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Dutch Contributions to Religious Toleration

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Historians have neglected a seventeenth-century hero whose actions and words laid the groundwork for America's democratic diversity and religious toleration—at least that is the theme of a best-selling history of the Dutch colony of New Netherland, the predecessor of New York.[1] This courageous but forgotten lawyer, Adriaen van der Donck, went out from Holland in 1641 as a young man to serve as "schout" (chief judicial officer, both sheriff and prosecutor) of Rensselaerwyck, then moved to New Amsterdam where he eventually became the spokesman of colonists irked by the arbitrary highhandedness of the Director General, Petrus Stuyvesant. Van der Donck is now proclaimed to have ensured that Dutch religious toleration became the basic assumption and pattern that evolved into modern American religious pluralism. The great popularity of this recent revelation ensures that thousands of people, from general readers to professional historians whose specialty lies elsewhere, now believe that religious toleration in America originated in New Amsterdam/ New York, where Dutch customs of toleration contrasted with the theocratic tendencies of English colonies. Is this claim true? In my opinion—no. Should historians pay attention to journalistic jingoism? Perhaps—because unexamined assumptions affect topics treated more seriously. What, then, can be said about the fabled Dutch tradition of toleration and its contribution to the discussion of religious freedom in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?

This article examines, first, Van der Donck's lack of expressed interest in toleration, followed by the question whether New Amsterdam was indeed a colony welcoming religious dissent. In 1657, English colonists on Long Island thought it was; they petitioned unsuccessfully for toleration of Quakers, assuming that Dutch custom included general religious toleration.

[1]Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004). Regarding religious freedom, see 96–97, 244–45, 274–77.

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The Dutch colonial government's refusal on this point must have surprised the English, who had long heard that the Dutch were tolerant. The question thus has to be asked, why did English people think that religious toleration essentially characterized the Dutch? The Union of Utrecht (1579), which constituted the confederation of Dutch provinces that became The United Netherlands, promised religious freedom in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland with resounding phrases that were remembered long after the true circumstances of society had contracted toward suspicious restriction of doctrinal dissent. From a distance, the English could still read "that every particular person shall remain free in his religion, and that no one will be pursued or investigated because of his religion." In The Netherlands, development of arguments for mutual religious toleration (rather than unilateral permission) became the work of members of marginalized groups—the idiosyncratic Catholic Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert, the Mennonite Pieter Twisck, and the Remonstrants Simon Episcopius and Philip van Limborch. Twisck, author of the first history of sentiments favoring toleration (1609), met John Robinson and the Pilgrim Church in Leiden in 1617 for two days of theological discussion. Robinson subsequently became more open toward alternative points of view, although he did not accept Mennonite theology. In their colony, the Pilgrims adopted anti-dogmatic positions first worked out by Remonstrants. John Murton, one of the Separatists who had split from the Pilgrims to found English Baptist congregations, returned to England from Amsterdam, where he was imprisoned for publishing a plea for religious toleration that was a shortened version of Twisck's arguments. Murton's work in turn provided the structure for Roger Williams's famous tolerationist book *The Blovdy Tenent* (1644), which formed a significant part of the background for the petition of 1657 from Flushing on Long Island. Arguments for toleration continued to grow among Dutch dissenters, especially in reaction to new persecution—particularly Calvinist oppression of Mennonites in Switzerland and Catholic oppression of the same people when they became refugees in the Palatinate. Response took the form of a widespread international effort to provide food, shelter, and financial relief, and to demand toleration—a campaign that extended beyond the Mennonites to involve Reformed and Remonstrant professors and other religious and political leaders as well, including Jan Amos Comenius, John Dury, Philipp von Zesen, Philip van Limborch, and William Penn. This ongoing relief effort should be counted among the sources for the ideas on toleration developed by John Locke (a friend of van Limborch's) that were influential later in America. The story is complex; and, in following the influence of Dutch ideas on the rise of religious toleration in North American colonies, the path we are to trace does not run through New Netherland.

I. Adriaen van der Donck and the Absence of Toleration in New Netherland

In 1649, Adriaen van der Donck returned to The Netherlands, where he wrote two remarkable booklets (*Vertoogh van Nieu-Nederland* [1650] and *Beschrijvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant* [1656]—"Discourse about New Netherland" and "Description of New Netherland").[2] These describe the richness of the colony, comment on Native society, and present his views on government problems in the West India Company's administration of New Netherland that he thought required intervention from the States General (the United Provinces' representative precursor to the Dutch national parliament). Van der Donck proposes hopeful remedies, all in the familiar form of promotional publicity attempting to attract new investors and settlers. After his description of geography and native society, van der Donck's interest was directed toward the improvement of circumstances that would contribute to greater economic flourishing and prosperity for the Dutch.

Russell Shorto thinks that as a university student Van der Donck had "soaked up the atmosphere" of Dutch tolerance in Leiden, "and his courses in law and politics would have been imbued with Dutch ideas about democracy, monarchy, and tolerance."[3] When van der Donck was a student, however, the atmosphere at the University of Leiden regarding religion and toleration was heavily perfumed with the anti-Remonstrant and anti-Mennonite sulphur of professors Jacob Trigland and Frederik Spanheim; the subject of law study was not democracy but Roman law, Dutch common law, and trial practice.[4] Whatever there was to soak up (from imagined student conversations, for example, about Descartes' book just printed in Leiden, *Discours de la Méthode* [1637], or about Professor Cunaeus's idea that the best form of government was found in the Old Testament and consisted of a non-democratic, aristocratic republican body, the Sanhedrin, flatteringly like the States General of the United Provinces), one cannot discover in the words of van der Donck any interest in religious toleration. In these, his only publications, he does not write about toleration at all. Nor are there any

[2]Adriaen van der Donck, *Vertoogh van Nieu-Neder-Land* ('s Gravenhage: Michiel Stael, 1650); van der Donck, *Beschryvinge Van Nieuvv-Nederlant* (Amsterdam: Evert Nieuwenhof, 1656). A translation of the first: E. B. O'Callaghan, trans., *Remonstrance of New Netherland, . . . With Secretary van Tienhoven's Answer* (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1856); a translation of the second: Adriaen van der Donck, Thomas F. O'Donnell, ed., *A Description of New Netherlands* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1968); Adriaen van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherlands*, ed. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, trans. Diederik Willem Goedhuys (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

[3]Shorto, *Island at the Center of the World*, 97.

[4]Willem Otterspeer, *Groepsportret met Dame, I, Het Bolwerk van de Vrijheid, De Leidse Universiteit 1575–1672* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2000), 331–34, 355–61.

manuscripts of his concerning toleration. And he is not found in colony records arguing for toleration. We can, therefore, simply dismiss the supposition that van der Donck is the source of a Dutch tradition of religious toleration in New Netherland that grew to influence the discussion of toleration in the American colonies in the late eighteenth century.

Christopher Beneke, in his recent book, *Beyond Toleration: The Religious Origins of American Pluralism*, comments that when the English took control of New Netherland, turning it into New York in 1664, they "formalized the informal Dutch tradition of tolerating dissent."[5] This assumed tradition was put to the test in New Netherland during the 1650s: when Jews arrived as refugees during the loss to Portugal of the Dutch colony in Brazil in 1654–1655, and two years later, when a proposal to tolerate Quakers was submitted to Director General Stuyvesant and the Council of New Netherland.

Jews were entirely unwelcome in New Amsterdam. Jaap Jacobs comments in his recent scholarly survey of the history of the colony that "No one in New Netherland was pleased with the arrival of twenty-three destitute Jews. On 22 September 1654, Stuyvesant and the council requested the directors [of the West India Company in Amsterdam] to refuse the Jews permission to remain in the colony. . . . The Reformed ministers in New Netherland were not enthusiastic about the arrival of the Jews either."[6] The Amsterdam directors of the colony, however, refused the request from New Amsterdam and enforced acceptance of the presence of Jews there because of their importance to the company's finances, either as shareholding investors in Amsterdam or (as Jacobs interprets it) as refugee debtors still owing money from their activities as tax farmers in Pernambuco, Brazil. The decision from Amsterdam contradicted the measures already put in place in New Amsterdam to have the Jews leave soon. In the summer of 1655, Stuyvesant and the governing councils "made a number of decisions with the objective of preventing the Jews from becoming permanent residents, and of making it so difficult for them that they might leave of their own accord."[7] Burghers did not want Jews to serve in the militia; a Jewish burial ground was not granted; trade was restricted; crafts were not allowed; exceptional discriminatory taxes were levied; public exercise of religion was forbidden. Some of these measures were eventually reversed following pressure from Amsterdam, where the "Portuguese Nation" (as the Jews were called) as outsiders had negotiated exceptional privileges. Jacobs concludes,

[5]Christopher J. Beneke, *Beyond Toleration: The Religious Origins of American Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21.

[6]Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 372–74.

[7]Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 377.

"The decision to allow the Jews to stay in New Netherland, despite the opposition of ministers, director general and council, and the colonists, was a consequence of the tolerant views of the directors in Amsterdam. It was not evidence of exceptional tolerance in the colony."[8] The "tolerant views" in Amsterdam were motivated by hope for economic advantage to the company, not by any other rationale for toleration of the Jews, whose presence the company directors, too, named an "infection" the colony would suffer.

On December 27, 1657, English colonists who had moved into the New Netherland colony and were living at Flushing (Vlissingen) on Long Island submitted a petition to the Council of New Netherland and Director General Petrus Stuyvesant requesting religious freedom for Quakers. Their request is known as the Flushing Remonstrance.[9]

These English from Flushing in New Netherland were not Quakers themselves. They based their request on biblical texts and formally on the town charter that had established their settlement in 1645, a charter issued to them by the Dutch colonial government, probably with approval from the West India Company in Amsterdam.[10] In that document, the colonists were promised freedom of conscience, "according to the custom and manner of Holland, without molestation by either magistrates or dominies."

But what was this custom and manner? To what extent was Holland tolerant when Flushing's charter was issued in 1645? What did the Dutch think freedom of conscience meant? Stuyvesant had no difficulty refusing the 1657 request, no hesitation in allowing punishment of Quakers and their friends with whipping and fines, and no reluctance to forbid their preaching. According to Jacobs, this repression was not concerned with freedom of conscience but only with the prevention of disturbance of the public order and with punishment for refusal to carry out an ordinance against Quakers. Having just described the vicious whipping of an unruly Quaker preacher dragged

[8]Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 379. Odette Vlessing and André Vuijsje, *1609; het jaar van Emanuel van Meteren & Henry Hudson* [a separate number of] *Uitgelezen Boeken, Katern voor boekverkopers en boekenkopers* 13 (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 2009), nr. 1, 45–46.

[9]Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 308–9; J. F. Maclear, ed., *Church and State in the Modern Age: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 48–50, nr. 16: texts of the Flushing Remonstrance (1657) and Dutch West India Company Instructions (1663). For a more extensive description of persecution of Quakers in New Netherland (from a Quaker viewpoint), see John Rous, George Fox, and James Cudworth, *The Secret Workes of a Cruel People Made Manifest* (1659), repr. in Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *The Seventeenth-Century Town Records of Scituate, Massachusetts* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2001), 3:390–420; for New Netherland, 392, 405–6.

[10]The Bible verses (all of which were commonly familiar) have been identified by Robert Ward Harrington, "Speaking Scripture: The Flushing Remonstrance of 1657," *Quaker History* 82 (Autumn 1993), 104–9.

along the street behind a cart, he concludes that "It was never the intention of director general and council to hamper freedom of conscience."[11]

It is a fine distinction when it comes to the effects. New Netherland's authorities allowed Quakers and their supporters the liberty to retain their beliefs and to choose to be scourged. Implicitly, the government unilaterally defined religion as a set of theological opinions that could be held individually in silence without a need either for expression in community (beyond the family) or for liturgy led by clergy (however ordained) sharing the same doctrines. Dissenters' belief that salvation depended on active membership in a pure church congregation (the Bride of Christ), not on individual adherence to dogmatic formulations, was arrogantly ignored by the Reformed government. Dissenters' biblical obligations to evangelize and to obey God rather than man (Acts 4:18–20) were troublesome objections most conveniently left unaddressed. By restricting "conscience" to such individual sentiments, all active divergence from this imposed definition could be treated as infractions of public order; and the fiction of freedom of conscience could be asserted.[12] Reformed governments in Switzerland, while persecuting Mennonites, similarly denied that anyone was ever punished for belief or matters of conscience; obstinate refusal to adhere to civil laws—such as the requirement to swear oaths or the prohibition of religious conventicles outside the official church—had to be punished lest the authority of the magistrates fall into disrepute and civil unrest result.[13] Claims that there was liberty of conscience but that threats to public order merited severe punishment in New Netherland were no less disingenuous.

The 1657 request in New Netherland was refused and subsequently forgotten until noticed again in the nineteenth century.[14] (To see it as a causative forerunner of the Bill of Rights is, therefore, questionable.) The Flushing Remonstrants who asked for toleration for Quakers were punished severely as a consequence of their temerity in presuming that an appeal to the Netherlands' reputation for welcoming all the "sons of Adam," including "Jews, Turks, and Egyptians," would move the colony's government to reverse itself with respect to the enforcement of laws against welcoming Quakers.

It was not only Jews and Quakers (and their friends) who met intolerance in New Netherland. A Baptist minister in Flushing—Roger Williams's

[11]Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 308.

[12]Evan Haefeli, "The Text of the Flushing Remonstrance," Paper presented to the Center for Ethical Culture, New York, November 15, 2007: "No one in Flushing was persecuted for their beliefs, only when they practiced those beliefs in public ways that defied Dutch law."

[13]The Swiss situation, which is discussed later in this article, is documented in Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *Letters on Toleration, Dutch Aid to Persecuted Swiss and Palatine Mennonites, 1615–1699* (Rockport: Picton, 2004).

[14]David William Voorhees, "The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance in Historical Perspective," Keynote Speech at the New York State History Conference, Cooperstown, N.Y., June 8, 2007, 5; published online at http://www.flushingremonstrance.info/#research.

Providence friend, William Wickenden—was fined and deported because he had baptized people during a visit in 1656. If one wonders how the English at Flushing could have known about Roger Williams's ideas, Wickenden provides an obvious clue. Additionally, consistent with the policy aiming to preserve Reformed social unity, Lutherans in New Netherland were forbidden to hold meetings led by their minister, who was also deported. The justifications given were not ostensibly doctrinal: first, despite his having been sent by the Amsterdam Lutheran consistory at the request of Lutherans in New Netherland, the Dutch colonial government considered the minister to lack proper authorization (from them); and, subsequently, once he had been dilatory about departing, he had compounded his offense so must leave immediately.[15]

With sophistry bordering on hypocrisy, tolerant New Netherland offered its inhabitants freedom to believe whatever they wanted, as long as their belief did not extend to religious exercises outside the family circle—no preaching, no prayer meetings, no group discussions of theology, no public marriage ceremonies (except civil marriages before magistrates in remote regions where no Reformed clergy could be found), no non-Reformed baptisms or burial ceremonies, no communion outside the Reformed Church. Colonists were allowed to disagree with the Dutch Reformed, but only if they kept silence about it outside their own homes, and only if their beliefs led to no visible actions in society. Although people who were not communicants of the Dutch Reformed Church might live there, the reality in New Netherland was scarcely freedom of religion.

II. Why Did English People in 1657 Think There Was Religious Freedom in Holland?

That The Netherlands is most significantly characterized by religious freedom is an idea that rests on a famous passage in the Union of Utrecht from 1579—the constitutive document that created the confederation that became the nation.[16]

In the Union of Utrecht, we read (in article 13) concerning religion that the provinces of Holland and Zeeland must "act according to their own judgement, . . . without any other provinces allowed to hinder or interfere with them in this"—adding to this, "that every particular person shall remain free in his religion, and that no one will be pursued or investigated because of his

[15]Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 295–305, 311.

[16]A modern edition of the Union of Utrecht is included and discussed in Simon Groenvelt, *Unie, Bestand, Vrede: Drie Fundamentele Wetten van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009).

religion." Further, religion would be regulated according to the Pacification of Ghent (1576), which protected Catholics from Protestant attacks (including verbal slights) and abolished enforcement of Catholic laws against heresy.[17] To balance Catholicism against Protestantism—by tolerating both to prevent either from annihilating the other—subordinated the claims of dogma to the desire for peace and the hope of uniting regions whose government leaders were either Catholic or Reformed. The Union aimed to defend the traditional political freedoms, rights, and privileges of Netherlandish territories against Spanish tyranny—a goal which could be supported by Catholics as well as Protestants, Lutherans and Mennonites as well as Calvinists. This foundation made the United Provinces famous for their religious freedom. The pragmatic broad tolerance necessary for political unity during the revolt met immediate resistance, however, from Calvinists who wanted to suppress every alternative to their version of the faith.[18] A few courageous voices spoke out against Calvinist presumption, although to little effect.

In Leiden in 1578 (the year after the Pacification of Ghent and just before the Union of Utrecht), Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert, who had been Secretary of the States of Holland and West Friesland (provincial parliament), formally confronted two Reformed ministers to oppose the Calvinist doctrine that to protect society from antichristian influences heretics should be killed, naming it tyrannical to enforce opinions against conscience. Such compulsion would be disastrous for civil society.[19] In 1582, no longer holding public office beyond that of notary, and having been warned to watch his tongue, Coornhert published an imaginary discussion about religious freedom in which he argued that the state should not punish heresy or involve itself in heresy's definition.[20] In 1590, Coornhert again issued a

[17]For the text and commentary, see M. Baelde, P. van Peteghem et al., *Opstand en Pacificatie in de Lage Landen, Bijdrage tot de Studie van de Pacificatie van Gent, Verslagboek van het Tweedaags Colloquium bij de vierhonderdste verjaring van de Pacificatie van Gent* (Ghent: V.Z. W. De Pacifikatie van Gent, 1976).

[18]Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims, Travellers and Sojourners – Leiden and the Foundations of Plymouth Plantation* (Plymouth, Mass.: General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 2009), 540–41; [Johannes Taurinus, compiler], *Weegh = Schael Om in alle billickheydt recht te over-vveghen de Oratie vanden Edelen . . . Heere DVDLEY CARLETON, Ambassadeur . . . van Groot Brittannien* (s.l., s.n., 1617), 57–58.

[19]Johannes Wtenbogaert, *De Kerckelicke Historie, . . . tot in het Iaer Sesthien-hondert ende Negenthien. Voornamentlijck in dese Geunieerde Provintien.* (s.l., s.n. [Johannes Naeranus?], 1647), third book, 34–35. The most thorough study of Coornhert's ideas on toleration is Gerrit Voogt, *Constraint on Trial: Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and Religious Freedom* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2000); for the Leiden debate in 1578, 180–85. A brief recent discussion of the ideas of Coornhert, Hugo Grotius, Simon Episcopius, and Sebastian Castellio is in Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 93–147, 152–64, 172–78.

[20]Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert, *Synodus vander Conscientien Vryheydt / Synod on the Freedom of Conscience*, ed. and trans. Gerrit Voogt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); Thierry

defense of the freedom of conscience and stated his opposition to killing heretics, this time in a written conflict with the Leiden professor Justus Lipsius, who had argued that for the good of society there should be but one religion allowed. Coornhert dedicated his book to the Leiden government, which angrily refused the gesture, not wanting to offend the famous professor and asserting that Coornhert had thus done them no honor.[21] (Not long after this, Lipsius moved to the University of Leuven and converted to the one religion allowed there, Catholicism.) At the same time, Cornelis Pietersz. Hooft, a burgomaster of Amsterdam, spoke out against the imprisonment of a religious dissident. Persecution of dissidents would lead to the decay of the state. We, he said, took up "weapons to defend against violence and oppression, not to dominate over someone else's conscience."[22] Hooft's eloquent plea did not affect the judgement; the accused was banished. Similarly, in 1598, two Socinians (anti-Trinitarians) who came from Rakow (Poland) to bring newly published theological works to Polish students at Leiden found their books immediately seized and burned and themselves banished.[23]

That dissent should be tolerated for the tranquillity of society is an idea that implies that specific doctrine is a matter of secondary importance. That position was stated explicitly by the mathematician, military engineer, architect, and social philosopher Simon Stevin who published his ideas on social behaviour in *Political Life, or Civil Society* (1590).[24] Stevin believed that some religion was socially useful in restraining secret crimes through the inculcation of the fear of God; it made no difference which sect was in charge. Dissenters could adjust their lives according to the grade of toleration granted them, but they should be free to live unobtrusively and unmolested. Stevin has been

Coornhert, *A L'Aurore des Libertés Modernes, Synode sur la Liberté de Conscience (1582)*, ed. and trans. Joseph Lecler and Marius-François Valkhoff (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1979). See particularly Session X.

[21]Wtenbogaert, *De Kerkelicke Historie*, third book, 81; the conflict with Lipsius discussed by Voogt, *Constraint on Trial*, 197–227.

[22]See the discussion in Carl O. Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); 2nd ed. with addenda, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury/Zondervan, 1985), 161–65.

[23]Carl O. Bangs and Jeremy D. Bangs, "The Remonstrants and the Socinian Exiles in Holland," *The Proceedings of the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society, Unitarianism in its Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Settings, Papers Delivered at Meetings of the Society for Reformation Research* 20, Part II (1985–1986), 105–13; Carl O. Bangs, "Arminius and Socinianism," in *Socinianism and Its Role in the Culture of the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Lech Szczucki, Zbigniew Ogonowski, Janusz Tazbir (Warsaw-Łódź: Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of Philosophy and Sociology/ PWN – Polish Scientific Publisher, 1983), 81–84; Wilhelmus Johannes Kühler, *Het Socinianisme in Nederland* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1912).

[24]Simon Stevin, *Vita Politica. Het Burgherlick leuen, Beschreuen deur Simon Stevin* (Leiden: Franchoys van Ravelenghien, 1590).

generally forgotten outside the history of mathematics and fortification; Coornhert and Hooft are now remembered for their support of freedom of conscience. Neither political consideration nor philosophical argument changed the minds of the majority of Dutch Reformed clergy.

Although strict Calvinists argued against toleration, the political and social circumstances that arose during the revolt against Spanish Hapsburg domination resulted in a population whose diversity of appearance, language, and opinion rapidly gained fame throughout Europe. But the 1579 Union of Utrecht's promise of religious toleration soon began to shrink. By 1581, placards were published prohibiting the Catholic mass and closing remaining monasteries and convents. In 1583, the States agreed to maintain and protect the Reformed and forbade "the public teaching or practice of any other Religion in the present United Provinces."[25] Dissenters were not allowed public worship but most were not forced into exile. Politicians justified the circumscribed toleration of the presence of many non-Reformed by claiming that such a policy contributed to social stability and economic growth. The Reformed clergy complained, but they did not completely dominate civil politics.

In addition to travelers and merchants who had visited Amsterdam, thousands of English soldiers who had fought in the Dutch wars could tell of the international mix of refugees, merchants, scholars, and diplomats they had seen in the Low Countries. A wide range of religious practice existed, from Roman Catholic to all imaginable sects of Protestantism, Jews of Portuguese origin, and, on rare occasions, visiting Orthodox Christians from Moscovy or perhaps Muslims from Morocco.

The struggle for independence from Hapsburg domination depended heavily on English military assistance; and the histories of the Dutch wars sold well in England. Beginning in 1598, Emanuel van Meteren's histories of the conflict were issued in numerous, regularly updated editions in Latin, Dutch, French, and German.[26] An English digest of van Meteren's passages that recounted the exploits of English soldiers came out in 1602.[27] Another compilation that

[25]O. J. de Jong, "Unie en Religie," in *De Unie van Utrecht, Wording en Werking van een Verbond en een Verbondsacte*, ed. S. Groenveld and H. L. P. Leeuwenberg (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 155–81, esp. 176–78. Monks and nuns, however, continued to receive housing and alimentation as had been agreed; see Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 123–24.

[26]Emanuel van Meteren, *Historia Belgica, . . . ad annum vsque 1598* (Cologne, 1598).

[27]T[homas] C[hurchyard] and Ric[hard] Ro[binson], trans. and compilers, *A Trve Discovrse Historicall, of the Svcceeding Governovrs in the Netherlands, and the Ciuill warres there begun in the yeere 1565, with the Memorable seruices of our Honourable English Generals, Captaines and Souldiers, especially vnder Sir Iohn Norice Knight, . . . from the yeere 1577, vntill the yeere 1589. And afterwards . . . vntill the yeere 1598* (London: Matthew Lownes, 1602). This is improperly catalogued as a translation of van Meteren's work, which, however, provided some of the information gathered here. Churchyard and Robinson exclusively describe military actions involving the English.

included information from van Meteren and other sources appeared in 1608 as an English translation of a French history of The Netherlands by Jean François le Petit—*The Generall Historie of the Netherlands*.[28] Interest was great enough to justify reprinting it with a new title page in 1609. The text was updated and reissued in 1627.

William Bradford, long-time governor of Plymouth Colony, owned the 1608 version, which he mentions in his memoir *Of Plymouth Plantation*, citing the page number where the Dutch law establishing civil marriage is found.[29] The full text of the Union of Utrecht is included in the *Generall Historie*, with the article on religious toleration on page 698: "euerie one remaining free in his Religion, and not anie waie to bee troubled or called in question." Support for religious toleration is found in another place in the book (marked by a seventeenth-century style pointing hand drawn in the margin on page 596 in my copy), where Emperor Maximilian II is praised for his broadminded wisdom. "He could not endure that warre should be made for religion, and was wont to say: *That it was a deadly sinne, to seeke to force mens consciences, that which belongs to God onely*." This theological opinion favoring religious toleration was known to many in England.

According to Bradford's memoir, in 1607 the Pilgrims "resolved to go into the Low Countries, where they heard was freedom of religion for all men."[30] Bradford specifically mentions that Separatists from London had found refuge in Amsterdam since the 1590s, probably unaware that the Dutch Reformed clergy had attempted to enlist the civic government's power to halt the activities of those English, although little came of this attempt at suppression. The Separatists we now call the Pilgrims succeeded in their escape to Amsterdam in 1608. Soon after that, their minister John Robinson was reproached by his former friend Joseph Hall, for whom Amsterdam, unlike England, was impure—"a common harbour of all opinions, of all heresies, if not a mixture . . . that odious composition of Judaism, Arianism, Anabaptism."[31]

In Amsterdam as well as Leiden (where most of the group moved in 1609), the English Separatists of the Pilgrim migration came into contact with

[28]Edward Grimstone, *A Generall historie of the Netherlands, with the genealogie and memorable acts of the Earls of Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland … Continued unto … 1608*, trans. Grimstone from J. F. Petit, E. Demetrius [van Meteren], and others (London: A. Islip and G. Eld, 1608).

[29]Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, "William Bradford's Sources for Dutch Law – Edward Grimeston and Emanuel van Meteren," *Mayflower Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (March 2010): 24–35.

[30]William Bradford, *Bradford's History* "*Of Plimoth Plantation.*" *From the Original Manuscript* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1901), 15.

[31]Robert Ashton, ed., *The Works of John Robinson: Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, with a Memoir and Annotations by Robert Ashton* (London: John Snow, 1851), 3:402–3 ("Letter by Rev. Joseph Hall, B.D., Rector of Halstead, called by Mr. Robinson 'A Censorious Epistle'").

members of various churches—other English Separatists, English Puritans, Dutch Reformed, French Reformed, Mennonites, and Portuguese Jews. They may incidentally have had contact also with German Reformed, Dutch Roman Catholics, Polish Socinians, and German, Scandinavian, and Dutch Lutherans.

Some of the English exiles in the initial Pilgrim group, influenced by their conversations with Amsterdam Mennonites, returned to England.[32] In London, two of them, Baptist founders Thomas Helwys and John Murton, published the first English plea for unlimited religious toleration, *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity*, strongly reflecting Dutch Mennonite ideas.[33] Murton was imprisoned in 1615 in reaction to his pamphlet, *Persecution for Religion Judged and Condemned*.[34] "No man ought to be persecuted for his religion, so he testify his allegeance by the Oath, appointed by law." (Mennonites, in contrast, rejected swearing oaths.)[35]

Murton was not the only English Separatist in The Netherlands who came in contact with Mennonite ideas on toleration. In 1617, John Robinson, the Pilgrims' minister in Leiden, together with his entire congregation, participated in a two-day conference with the Mennonite historian Pieter Twisck, after which Robinson supported the theological justification for religious toleration that Twisck had worked out in his book from 1609—the first book providing a history of opinions and arguments in favor of religious toleration.[36] The title says it all: *Religion's Freedom, A brief Chronological Description of the Freedom of Religion against the Coercion of Conscience, Drawn from Many Various Books from the Time of Christ to the Year 1609; From which One Can See Clearly . . . How One Should Treat Heretics; That the Steel Sword of the Worldly Government Does Not Extend over Conscience to the Compulsion of Belief; That Heretics and Disbelievers Must Not Be Converted with the Violence of the Worldly Government but*

[32]See James R. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation, English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation* (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1991); Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, chap. 2, "Amsterdam, 1608, 'A Common Harbour of all Opinions, of all Heresies.'"

[33]Thomas Helwys, *A Shorte Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity* (s.l., s.n., 1612).

[34]John Murton, *Persecution for Religion Judg'd and Condemn'd . . . Proving by the Law of God and of the Land, and by King James his many Testimonies, that No Man Ought to be Persecuted for his Religion*, Printed in the years 1615 and 1620 (repr. s.l., s.n., 1662).

[35][John Murton or Thomas Helwys], *Obiections: Answered by Way of Dialogue, wherein is Proved By the Law of God By the Law of our Land And by his Ma[jes]ties Many Testimonies That No Man Ought to be Persecuted for his Religion, so He Testify his Allegeance by the Oath, appointed by Law* (s.l., s.n., 1615).

[36]Keith L. Sprunger, "The Meeting of Dutch Anabaptists and English Brownists, Reported by P. J. Twisck," in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State, and University, A Festschrift in Honor of Professor George Huntston Williams*, ed. Rodney L. Petersen and Calvin Augustine Pater (Kirksville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 221–31; see also Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, chap. 13, "Dutch Separatism, England's Interference, and the Pilgrims' Need to Leave."

with God's Word; That Variety of Religions Does Not Bring Decay or Disruption in a Country or City; That the Kingdom of Christ is Not of This World; And that the Gospel Does Not Have to be Defended with the Sword; . . . . A short poem completes the title-page: "Compiled within these pages/ in religious concord's praises/ are over a thousand citations/ from various places and numerous nations."[37]

This theological reasoning is a logical consequence of an interpretation of the story of the Fall and the Expulsion from Paradise. That everything human must be considered decayed and imperfect meant that also any particular person's own theology is necessarily imperfect. Equally, the person's own belief that another person's opinion was wrong must itself be imperfect, as is any person's ability to understand the Word of God, so that, finally, exercising careful defense against logical nonsense, one must approach all others with mutual toleration and patience.

At the beginning of the Twelve Years' Truce, a period of peace (1609–1621) during the Dutch revolt against Hapsburg domination, Twisck was afraid that the pragmatic political necessity for unity during wartime would evaporate, and that the Reformed would turn against toleration toward dissenters. The Reformed, he thought, were anxious to declare their own to be the only true theology. Twisck was right to be afraid.

Article 36 of the Calvinists' Belgic Confession (1561, 1566) is called "Of Civil Government" and includes the opinion that the civil government should "remove every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and to every aspect of divine worship," and that the government's obligation included "removing and destroying all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist."[38] The killing of Michael Servetus at Geneva was thus justified. As Calvin put it, "whoever shall maintain that wrong is done to heretics and blasphemers in punishing them, makes himself an accomplice in their crime and guilty as they are." Calvin's views, summarized by John Marshall, were that "those

[37]Pieter Jansz. Twisck, *Religions Vryheyt, Een korte Cronijcsche beschryvinghe van die Vryheyt der Religion/ tegen die dwang der Conscientien/ . . . tot den Jare 1609 toe.* (Hoorn: s.n., 1609). On Twisck, zie Archie Penner, "Pieter Jansz. Twisck – Second Generation Anabaptist/Mennonite Churchman, Writer and Polemicist" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1971); see also Bangs, *Letters on Toleration*, 32–34. Twisck continued his exploration of the topic of religious toleration in a history of the world conceived as a progressive opposition to tyranny: Pieter Jansz. Twisck, *Chronijck vanden Onderganc der Tirannen . . . Van Christi geboorte af tot desen tyt toe.* (Hoorn: Sacharias Cornelissen), vol. 1, 1617–1619; vol. 2, 1620. The Remonstrant historian Gerard Brandt, a friend of Philip van Limborch's, used Twisck's *Chronijck*: see Brandt, *Verhaal van de Reformatie, In en ontrent de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz., 1663), [Fff viii]. Twisck's work is not included in the chronological list of texts on religious liberty up to 1648, in Joseph Lecler and Marius-François Valkhoff, *Les Premiers Défenseurs de la Liberté Religieuse* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969).

[38]The complete text in English is found in Arthur C. Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 189–219.

who did not understand the duty of the magistrate to punish heresy were either simple and ignorant people who needed to be educated, libertines who wanted to secure liberty for their evil wills, or atheists."[39] During the Arminian–Gomarist (Remonstrant versus Contra-Remonstrant) controversies that led up to the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), article 36 of the Belgic Confession was understood and explicated by the Reformed minister and professor at Leiden, Festus Hommius, among others, in a way that not only justified putting heretics to death but also made doing so an obligatory article of faith. And this general reasoning had one chief target—Conrad Vorstius, the Remonstrant sympathizer who in 1610 was appointed professor as successor to Jacobus Arminius and who was accused of Socinianism.[40]

The appointment was effectively blocked by clever manipulation of the powerful influence of King James I of England in Dutch politics. The young Hugo Grotius traveled to London to convince the king that both theological opinions in the controversy could exist within a broadly tolerant church; the king responded with a published opinion in favor of mutual toleration.[41] Strict Calvinists mounted an effective campaign to convince the king that Vorstius was a Socinian heretic and that by allowing his appointment the king himself partook in heresy. The king reversed himself, coming to the view that if Vorstius were to be allowed to lecture in Leiden, God would abandon the Netherlands and he himself would feel compelled to forbid English students to attend the University of Leiden. Moreover, England's military aid to the Dutch to defend against the Hapsburgs was put in question. (The English had provided nearly half the soldiers in the Dutch army.) Moreover, King James pressured the States General to convene a so-called National Synod, to settle the disputes between the Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants—settle them in favor of the Contra-Remonstrants. This eventually took form as the Synod of Dort. In contrast to the mutual toleration that the Remonstrant leaders Johan Wtenbogaert and Simon Episcopius, like the Mennonite Twisck, had offered their theological

[39]John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture – Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and 'Early Enlightenment' Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 325; see also Zagorin, *Idea of Religious Toleration*, 77–82.

[40]The Vorstius controversy is described at length in Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, chaps. 12, "Assaults on Toleration," and 13, "Dutch Separatism, England's Interference, and the Pilgrims' Need to Leave."

[41]James I, *Copie van den Brief des Conings van Groot Britannien, . . . VVaer in hy sijn Advijs, nopende het different tusschen de Remonstranten ende Contra-Remonstranten over-schrijft* (s.l., s. n., 1613); published also in Philippus van Limborch, *Praestantium ac Eruditorum Virorum Epistolæ Ecclesiasticæ et Theologicæ varii argumenti, Inter quas eminent eæ, quæ à Iac. Arminio, Conr. Vorstio, Sim. Episcopio, Hvg. Grotio, Casp. Barlæo, conscripta sunt* (Amsterdam: Apud Hendricvm Dendrinvm, 1660), 393; discussed in Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 492–95.

opponents, the king and the Contra-Remonstrants demanded that the Remonstrants be expelled from the Reformed Church, and that the Belgic Confession and the Acts of the Synod of Dort be compulsory articles of doctrine.

A military coup in 1618 removed Arminian sympathizers from all government offices. The Synod of Dort is frequently remembered for its parallel ejection of the Remonstrants from the ranks of the Reformed clergy. For our topic, however, what is important is that the military coup and the convocation of the Synod of Dort marked the effective end of article 13 of the 1579 Union of Utrecht. As Gerard Brandt, and, before him, Hugo Grotius, protested, no longer could the provinces of Holland and Zeeland "act according to their own judgement, . . . without any other provinces allowed to hinder or interfere with them in this."[42] No longer was it true, even as an ideal, "that every particular person shall remain free in his religion, and that no one will be pursued or investigated because of his religion." Exiled Remonstrant scholars such as Hugo Grotius and Simon Episcopius could complain about this affront to constitutional law and theorize about the need for religious freedom, but Dutch religious toleration had become at least for the meantime an evanescent, unrealized goal.

In 1619, just after the synod ended, the States General published an edict prohibiting holding separate religious gatherings or conventicles outside the official Reformed Church or supporting dissenting clergy.[43] The law aimed to prevent the establishment of Remonstrant congregations. This restriction remained in force for decades, although some cities, such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, gradually relaxed their enforcement, finding ways to connive at the presence and practices of dissenters in a society where the Reformed remained a minority. Thus the Public Church (Reformed) existed alongside other groups whose existence gradually gained a de facto acceptance, albeit insecure.

Clearly, the law and custom of Holland applicable in New Netherland in 1645, when a town charter was granted for Flushing, was no longer what had been conceived in 1579.[44]

In England, however, most people were unaware of the changes. The English knew about the theological decisions of the Synod of Dort; but legal changes

[42]Gerard Brandt, *Historie der Reformatie, en andre Kerkelyke Geschiedenissen, in en ontrent de Nederlanden* 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz., Hendrik and Dirk Boom, 1671–1674): 2:632–33, 751–52 (Grotius).

[43]The edict was published in Leiden on July 15, 1619: Regionaal Archief Leiden, Secretarie Archief II, 272, III d (1619–1622), nr. 52A.

[44]This has been noticed by Tabetha Garman; see her "Designed for the Good of All – The Flushing Remonstrance and Religious Freedom in America" (master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2006), available online at http://www.flushingremonstrance.info/documents/GarmanT080506f.pdf.

outside the synod's acts received far less publicity. People continued to learn about The Netherlands from the books that published the text of the Union of Utrecht.[45] The religious toleration of the Dutch thereby remained famous in England, while toleration mandated by law had become a memory inconsistent with mid-seventeenth-century reality.

Circumstances and attitudes were not static. Although the Dutch government no longer guaranteed freedom of conscience, dissenters did not all join the Remonstrant ministers who went into exile, nor were they expected to do that. In addition to the Pilgrims, Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites continued quietly to live according to their consciences' dictates, sometimes paying bribes or special taxes to ensure being left alone. Catholic masses as well as Remonstrant services were forbidden. Danger was real. In 1619, one of the Pilgrims, James Chilton, was surrounded by youths in Leiden who stoned him, leaving him wounded and unconscious on the street. (The boys had mistakenly thought he was returning home from a Remonstrant gathering.)[46]

Critical historians presently lose patience with superficial admiration for so-called tolerance of ideas that were not allowed to be expressed in public, because it embodies a power relationship in which a dominant social group grants limited rights of existence to a relatively powerless minority alternative.[47] Granted unilaterally, the right to be tolerated can also be withdrawn. If one conceives genuine religious freedom as a situation where a neutral state must offer equal protection indifferently to the variations of religious belief and practice (or to the absence thereof based on personal rejection), then the seventeenth-century policy of connivance regarding religious minorities had little to do with it. Jonathan Israel refers to the complexity in The Netherlands as an "ambivalent semi-tolerance . . . a

[45]Article 13 of the Union of Utrecht is quoted (without the full text of the rest) in Gerard Brandt, *Historie der Reformatie*, I [12th book], 631. Brandt's history was published in English in the early eighteenth century: *The History of the Reformation and Other Ecclesiastical Transactions in and about the Low-Countries, . . . down to the famous Synod of Dort* (London: T. Wood for T. Childe, 1720–1723).

[46]Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarieel Archief 180 (Paets, 1618–1619), fol. 239–40.

[47]Discussions of this are found, among other places, in Wilbur Kitchener Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England, From the Beginning of the English Reformation to the Death of Queen Elizabeth* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932); *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Zagorin, *Idea of Religious Toleration*, 5–10; *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, ed. C. Berkvens-Stevelinck, J. Israel, and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 2007; E. H. Kossmann, "Tolerantie Toen en Nu," Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/koss002poli01_01/koss002poli01_01_0004.php#030T, from E. H. Kossmann, *Politieke Theorie en Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1987), 45–58.

partial toleration seething with tension." He has summarized the widespread, forceful opposition by the Dutch Reformed to toleration for religious expression outside their services.[48] The contradictory combination of attitudes has been described in detail recently by John Marshall.[49]

Even unilateral connivance was opposed by most Reformed clergy.

As an alternative to one-sided granting of limited rights of existence, mutual toleration toward Reformed and other groups was proposed by Dutch Mennonites and Remonstrants. Opponents would tolerate each other as equals. This attitude was, they thought, consistent with proper theological humility. Mennonites and Remonstrants were, however, among the dissenters the Reformed wanted to suppress, so their offer to tolerate the Reformed was considered effrontery. That idealistic proposal assumed that people disagreeing with each other were united in a search for a rationally demonstrable truth. Their disagreements might be resolved in the future through reasoned argument. Remonstrants spent considerable time demonstrating that in earlier years the Reformed Church had been a place where a variety of views, theirs especially, had been welcome. Their irenicism was rejected by Calvinists who considered their own dogmatic formulations to have achieved perfection. The Remonstrants were not worthy of the name "Reformed." The victors at the Synod of Dort accounted all non-Reformed heretics.

III. Dutch Sources for Ideas on Toleration in Plymouth Colony and Rhode Island

In Plymouth in 1624–1625, the colonists refused a request put to them by their London financers (the Merchant Adventurers) that they make adherence to the Belgic Confession obligatory and that they introduce the church discipline of the Walloons (Huguenots, French Reformed, comprehended in the decisions of the Synod of Dort). Their minister, John Robinson, had written that

> The French may err, we may err, and other churches may err, and doubtless do in many circumstances. That honor therefore belongs only to the infallible word of God, and pure Testament of Christ, to be propounded and followed as the only rule and pattern for direction herein to all churches & Christians. And it is too great arrogance for any man, or church to think that he or they have so sounded the word of God to the bottom, as precisely to set down the

[48]Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1472–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 372–77, 499–505, 674–76.

[49]Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 138–93: chap. 4, "Religious toleration and intolerance in the Netherlands and in the Huguenot community in exile"; 335–70: chap. 11, "Arguments for and against religious toleration in the Netherlands, ca. 1579–ca. 1680."

> churches' discipline, without error in substance or circumstance, as that no other without blame may digress or differ in any thing from the same. And it is not difficult to show, that the reformed churches differ in many circumstances amongst themselves.[50]

The Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony, despite John Robinson's basic agreement with Calvinist theology that inspired him to write a defense of the Synod of Dort, refused to grant dogmatic symbols the status of Holy Writ. On that point, they consciously took the same position as the Remonstrants, a position that was among those for which the Remonstrants were expelled from the Dutch Reformed Church. Even though agreement to the Pilgrims' investors' request was imagined to be potentially profitable and a way to remove public criticism of the colonists for being sectarian fanatics, they took a principled stand against that particular intolerance. The Pilgrims also did not make church membership a condition of suffrage.[51] People in Plymouth Colony were sure that only covenanted believers should be allowed to belong to the church, but that other colonists outside the congregation had just as much right to enjoy equal treatment in all civil, non-ecclesiastical affairs.

During the beginning of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, Dutch dissenters' arguments for toleration had entered English discussion.[52] The Anglican Church lost its exclusive status of being the state church; freedom of religion was propagated by many of the Independent-leaning members of parliament as well as Baptists and some Puritans and Presbyterians.

Dutch Mennonite ideas imported by the early Baptists were influential beyond England. John Murton, particularly, is one of the sources for religious freedom in Rhode Island under Roger Williams. Rhode Island's explicitly anti-theocratic government structure was expressed in agreements among the colonists (1641, 1642), guaranteeing freedom of conscience and declaring that dogmatic differences could not be prosecuted. These non-theocratic agreements reappear in the charter of Rhode Island granted in 1643 by the government in London (which was then considering forms of toleration of dissenting churches). Roger Williams published his arguments

[50]*Bradford's History* "*Of Plimoth Plantation*", 239; See Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, chap. 15, "Some Good Foundation."

[51]This is discussed in *Seventeenth-Century Town Records of Scituate*, ed. Bangs, 3:31–58: "Cudworth and Vassall: Suffrage, Land, and Other Issues before King Philip's War."

[52]Wilbur Kitchener Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England, From the Accession of James I to the Convention of the Long Parliament (1603–1640)* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936); Nicholas Tyacke, "The 'Rise of Puritanism' and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571—1719," in *From Persecution to Toleration, The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. Ole Pieter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 17–49. For a recent summary of general circumstances in England, see Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 66–75.

for freedom of conscience and of religious practice and against persecution in *The Blovdy Tenent*. In that book, he reprinted texts by John Murton literally.[53]

Williams's preface contains enumerated points. The sixth states that it "is the will and command of God, that since the coming of his Sonne the Lord Iesus) a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish or Antichristian consciences and worships, bee granted to all men in all Nations and Countries: and they are onely to bee fought against with that Sword which is only (in Soule matters) able to conquer, to wit, the Sword of Gods Spirit, the Word of God." The eighth asserts that "God requireth not an uniformity of Religion to be inacted and inforced in any civill state; which inforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civill Warre, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Iesus in his servants, and of the hypocrisie and destruction of millions of souls."[54] The text of the book begins with an abbreviated excerpt from chapters six through nine of John Murton's *Most Humble Svpplication of Many the Kings Maiesties . . . Who are Persecuted, onely for differing in Religion*.[55] Murton, following the pattern used some years earlier by Twisck, cites arguments for toleration from the Bible, from political leaders, and from theologians. Williams next published a response to Murton's arguments by John Cotton, who imagined he had refuted each authority cited by Murton, claiming generally that "it is not lawfull to persecute any for Conscience sake Rightly Informed" but that anyone who persisted in a divergent opinion after one or two admonitions should be punished to protect society from error and seduction. Further, "if a Man hold forth or professe any Errour or false way, with a boisterous and arrogant spirit, to the disturbance of Civill peace, he may justly be punished according to the qualitie and measure of the disturbance."[56] (Stuveysant's practice conforms to Cotton's opinion.) Williams' own contribution is his reply to Cotton's answer to Murton, filling pages 15 through 247. The structure of the argument thus rests on Murton's drastic abbreviation of Twisck, who had presented sentiments for toleration culled from over a thousand sources. Williams revived these arguments in 1644.

The following year, 1645, the General Court of Plymouth (the colony founded by the Pilgrims in 1620) received a petition for complete religious

[53]Roger Williams, *The Blovdy Tenent, of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience* (London: s.n., 1644).

[54]Williams, *Blovdy Tenent*, [a2 verso]-a3.

[55]John Murton, *A Most Humble Svpplication of Many the Kings Maiesties Loyall Svbiects, Ready to Testifie all civill obedience, by the oath as the Law of this Realme requireth. and that of conscience; Who are Persecuted onely for differing in Religion, contrary to divine and humane testimonies as followeth* (s.l., s.n., [Amsterdam? Giles Thorp?] 1621), 23–30. That Williams repeats Murton contradicts Zagorin's statement that "*The Bloudy Tenent* . . . remains his [Williams's] essential treatment of the subject [of toleration]. It is difficult to determine the sources of his ideas." Zagorin, *Idea of Religious Toleration*, 200.

[56]Williams, *Blovdy Tenent*, 7, 12.

freedom, apparently supported by a majority of the magistrates as representatives of the whole colony. The petitioners asked that a law be made that would "allow and maintain full and free tolerance of religion to all men that would preserve the Civil peace, and submit unto Government. And there was no limitation or exception against Turk Jew Papist Arian Socinian Nicholaytan Familist or any other."[57] The listing of groups to be tolerated recalls what Williams had written the year before, with additions. The leader of the supporters of this proposal was William Vassall of Scituate, the most important town in the colony.[58] At the same time, William's brother, Samuel, was a member of parliament in London and sat on the parliamentary commission for plantations or colonies. Samuel traded with New England, Virginia, the West Indies, and Guinea. He must have been involved when the commission of which he was a member, on October 27, 1645, approved a similar request for religious freedom, that granted freedom of conscience to the colonists of the Summer Isles (Bermuda), in those places where they were now settled, as well as in whatever places in America they as Englishmen might come to inhabit in the future.[59] We may assume that the brothers communicated on this topic. William Vassall returned to London in 1647 to demand religious freedom in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Well aware that to return to New England would expose him to punishment for the capital crime of opposing the government and religion established in the Bay Colony, Vassall moved to Barbadoes where he died in 1655.[60]

In the mid-1640s religious freedom in America started in Rhode Island and Bermuda, not in New Amsterdam, Plymouth, or Boston. But dissenting voices urged toleration in the English colonies, as also in England and The Netherlands.

In Plymouth, the motion did not come to a vote at the General Court. After a day-long discussion, Governor Bradford decided to keep it off the agenda of the full court. He and some of his friends feared for the colony's reputation for piety and respect among other God-fearing governments. Consequently, although the sentiment for religious freedom had broad support, no law establishing such toleration was passed. The presence of this tolerant sentiment, however, must

[57]Letter from Edward Winslow to John Winthrop, November 24, 1645, published and discussed in Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *Pilgrim Edward Winslow, New England's First International Diplomat, A Documentary Biography* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2004), 224–26; Allyn Bailey Forbes, Stewart Mitchell, and George Washington Robinson, eds., *The Winthrop Papers*, 1645–1649 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1947), 5:55–56.

[58]From circa 1650 on, Scituate was around 60 percent larger than the town of Plymouth (its nearest rival). See *Seventeenth-Century Town Records of Scituate*, ed. Bangs, 3 vols., 1997, 1999, 2001.

[59]Leo Francis Stock, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments respecting North America* (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924), 1:169.

[60]*Seventeenth-Century Records of Scituate*, ed. Bangs, 1:38–43.

help explain the relative tranquillity of the colony, where Quakers were not killed and no hysteria led to witchcraft delusions and murders.

The Flushing Remonstrance twelve years later, however, has to be understood as an aspect of English interest in toleration, an interest that had arisen in the context of unofficial, dissenting discussions in The Netherlands, but not in New Netherland. Official Dutch intolerance shows explicitly in the requirement in 1656 that magistrates in Beverwijk in New Netherland maintain the Reformed religion according to the Word of God and the rules of the Synod of Dort, and that they not openly tolerate any sect.[61] A year later, when the English living at Flushing called upon their charter to be allowed freedom of conscience "according to the custom and manner of Holland," they undoubtedly had no idea how Holland's customs and manners had changed from the ideals expressed in 1579 in the Union of Utrecht.

IV. Dutch International Pleas for Toleration among Protestants

Dutch arguments for toleration had continued after 1619, but they were now the work of dissenters marginalized by the Reformed. Remonstrants in Leiden, deprived of resident clergy, held secret meetings in a village not far away, Warmond. When persecution relaxed they organized gatherings for non-dogmatic religious discussion among laymen without membership restrictions, meeting in another village close to Leiden, Rijnsburg.[62] People attending the meetings were known as the Rijnsburg Collegiants. Similar collegiant meetings were held in Amsterdam and elsewhere, usually attracting a mix of Remonstrants and Mennonites, as well as Spinoza and some people whose affiliation, if any, is unknown.

Non-sectarian, ecumenical action is seen again when Mennonites and Remonstrants worked together with some Reformed to expose and attempt to alleviate an international humanitarian crisis caused by Swiss Calvinists who were persecuting Swiss Mennonites.[63] A French Reformed (Walloon,

[61]Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 295.

[62]Jacob Cornelis van Slee, *De Rijnsburger Collegianten: Geschiedkundig Onderzoek* Teylers Godgeleerd Genootschap, Verhandelingen raakende den Natuurlyken en Geopenbaarden Godsdienst, new series, vol. 15 (Haarlem: Bohn, 1895); Andrew Cooper Fix, "Radical Reformation and Second Reformation in Holland: The Intellectual Consequences of the Sixteenth-Century Religious Upheaval and the Coming of a Rational World View," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 63–80; Andrew Cooper Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegians in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[63]Described and documented in Bangs, *Letters on Toleration*. On Remonstrants and toleration, see also Luisa Simonutti, *Arminianesimo e Tolleranza nel Seicento Olandese – Il Carteggio Ph. Van Limborch, J. le Clerk* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984).

Huguenot) merchant from Amsterdam, Isaac Hattavier, had lived in Zürich as a young man. There, he had seen the public beheading of the Mennonite Hans Landis in 1614. Hattavier helped the Dutch Mennonites obtain support from the Walloon minister Godofroy Hottonus and from Amsterdam's town council in 1642 when they sent a letter to the government of Zürich protesting the ongoing persecution of Swiss Mennonites. By the 1650s and 1660s, Dutch Mennonites led by Hans Vlamingh and Isaac van Limborch organized a standing committee on foreign needs to coordinate attempts to provide relief through correspondence and diplomatic efforts, as well as in providing food, clothing, and shelter for Swiss Mennonites who had fled into the Palatinate. They obtained support from Abraham Heidanus and Johannes Valckenier, Reformed professors of theology at Leiden and Franeker, who wrote to their colleague Christoph Lüthard, professor at Bern, urging toleration of Swiss Mennonites. The Dutch Reformed professors Johannes Hoornbeek, Gisbertus Voetius, and Samuel Maresius wrote similar pleas to the Zürich professors Johan Heinrich Heidegger and Johannes Müller, and the Swiss professor at Heidelberg, Johan Heinrich Hottinger, asking that they use their influence with the secular officials to end the persecution. How could Protestants treat other Protestants this way without discrediting the entire movement as being no better than the papal inquisition?

Mennonites also contributed a large sum to the relief efforts when the Reformed provided help to the Waldensians suddenly once again exposed to Catholic persecution circa 1655.[64] International outrage at this Catholic persecution was expressed in familiar anti-Catholic dogmatic assertions and hyperbolic metaphors about the Whore of Babylon, but attempts to achieve a shift in policy in the Piedmont had to be based on arguments accepting that the Duke of Savoy would not convert away from Catholicism. Persecuting Protestants in Catholic territories, he was reminded, served to invite retaliatory persecution of Catholics in Protestant lands. This was an old argument that had contributed to a grudging truce between Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed in German principalities without, however, including toleration for Mennonites.

For the Swiss and Palatine Mennonite relief project, the Dutch Mennonite leaders agitated for support among people outside their ordinary circles. Finally, Jan Amos Comenius, Philip von Zesen, John Durie, and William Penn added their voices to those of the Mennonites and the Reformed ministers and professors who wrote letters to urge an end to the imprisonment and other persecution.[65] (This crisis brought Penn in contact

[64]Bangs, *Letters on Toleration*, documents 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 66, 72, 207.

[65]Besides the documents published in Bangs, *Letters on Toleration*, see Leonard Forster, "Unpublished Comeniana: Philip von Zesen, Johann Heinrich Ott, John Dury, and Others," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 32 (1953–1954): 475–85, where mutual contacts are documented, but not in the context of discussion of toleration.

with the Mennonites who became the first settlers of his colony, Pennsylvania.) The city governments of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Maastricht also wrote letters for this goal, as did the provincial States of Holland and Zeeland and of Gelderland, and finally the States General and the Stadholder–King William III.

Philipp von Zesen's three-hundred page book, *Against the Coercion of Conscience* (1665), was dedicated to the Sheriffs and Councils of Zürich and Bern, specifically urging an end to persecution of the Mennonites in those cities. Written in Amsterdam, the book's foreword begins, "Belief . . . cannot suffer any coercion at all. It is a merciful gift of God. . . . Desist! you coercers of conscience . . . Leave alone the poor oppressed Christians, your free-born fellow brethren, who only appear, according to your human judgement, which can easily be wrong, not yet to have fully received the gracious gift of belief from God. Stop condemning them, persecuting them, sending them away. Stop robbing them. . . ." No "truly believing Christian, who takes this most important Commandment to heart [that is, the "new and highest Commandment, Love"], could ever say that such persecution as yours . . . can be service to God."[66]

The persecution nonetheless was justified by doctrinaire Calvinists. Oppression of Mennonites continued until the end of the century then revived once more in the eighteenth century. This complex, major international relief campaign is now largely forgotten in the historiography of the rise of toleration in The Netherlands during the seventeenth century.[67] Because Dutch scholars have practically ignored this trans-denominational action aiming for toleration and relief from persecution in an immediate and practical context, it is missing, also, from John Marshall's excellent book on the context in which John Locke developed his ideas on toleration.[68]

[66]The book (Amsterdam, 1665) is included in *Philipp von Zesen Sämtliche Werke, unter Mitwirkung von Ulrich Maché und Volker Meid, herausgegeben von Ferdinand van Ingen*, vol. 13, *Gegen den Gewissenszwang*, ed. Ferdinand van Ingen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984).

[67]The international effort to obtain toleration for Swiss and Palatine Mennonites is mentioned in one sentence only in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, ed. Hsia and van Nierop, 119; it is not mentioned in *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, ed. Berkvens-Stevelinck, Israel, and Posthumus Meyjes. Since my publication of *Letters on Toleration* (2004), the topic has been approached from a different angle by James Lowry in *Documents of Brotherly Love: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists, 1635–1709* (Millersburg, Ohio: Ohio Amish Library) 2007; and it is mentioned by Astrid von Schlachta in her "Anabaptism, Pietism and Modernity: Relationships, Changes, Paths" in Fred van Lieburg and Daniel Lindmark, eds., *Pietism, Revivalism and Modernity, 1650–1850* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 1–22, section "The Anabaptists as the subject of early modern discourses on tolerance" (9–12).

[68]Marshall, *John Locke*, *Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*. Similarly, the topic is omitted from Zagorin, *Idea of Religious Toleration*.

Among the leaders of the practical relief aid in the 1670s, we see the Mennonite (and Collegiant leader) Galenus Abrahamsz. de Haan, teacher of the Quaker historian William Sewel and friend of the Remonstrant theologian Philip van Limborch (whose family had been Mennonite refugees a century earlier and who was probably related to Isaac van Limborch, already mentioned).[69] The acquaintance and cooperation of these Mennonite and Remonstrant ministers is important. Besides their activities as preachers, both Galenus Abrahamsz. and Philip van Limborch were Amsterdam doctors who met weekly to discuss medicine. That is how they came in contact with John Locke.

The extensive publicity organized by the Mennonites focussed international attention on freedom of conscience and religious practice. At this time Galenus Abrahamsz.'s friend Philip van Limborch wrote more and more about mutual toleration.[70] He sent copies of his newest publications to sympathizers in The Netherlands and beyond, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, and the Cambridge Platonist, Ralph Cudworth.[71] Cudworth in turn corresponded with his brother James (although most of this is evidently lost). James Cudworth lived in Plymouth Colony. In 1659, James published (as co-author with John Rous and George Fox) a complaint against the persecution of Quakers in Massachusetts, Plymouth Colony, and New Netherland that formed part of the up-to-date information that contributed to the decision of the government in London to order a halt to the persecution in New England.[72]

Through his work translating, editing, and commenting on the famous Toulouse manuscript of the Inquisition, van Limborch developed the most

[69]For general biographical information on de Haan, see Hendrik Wiebes Meihuizen, *Galenus Abrahamsz, 1622–1706, Strijder voor een onbeperkte verdraagzaamheid en verdediger van het Doperse Spiritualisme* (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1952). A genealogical manuscript that could indicate the relationships in the van Limborch family was misplaced when the Amsterdam Archives recently moved.

[70]For examples of van Limborch's comments regarding toleration, see Philippus van Limborch, *Praestantum ac Erudit/Virorum Epistolae Ecclesiasticae et Theologicae varii argumenti*, . . . *Iac. Arminio, Conr. Vorstio, Sim. Episcopio, Hug. Grotio, Casp. Barlaeo, conscripta sunt* (Amsterdam: H. Dendrinvm, 1660), 393; and P. van Limborch, *Korte Wederlegginge van 't boexken onlangs uytgegeven by Iacobus Sceperus genamt Chrysopolerotus, Waer in onder anderen gehandelt wert van de Onderlinge Verdraegsaemheyt* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz., 1661). The topic recurs elsewhere in van Limborch's works, as indicated by Marshall.

[71]Pieter Barnouw, *Philippus van Limborch* (Den Haag: Mouton, 1963), 15–16 (besides John Tillotson and Ralph Cudworth, also Henry Moore, Oliver Doiley, Henry Jenkes, and Thomas Pierce); further, see Henry Ollion and T. J. de Boer, eds., *Lettres inédites de John Locke* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1912), s.v. Cudworth et al.; Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment, A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

[72]On James Cudworth, *Seventeenth-Century Town Records of Scituate*, ed. Bangs; Cudworth's text concerning Quakers is included as an appendix in vol. III, 390–420.

elaborated theology of toleration among the Remonstrants and Mennonites.[73] His ideas built on those of his Remonstrant predecessor Simon Episcopius and on their inspiration, the theology of Jacobus Arminius, with which Galenus Abrahamsz. de Haan was also familiar.[74] Both Arminius and Episcopius had urged mutual toleration based on the perception that all human opinion is imperfect, an opinion expressed earlier by Sebastian Castellio (whose works Arminius discussed in classes he taught).[75] Episcopius emphasized that only a few essential doctrines could be found in the Bible; all others should be open to differences in interpretation tolerated peacefully.[76] The topic of toleration appears also in collected letters published in 1660 by van Limborch including one recently sent (February 14, 1660) from the burgomasters and magistrates of Rotterdam to their counterparts at Bern, urging an end to persecution of Swiss Mennonites, as desired by Galenus de Haan (who must have supplied the copy that is published).[77] Van Limborch discussed his ideas on toleration

[73]Philip van Limborch, *Historia inquisitionis: cui subjungitur Liber sententiarum inquisitionis Tholosanae, ab anno Christi CIↃCCVII ad annum CIↃCCXXIII* (Amsterdam: Hendrik Wetstein, 1692); translated into English by Samuel Chandler: *The History of the Inquisition. By Philip à Limborch . . . to which is prefixed a large introduction concerning the rise and progress of persecution, and the real and pretended causes of it* (London: J. Gray, 1731); second edition: *A brief representation of the cruel and barbarous proceedings against Protestants in the Inquisition: Extracted from the history of the Inquisition, written by the celebrated Philip à Limborch* (London: James Roberts, 1734); abridged edition, 1816; partially re-issued in 1825. Further, see van Limborch, *De Veritate Religionis Christianæ Amica Collatio cum Erudito Judæo* (Gouda: Apud Justum ab Hoeve, 1687); an English translation appeared in 1740.

[74]Jacobus Arminius, *Opera Theologica* (Frankfurt: apud Guilielmum Fitzerum, 1631), 58–73 ("Oratio De Componendo dissidio Religionis inter Christianos") (My copy belonged to Galenus Abrahamsz. de Haan; it bears the bookplate of the Amsterdam Mennonite Church "Bij het Lam en den Toren" whose library was founded with their minister de Haan's books); translated in *The Works of James Arminius*, The London Edition, I, trans. James Nichols; intro. Carl Bangs, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1986), 434–541 ("On Reconciling Religious Dissensions among Christians").

[75]Caspar Sibelius, a former student, listed authors he remembered having been treated in Arminius' lectures in 1608: "Nam in isto Collegio à lectione Operum et Tractatum Calvini, Bezae, Zanchii, Martyris, Ursini, Piscatoris, Perkensi, aliorumque; seit iuxta Socini, Acontii, Castelliones, Thomae Aquinatis, Molinae, Suaretis, aliorumque, gratushostium scripta summi nobis commendabantur." See Gemeentearchief Deventer. 101 H 16, 17, 18 KL. (3 vols.): Caspar Sibelius, Ms. «De curriculo totiu vitae et peregrinationis suae historica narratio,» 1: 51.

[76]Simon Episcopius, *Uytleggginge Over het vijfde Capittel des H. Euangelisten Mattheus, Vervatet in XXXIV. Predicatien Gedaen in de Christelijke Vergaderinge der Remonstranten*, ed. Philippus van Limborch (Franeker: Jacob Pieters, 1666), 153–55, 430–31; Episcopius, *Opera Theologica*, ed. sec. (London: Ex Officinia Mosis Pitt, 1678), second pagination sequence, 183–86, in "Examen Thesium Theologicarum Jacobi Capelli . . . De Controversiis quæ Fœderatum Belgium Vexant" – sections «De Tolerantia fraterna, Et de prophetandi libertate. Quam Tolerantiam perierint Remonstrantes.» This is the edition also owned by John Locke: see John Harrison and Peter Laslett, *The Library of John Locke*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 130, nr. 1060. The first edition of Episcopius, *Opera Theologica* appeared in Amsterdam: Ioannis Blaev, 1650.

[77]Van Limborch, *Praestantium ac Eruditorum Virorum Epistolæ*, 917–18 (misdated as January); the text translated, in: Bangs, *Letters on Toleration*, 149–51, documents 36, 37. My incorrect

with his Amsterdam friend, the English medical doctor in exile, John Locke. Van Limborch's ongoing close interaction with Locke is extensively analyzed by Marshall in his brilliant study of Locke's views on toleration.[78] "Locke was to lament his distance from Limborch after [Locke's] return to England as causing the absence of a very close friend, and to suggest that he truly resided not in England but in Limborch's heart."

Locke recognized his intellectual debt to van Limborch by dedicating (or addressing) his (first) *Letter on Toleration* to van Limborch, who saw to its first publication (Gouda, 1689). Raymond Klibansky commented that "Apparently it was due to his conversations with Limborch during the last weeks of 1685 that Locke set aside his work on the *Essay* [concerning Human Understanding] and turned again to the problem of toleration." Locke had been collecting commentary on toleration from many sources; he "systematically collected all books on toleration which he could find."[79] Locke continued to correspond with Limborch for many years.

Although the revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes has been identified as an event that inspired Locke's *Letter on Toleration*, and he certainly must have discussed that disaster in Rotterdam at the Lantern Club when he was staying with the Quaker supporter Benjamin Furly, Locke does not refer in the *Letter on Toleration* to the persecution of Huguenots by Catholics. Protestants agreed that Catholic oppression of Protestants was intolerable. Logically, Catholics should have expected equivalent persecution in Protestant lands unless each side tolerated the other everywhere. Nothing new needed to be said; accordingly, Locke added nothing to that issue. The revocation of the edict that for a century had guaranteed French Protestants their religious liberty must have underlined for Locke the duplicity of the Catholic religion whose leader, the pope, was known to have declared that oaths of honor given to heretics need not be kept. As in France, Catholics might suddenly turn on

indication (on p. 52) that this was included by van Limborch first in the 1703 edition of his volume was based on an oversight.

[78]Marshall, *John Locke*, *Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 481–95, passim.

[79]John Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia A Letter on Toleration*, trans. J. W. Gough, ed. Raymond Klibansky (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), xvi, xxxi. See also Mario Montuori, *John Locke on Toleration and the Unity of God* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1983). Jonathan Israel contrasts Locke and Spinoza. See Jonathan I. Israel, "Locke, Spinoza and the Philosophical Debate Concerning Toleration in the Early Enlightenment (c. 1670– c. 1750)," *Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Mededelingen van de Afdeling Letterkunde*, Nieuwe Reeks, 62, nr. 6 (9 November 1998). See also Jonathan I. Israel, "John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and 'Early Enlightenment' Europe," *The English Historical Review* 122, no. 498 (September 2007), 1042–44.

Protestants, destroying social stability. That Catholics therefore could not be safely tolerated seemed obvious.

Another matter required attention: mutual toleration among Protestants. Locke wanted to provide a general rationale for toleration of Protestant dissenters by other Protestants. This was the issue at hand in Switzerland where Calvinists were persecuting Mennonites. Besides naming several dissenting groups equally, Locke called particular attention to a single theological issue—the Mennonite and English Baptist refusal to participate in infant baptism. Locke specifically argued for toleration of Mennonites, Baptists, and Remonstrants, saying, "And if others are allowed assemblies, solemn meetings, celebrations of feast days, sermons, and public worship, all these should with equal right be allowed to Remonstrants, Anti-remonstrants, Lutherans, Anabaptists [that is, Mennonites and Baptists], or Socinians." Additionally, in the Postscriptum, Locke adds a general definition of the words "heresy" and "schism" to support the Remonstrant claim that they were neither heretical nor schismatic. In Locke's terms, their opponents were the schismatic heretics for having excommunicated the Remonstrants because of disagreements "about things not necessary." Thus we find Locke specifically addressing Mennonite/Baptist and Remonstrant issues, but saying nothing directly in response to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.[80]

Traditional wisdom attributes the late eighteenth-century discussion of religious toleration in America to Locke's inspiration. Through Locke's writings, including his further development of the philosophical implications, the originally Dutch ideas of van Limborch, Episcopius, Arminius, and Twisck became common assumptions in England and in the English colonies. But this was not the result of Locke's work alone. The English considered van Limborch's ideas so important that his systematic theology was translated, with additions and comments—called "improvements"—by John Tillotson (Archbishop of Canterbury), John Wilkins (Bishop of Chester), John Scott (canon of St. Paul's Cathedral), "and several other Divines of the Church of England," as well as a dedication to Thomas Tenison, Tillotson's successor at Canterbury.[81] Van Limborch's *Compleat System* was widely read for the training of Anglican priests during the "Latitudinarian" period of the Church of England.[82] Through Locke and van Limborch, Dutch ideas became the basis for discussions about

[80]The foregoing repeats a paragraph from Bangs, *Letters on Toleration*, 55. The quoted sentence is found in Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia A Letter on Toleration*, trans. Gough, ed. Klibansky, 142–45.

[81]Philip van Limborch, *A Compleat System or Body of Divinity, Both Speculative and Practical, Founded on Scripture and Reason*, trans. William Jones (London: John Darby, 1713); an abbreviated edition appeared in 1807.

[82]Carl O. Bangs, "'All the Best Bishoprics and Deaneries': The Enigma of Arminian Politics," *Church History* 42 (1973), 5–16.

religious liberty in the eighteenth century not only in England but also through all the English colonies.[83] Eighteenth-century Anglican ministers in Virginia, for example, as well as those elsewhere, must be presumed to have been acquainted with this broadly tolerant attitude, however narrow-minded some proved to be. Van Limborch spoke for reasonable Christians everywhere:

> "It may so happen, that those whom we believe to be Hereticks, may be Professors of the Truth, while we without knowing it may be the Patrons of very gross Errors; since we can by no infallible Judgment tell whether the Truth be on our side. Nay, it is foretold, that many out of a Zeal towards God should prove Persecutors, and such an one was Paul: And then it may chance that out of a mistaken Zeal we shall persecute the Truth it self, and resist God."[84]

The ideal of mutual toleration (as distinguished from unilateral toleration) is indeed of Dutch origin, although the Dutch acknowledged their debt to great thinkers in the past—more than a thousand, as Pieter Twisck pointed out. But the idea was developed by oppressed minorities in The Netherlands, and not as a reflection of the reality in the wider society. That a relative freedom of publication and an unusual connivance at the existence of dissenting religious groups made The Netherlands more tolerant than other places is indisputable. But we do not see this tolerance as a dominant attitude in the Reformed Church whether in The Netherlands or in New Netherland; and it is just as difficult to find it generally outside the great cities of Holland. New Netherland did not tolerate Lutheran services, for example, until the English took over. The seventeenth-century discussion of toleration in England owed much to the presence of foreign refugees and to the opinions of dissenters who had returned from exile in Holland; and the Dutch contribution to the Glorious Revolution with the consequent Act of Toleration (1689) is essential.

The works of van Limborch translated into English, together with his friend Gerard Brandt's *History of the Reformation . . . in . . . the Low Countries*, gave the eighteenth-century English at home and in the colonies a predominantly Remonstrant vision of the Dutch revolt and of the mutual toleration that characterized the most enlightened spirits of the Dutch, embodied in the stirring biographies of such heroes as William the Silent, Jacobus Arminius, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, and Hugo Grotius.[85] Holland seen through these

[83]Thomas Jefferson, for example, possessed letters by Philipus van Limborch written to John Locke, included in *Some Familiar Letters between Mr. Locke and Several of his Friends* (London: A. Bettesworth, C. Hitch, J. Pemberton, E. Symon, 1737), for example 415–18, van Limborch to Locke, 27 Oct. 1702.

[84]Van Limborch, *A Compleat System . . . of Divinity*, (II.), 985.

[85]Gerard Brandt, *Historie der Reformatie, en andre Kerkelyke Geschiedenissen, in en ontrent de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz., Hendrik and Dirk Boom, 1674); translation: *The History of the Reformation and Other Ecclesiastical Transactions in and about the*

carefully ground lenses shone with tolerance. That idealistic Remonstrant historiography provided the background and context for the history books of John Motley in the nineteenth century, and for Motley's rather romantic image of the Dutch as fervent fighters battling for religious tolerance.[86]

John Locke's *Letter on Toleration* was reissued in English in 1765 and 1768. It was again available to readers in England and America. To suppose that instead of Locke, the long-forgotten un-translated Dutch writings of Adriaen van der Donck permeated English colonial society with an ongoing strength that makes his vision of New Netherland a source of revolutionary Enlightenment hopes for religious toleration seems to me simply wishful thinking flattering to New Yorkers. Locke, long recognized as a source for Americans of the late eighteenth century, was that, certainly; but Locke himself was rooted in the Dutch arguments for toleration that Locke acknowledged through the dedication to Philippus van Limborch on the title page of his *Letter on Toleration*.

We come then to a view of Dutch influence in the American discussion that does not overturn accepted assumptions about John Locke to replace him with a newly discovered heroic individual named Adriaen van der Donck. Instead, familiarity with circumstances in England, New England, The Netherlands, and Switzerland suggests that John Locke's formulation of the question of mutual toleration owes so much to the arguments of Dutch Mennonites and Remonstrants that Russell Shorto's intuition that it was somehow the Dutch who influenced American thought can be affirmed, although following a very different route than through the relatively intolerant custom and manner of New Netherland. Locke, the bold and visionary intellectual formulating arguments for toleration, was not only developing ideas expressed by Dutch and other theologians. He was also reacting to the actions and arguments of "peasants and craftsmen, women and minorities" (to use Benjamin Kaplan's terms) in the face of real circumstances of recurrent persecution now long forgotten.[87]

Low-Countries, . . . down to the Famous Synod of Dort, inclusive (London: T. Wood for T. Childe, 1720–1723). See the comments in Carl Bangs's introduction to Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, I, xxiii–xxiv.

[86]On Motley's conception of history as heroics, see Mark A. Peterson, "A Brahmin Goes Dutch: John Lothrop Motley and the Lessons of Dutch History in Nineteenth-Century Boston," in *Going Dutch, The Dutch Presence in America, 1609–2009*, ed. Joyce D. Goodfriend, Benjamin Schmidt, and Annette Stott (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 109–31.

[87]Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 7.