relationship between state and church. Uytenbogaert represented the Remonstrant position when he supported the authority of the state over the Church in “the appointment of preachers, regulation of doctrine, calling of synods, and determining their agenda” (426). These “libertine” positions, taken by the Arminians or Remonstrants, from the perspective of the orthodox Calvinists, would limit the influence of the Calvinist Church. Furthermore, there might be other cumulative effects. Israel draws attention to patterns in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in which towns that had these “libertine” tendencies were areas that “Catholic priests [were allowed] to reside and preach” (Israel 381-382). As another example, it was more characteristic of areas, under Arminian civic leanings, such as Leiden, to allow for a Lutheran ‘public church’. Logically, then, it is possible to see that, from the perspective of the orthodox position, this ‘freedom’ within the church could potentially lead to a greater religious breakdown. Consequently, the Remonstrant opposition, or Gomarists, were equally adamant about their view and posed a Counter-Remonstrance adhering to the Heidelberg Catechism (Reformed confession of faith). Counter Remonstrants wanted the “synods and classes to possess power to ensure doctrinal purity within the Church and curb theological deviation “. For Counter Remonstrants, the struggle was for “the true faith”. As a corollary, they felt that the primary function of the state was to defend and serve the church. To prevent the further erosion of the “true faith”, Counter Remonstrants looked to the stadholder for support. Initially, Maurits remained outside of these religious discussions and separated himself from politically interfering. In fact, scholars repeatedly argue that Maurits didn’t know whether the predestination was “green or blue”, indicating his ignorance or indifference over the issues. Nevertheless, because of the growing tensions between control of the policies of the Dutch state and threat of disunity/disturbance in the Netherlands, Maurits placed his support openly on the side of the Counter Remonstrants with respect to a situation that arose at Alkmaar.

After Maurits openly sided with Counter Remonstrants at Alkmaar, the struggle between stadholder and Holland’s *landsadvocaat* ossified over the nature of toleration and sovereignty. In a mobilization effort against the Arminians at Alkmaar, hard line Calvinists suspended a number of ministers who refused to participate. When the States intervened and supported a prominent minister, Adolphus Venator, who was then suspended, Maurits manipulated civic elections toward a Gomarist leaning. The civic militia, however, who wanted to expel the new

Gomarists found help from Oldenbarnevelt, who, in turn, reversed the authority of the stadholder. The stage was set. Oldenbarnevelt would argue for the preservation of the republic while the stadholder would counter in favor of ending the religious divisions that were creating civil strife. Oldenbarnevelt's arguments ran more and more toward provincial sovereignty, while Maurits arguments ran more towards the centralization of power to handle difficult and divisive questions. Jonathan Israel finds that a popular and more militant counter Remonstrantism also emerges within these years, but stemming primarily from economic causes associated with the Twelve Years' Truce and the resentment of a large Calvinist immigrant population (434-436). Economic stresses and immigrant resentment created social unrest, particularly in Holland, the power base of Oldenbarnevelt. Although in 1614, the Holland towns were able to adopt a moderate religious placard "for the peace of the church", by 1616, Oldenbarnevelt was unable to maintain unity in Holland. In the meantime, the stadholder had been working to shore up his support. Israel notes that "Maurits chiseled relentlessly at Oldenbarnevelt's shrinking power base, dispatching letters to Holland regents who opposed Oldenbarnevelt or might be persuaded to do so" (443) He found great help from a champion for the Counter Remonstrant position, Burgomaster Pauw in Amsterdam. By the summer of 1617-1618, the republic was in dire crisis with disturbances in Amsterdam, The Hague, Brill, and Oudewater. To add to Oldenbarnevelt's troubles, Maurits was found attending services at a Cloister Church that was seized by Counter Remonstrants. Counter Remonstrants also were working for the calling to order a National Synod to resolve disputes. Oldenbarnevelt, finding his support weakening, endorsed the "Sharp Resolution", which empowered towns to hire *waargelders* (special troops) who were allied to the municipality rather than the state. The underlying assumption of the acceptance of *waargelders* was that sovereignty lay at the provincial level. In 1618, there was a reaction, where Maurits, acting under the authority of the States-General worked to crush the resistance of Oldenbarnevelt and his party. First, Maurits purged the Nijmegen council, which was antagonistic to the Gomarist leanings of the rest of the province of Gelderland. What followed were mutinies of garrisons, popular uprisings, or town councils were forcibly set aside by the stadholder—all in favor of the Counter Remonstrants. The States General, without a majority, voted for the calling of a National Synod and also voted in favor of disbanding the *waargelders*. Now, Oldenbarnevelt and his party had no military to back up their claims to provincial sovereignty. Maurits had successfully mobilized the support of five out of the seven provinces.

Oldenbarnevelt and his supporters—among others, the famous jurist Grotius, and the pensionary of Leiden, Hogerbeets—were arrested and held prisoners at the Binnenhof, awaiting trial. The statesman for the most powerful province in the Dutch Republic and who acted virtually as “prime minister, president, attorney general, finance minister, and minister of foreign affairs of the whole republic” was put to death (Motley).

The death of Oldenbarnevelt and the simultaneous success of the proceedings of the National Synod cemented an end to any form of toleration and a shift in power to the stadholder. Not surprisingly during their trial and at earlier points, Grotius and Oldenbarnevelt would argue for provincial sovereignty. Their claim was that religion was a provincial concern and sovereignty lay with the province to decide internal matters. Moreover, Oldenbarnevelt and Grotius were civil servants of their own provinces and therefore should be held responsible and judged by their own province. Maurits wouldn't disagree, conscious of the logical and theoretical implications. Nevertheless, Maurits would point out that “religious divisions had to be settled by the States General as the highest government of the United Netherlands [and] by whose authority all differences and difficulties of importance over the last 30 years have been settled” (Israel 447). Maurits, while not disputing provincial sovereignty, argues for historical precedent and the gravity of how these religious issues were affecting the union. Apologists from his party would point out later that Maurits argued that “sovereignty in the United Provinces was divided between the provinces and the Generality” (Israel 447). The judges would agree with the stadholder. At the same time, the National Synod, would expel the Remonstrants during sessions and confirm the orthodox position. Significantly, the stadholder had purged the Arminian leaning towns in religiously divided Holland and towns in which there was still strong Arminian support before the convening of the National Synod. Perhaps more politically conscious or religiously flexible, Oldenbarnevelt and Grotius never argued for toleration but not full toleration. Grotius placard “For the peace of the Church” wanted “liberty of conscience’ within a dominant and state-backed church, where certain aspects of doctrine were defined as publicly debatable. Nevertheless, intolerance prevailed after the arrest of Oldenbarnevelt and the ruling of the Holy Synod. Maurits was supreme but left himself with only one direction religiously for the new regime. Maurits had to purge the civic militias, schools, and consistories along with local councils. There was finally rigid confessional unity and sovereignty was firmly placed in the stadholder as executor. But, it was forced and there

was a price. Tensions still remained with riots breaking out sporadically in the 1620s over religious matters. Israel notes that a military presence had to remain in Utrecht, Hoorn, Schoonhoven, Alkmaar, and Oudewater. The Reformed Church lost adherents. Israel points to a “dramatic jump in Catholic allegiance at Rotterdam, around 1620” and the loss of Rotterdam Remonstrants to Lutherans (394-395). At the same time, the orthodox Calvinists wanted further limitations on behavior: “the consistories pressed for reforms across a broad front, hoping to achieve a shift in civic legislation towards more, and tighter, restrictions on feasting, dancing, music-making, and theatrical performances” (Israel 476). From the perspective of the military leader, it left the republic vulnerable. Maurits made a change diplomatically, in an effort to divert and minimize Spanish pressure, by drawing the Dutch Republic into subsidizing the Thirty Years’ War, complicating its military involvements.

Nevertheless, as long as Holland remained divided or weak, sovereignty was centralized in the power of the stadholder who defined the nature of toleration, even after Maurits’ death. Maurits’ purging of the Arminian towns in Holland had left Holland weak, but not divided, as Maurits’ replaced the regents with under educated and inexperienced individuals of Counter Remonstrant leanings. But, upon the death of Maurits and the ascension of the next stadholder, Frederick Hendriks, new circumstances would unfold in the Holland towns. The historian Israel identifies the emergence of a political form of Arminianism distinct from the religious and Remonstrant position. Arminianism, notes Israel, in the 1620s was political and secular in form, emerging as a reaction to the decline of Holland following Maurits orthodox Calvinist revolution of 1618, a trade depression beginning in 1621, and the existence of party factions. Party factions managed political affairs at the town level, where client systems, family influence, and political ideology were inseparably linked to a theological stance (Israel 392). Many of these local and dynastic factions intermixed with opportunists who politically adhered to an ideological stance at expedient points without really having any clear theological convictions. This political form of Arminianism was able to regain positions through town elections in Holland towns because of the eclipse of Burgomaster Pauw (strong local arm of Counter Remonstrantism in Amsterdam), with “the Republic’s fortunes at a low ebb”, a climate of repression and defections (following Maurits’ purges), and a delay in the choice of a new stadholderate, as Frederick Hendriks had to wait for each province to confirm him (Israel 487-488). In 1625, Frederick Hendriks, upon possession of the stadholderate in 5 out of 7 of the provinces, created a situation in which

religious issues and religious control would devolve to a town level based on party factions. Israel records that Frederick Hendriks was “temperamentally averse to Counter Remonstrantism” (490). He was born in the year of his father’s death at the hands of a fanatical religious devotee and had links to Uyttenbogaert, one of the principal proponents of Arminianism. Working from his own inclinations and noting the political and religious situation in Holland, Frederick Hendriks tried to manage a middle position with regard to religious policies. In a climate prone to the resurgence of Remonstrant gatherings, the Holland towns found no support in either “cancel[ing] the placards forbidding Remonstrant prayer-gatherings” nor in enforcing Counter Remonstrant placards won from the Calvinist revolution (Israel 492). In fact, in February of 1626, Frederick Hendricks instructed his troops that they would no longer be available for “quelling peaceful Remonstrant meetings” (Israel 492). Frederick Hendriks also suppressed a mutiny among the militia in Amsterdam, upon the recall of a purged Arminian captain. Although slightly favoring the Arminians, he never went too far by eliminating the Counter Remonstrants. Israel notes that, while he never went too far, supporting either party faction; neither party faction was purged from towns, signaling the key difference from Maurits’ religious policy.

Frederick Hendriks religious position, then, primarily as a *politique* (emphasizing political unity over religious conformity), fixed religious issues at a town level. By not taking a firm stance for the entire Dutch republic on one side of the key religious debate, Frederick Hendriks tacitly, and sometimes explicitly, confirmed that religious issues were not associated or connected with the preservation of the larger union. He intervened only when there was the possibility of violent protest. Both party factions had to rely on him, in this way, although typically it was the Arminians that found his support. Drawing the teeth of the military against enforcement of the counter Remonstrant placards were probably the greatest blow to a large, confessionalized and orthodox Calvinist state. Religious prosletization was now mutually exclusive from the physical force of the larger Dutch state. The Arminian cause found great help in the fact that Arminian leaders contained Arminian actions. For example, Grotius instructed Arminians to maintain decorum, noting the new political climate. The stadholder’s indifference forced confessional uniformity to the town level and dominated by party factions. Israel records that Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, and Alkmaar became Arminian-leaning towns, while Haarlem, Leiden, and Utrecht remained Counter Remonstrant in religious attitude. If the new

lines for sovereignty over religion (and thus toleration) were politically localized and lacked military support from the stadholder, then the new weapons were words. The Netherlands in the 1620s was an environment in which there was a rise of “theologico-political” pamphlets, propaganda, and debates over toleration. Among the more notable proponents of the Counter Remonstrant position during this period were Adriaen Smout, Jacobus Trigland (both at Amsterdam), and Henricus Arnoldi (Delft). Arnoldi based his ideas on “the principles of the Revolt and the Union of Utrecht” (Israel 500). He pointed to the “authentic legacy of the Revolt against Spain” connecting the “freedom” for which they fought as being religious and political (Israel 500). Arnoldi stated the leniency of secular authorities brought out the “free exercise of the pretended religions” (Lutherans, Mennonites, Jews). He only allowed for the possibility of a politically pliant Lutheran and Mennonite population in the Netherlands, not leaving room for Catholics or “godless Jews”. And finally, he noted the intolerance of the Remonstrants toward Counter Remonstrants before 1618 (Israel 501). Remonstrant leaders, at this time, typically all believed in general toleration but not full freedom, while Grotius retained his position on a limited form of toleration based on certain theological points that would remain in the realm of debate. While other Remonstrant leaders were willing to allow for a broader form of toleration (“freedom of conscience”), only Episcopius argued for full freedom of practice. Episcopius found that the variety of views on scripture were “fragments of truth” and, together, “elevates to a positive good” (Israel 503). He states that toleration “strengthens the state because only that state is secure whose citizens are content”. While Episcopius didn’t built a systematic account of toleration on individual “rights” and individual “freedom”, he went far toward reaching a modern conception of toleration by defining the secure state as a body of content individuals. Despite debate, however, confessional uniformity and forms of toleration remained at a local level. Even after 1633, when the stadholder broke from the Arminians party faction and sided exclusively with the orthodox Calvinists over the issue (interestingly enough) of another truce with Spain, Frederick Hendriks did not intervene to impose religious conformity. Nevertheless, the political dynamic of Holland against stadholder was reborn in full form. But, strikingly, by allying himself with the orthodox party faction and maintaining indifferent to religious questions, Frederick Hendriks defused the power of the orthodox party.

In conclusion, in the early formation of the Dutch state, from the beginning of the Revolt to the end of Frederick Hendriks stadholderatee never accepted or achieved a ‘modern’ form of toleration. Before Oldenbarnevelt’s fall, toleration was, at best, local and limited. It was localized to provincial areas, as long as Oldenbarnevelt had hegemony in the republic, as arguments for provincial sovereignty could easily be used and the state was not yet full confessionalized. Before Oldenbarnevelt and his party lost power, the church of the state was clearly Calvinist but there were many areas where leaders turned a ‘blind eye’. Also, it was a limited type of toleration in which it was possible to reform within the Calvinist church (Arminian) or allows for “freedom of conscience”, with some exceptions for conventiclers. After Oldenbarnevelt’s fall, Holland was weakened and sovereignty over religion was centralized and exercised by the state through the stadholder, Maurits. The period after 1618 was, at best, intolerant with the state forcing a confessionalization process. During the first half of the next stadholderatee, Frederick Hendriks disconnected the confessionalization process from the power of the centralized state. The confessionalization process was localized to party factions at the level of towns. A limited form of toleration might be seen in towns with Arminian leanings and there were exceptional individuals, such as Episcopius, that might talk of full freedom. But, typically, it was a freedom from inquisition, but not full freedom of practice, that was supported by the more progressive thinkers. Toleration, based on the respect for an individuals freedom of expression, opinion, and rights were still at a distance.

What might be particularly illuminating for future thoughts about toleration and the Dutch republic are elements that were not discussed in depth or set aside, based on the limitations of this paper. The largest consideration, of course, would have to do with the economic situation of the Dutch, which were also tied to questions of power and religion. The Enlightenment, as a whole, would clearly redefine the nature of toleration. It would also be intriguing to note the common elements of counter Remonstrant and Remonstrant positions, which would inform us of clearly accepted Dutch constructs. Along those lines, there are common themes in arguments proposed by various theorists at different time periods--Coornhert (Spiritualist, moralist, and playwright), Lipsius (humanist and theorist), Stevin (mathematician), and Grotius—which might be particularly telling. The Spiritualist proposals and early defense of

full freedom of religion by Coornhert are exceptional and fascinating. Finally, the rise of the Collegians in the 1630s is timely and revealing.

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