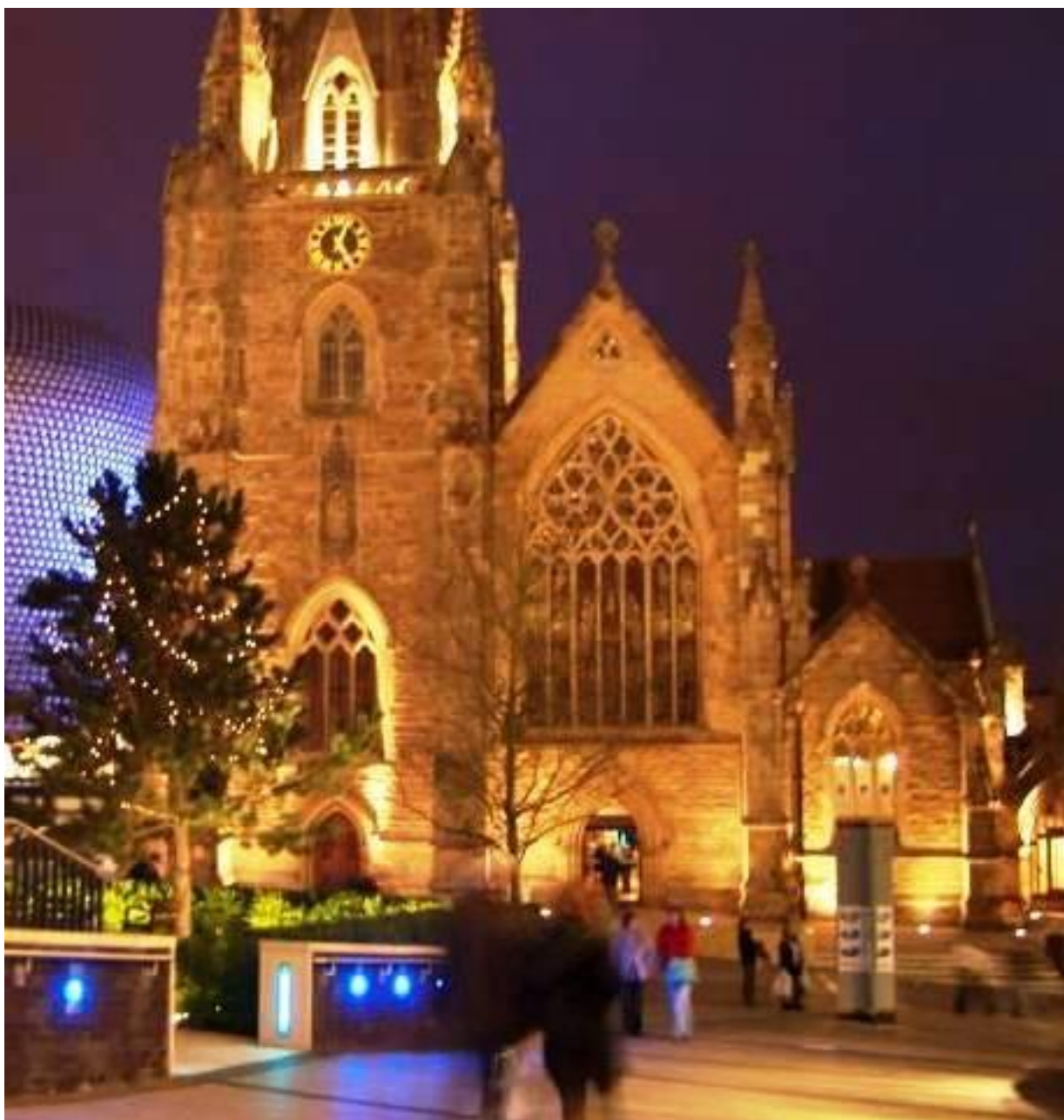




**Nieuwsbrief 45**

**juli 2013**



Birmingham – op weg naar het IARF Wereld Congres in 2014

IARF is een ontmoetingsplaats voor hen die streven naar de vrijheid van godsdienst en levensovertuiging en naar het bevorderen van mensenrechten op dit gebied

IARF Nederland organiseert twee maal per jaar een bijeenkomst, de voorjaars- en de najaarsbijeenkomst. Twee maal publiceert IARF Nederland een Nieuwsbrief. Zowel de bijeenkomsten als de Nieuwsbrief zijn gratis voor leden. Een lidmaatschap kost € 30 per jaar.

**Donderdag 3 oktober 2013 Dialoogdag** van IARF Nederland met partners samenwerkend in “Naar een Landelijk Stemgeluid”. Thema: Godsbeelden en mensbeelden. Plaats: Gebouw van het Apostolisch Genootschap, Aziëlaan 155, 3526SG Utrecht

**Augustus 2014 IARF Congres** in Birmingham, Engeland

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#### **Inhoud**

Van het bestuur

IARF Nederland

IARF

VIGILANCE OVER THE HUMAN RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF BELIEF

## Van het bestuur

**Het jaar 2013 is goed begonnen met een voorjaarsbijeenkomst, de tweejaarlijkse IARF-TEC (Taakgroep Ecumenische Contacten), gehouden in de Mozes en Aaronkerk in Amsterdam, binnen het kader van de Remonstrantse Beraadstag. Het thema ervan Tolerantie paste uitstekend bij de taak en missie van de IARF. Het was ook het thema van de toerusting van 2012-2013. De Remonstranten vroegen de voorzitter van IARF Nederland om een bijdrage voor het thema nummer Tolerantie van de AdRem van september vorig jaar.**

Na verschillende ontmoetingen met de heer Zwart, de Opziener van het Apostolisch Genootschap in het prachtige hoofdkantoor in Baarn is er uitzicht op een nauwere samenwerking. In 2012 werkte IARF Nederland samen met de partners van NLS (Naar een Landelijk Stremgeluid) voor de najaarsbijeenkomst. Jan van der Klooster, Ambassadeur van het ApGen, werkte enthousiast mee aan de voorbereidingen voor de Beraadstag en stelde het gebouw van het ApGen in Utrecht en vrijwilligers gratis te onzer beschikking. Voor dit jaar vindt de gezamenlijke beraadstag van het NLS plaats op donderdag 3 oktober weer in het gebouw van het Apostolisch Genootschap. Het thema is: Godsbeelden en mensbeelden. Er zal een belangrijke inbreng zijn van de studenten religiestudies van de Utrechtse Hogeschool, net als in 2012..

Dit jaar zet IARF Nederland de traditie gestart vorig jaar voort om de jaarlijkse ledenvergadering te combineren met de viering van de Dies Natalis. Vorig jaar genoten we hiervoor gastvrijheid van de Woudkapel in Bilthoven. Dit jaar heeft de Utrechtse Geertekerk ons gastvrijheid aangeboden. We zijn hiervoor zeer erkentelijk. Nieuw dit jaar was de interreligieuze boottocht die volgde op onze Diesviering in de kerk. De boottocht stond onder leiding van Stephan Vollenberg, stadsgids, historicus en dichter. Hij is sinds kort Vriend van de Geertekerk.

Onze voorzitter Dr At Ipenburg heeft na een periode van vijf jaar afscheid genomen als bestuurslid. We danken hem voor zijn inzet voor IARF Nederland de afgelopen vijf jaar. We hopen bij gelegenheid nog verschillende malen met succes een beroep te doen op zijn kennis en ervaring. We wensen hem succes bij de vele activiteiten die hem bezig houden.

## IARF-TEC Dag zaterdag 9 maart 2013 in Amsterdam

**IARF Nederland is blij met de goede samenwerking met de Taakgroep Europese Contacten voor de organisatie van de tweejaarlijkse IARF-TEC dagen. IARF is ook blij met het thema van de Remonstrantse Beraadstag – verdraagzaamheid in the Global Village. Dit is de kern van waar IARF al meer dan 100 jaar voorstaat.**

Plaatselijke geloofsgemeenschappen zochten contacten met geloofsgenoten over het IJzeren Gordijn heen in het heetst van de Koude Oorlog om een dialog en verzoening tot stand te brengen en zo bij te dragen aan de vrede in Europa. Het IJzeren Gordijn die Europa van Noord naar Zuid in Oost en West verdeelde is al meer dan 20 jaar niet meer. Zelfs de herinnering eraan verdwijnt bij een nieuwe generatie. Toch is het goed om als geloofsgemeenschap steeds opnieuw te zoeken waar verzoening nodig is over door mensen gemaakte barrières en over vooroordelen heen. Langdurige bondgenootschappen, waarbij je vriendschappen ontwikkelt en leert lief en leed te delen, zoals bij de Europese kerkelijke contacten tussen gemeenten zijn daarbij van grote waarde. Er zijn nu in het tweede decennium van de 21<sup>ste</sup> eeuw nieuwe uitdagingen voor het overbruggen van nieuwe tegenstellingen, zoals die tussen christenen en moslims. Onze wereld verandert snel, ten goede en ten kwade. Laten we met openheid kijken over onze grenzen heen. IARF wil hierbij graag uw bondgenoot en partner zijn.

## Een 16de eeuws pleidooi voor vrijheid van godsdienst

**Castellio's verzet tegen het vervolgen van 'ketteren' als Michael Servet in het Geneve van Calvin**

**Sébastien Châteillon, Castillio (1515-1563) was een vooraanstaand reformator, die een belangrijke rol speelde in het Geneve van Calvijn. Al vanaf 1544 had Castillio echter te maken met vervolging door Calvijn. Hij raakte zijn functie als rector van het College de Geneve, de theologische opleiding, kwijt en overleefde door te bedelen. Het conflict met Calvijn ging toen al over de onwenselijkheid van de vervolging van andersdenkenden. Om dit meningsverschil met Calvijn werd hij zelf bedreigd en moest hij kort voor de executie van Servet uit Geneve vluchten. Hij vestigde zich in augustus 1553 in Bazel, de plaats waar David Joris, de leider van de anabaptisten, onder het pseudoniem Jan van Bruggen leefde. Direct na de executie van Servet beschuldigde Castillio Calvijn van moord. Calvijns handen dropen, volgens Castillio, van het bloed van Servet. Calvijn nam de beschuldiging hoog op en schreef als apologie het boek *De Verdediging van het rechtzinnige geloof in de Heilige Drieëenheid (Defensio orthodoxae fidei de sacra Trinitate)* van februari 1554. Hier verdedigt hij de doodstraf voor, naar de mening van Calvijn, ketterse opvattingen.**

Castillio schreef, onder het pseudoniem Martinus Bellius (bellius = oorlog!), in mei 1554 zijn boek tegen de vervolging van Servet en andersgelovigen in het algemeen getiteld *Moeten ketters vervolgd worden? (De haereticis, an sint persequendi?)*. Als plaats van uitgave was uit voorzorg vermeld Maagdenburg in plaats van Bazel, waar de bekende drukker Johannes Oporinus het gedrukt had. De Italiaanse humanist Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio, markies van Orio, financierde de uitgave. In 1663 verscheen een Nederlandse vertaling. Het is mogelijk dat Laelius Socinus en Celio Secondo Curione medeauteurs waren. "Wanneer Servetus vecht met argumenten en publicaties, dan moeten hij bestreden worden met argumenten en publicaties." Castillio citeerde kerkvaders als Augustinus, Johannes Chrysostomos en Hieronimus om zijn argumenten kracht bij te zetten. Hij citeerde zelfs Calvijn zelf die pleitte voor godsdienstvrijheid toen hij zelf werd vervolgd door de katholieke kerk: "Het is niet christelijk om wapens en geweld te gebruiken tegen degenen die worden verdreven uit de kerk, en hen de rechten te ontfemen die alle mensen gemeenschappelijk hebben." Castillio stelde zich de vraag "Wat is eigenlijk een ketter?" Bij herhaling bestreed hij dat wie een ketter is bepaald wordt door een persoon, Calvijn, die meent dat hij zelf een foutloze uitleg van de Bijbel bezit. Castillio definieert een ketter als iemand die een andere interpretatie heeft van de Bijbel dan iemand anders. Ketterij is een relatief begrip en de aanklacht van ketterij is ook relatief. Hij is een van de eersten die pleit voor een beperkte opvatting van de overheid. Hij wilde een scheiding van kerk en staat en hij verzette zich tegen het idee van een theocratie. Hij stelde dat niemand het recht heeft om andermans gedachten te sturen of te controleren. De overheid heeft niets van doen met iemands persoonlijke opvattingen. "We kunnen alleen in vrede leven wanneer mensen hun onverdraagzaamheid beheersen. Ook al zullen er van tijd tot tijd verschillen van inzicht zijn, we kunnen in ieder geval komen tot algemene uitspraken. We kunnen verder van elkaar houden en we kunnen de banden van vrede vestigen, in afwachting van de dag dat wij de eenheid van het geloof zullen bereiken."

Is er een lijn naar de opvattingen van de voorlopers van de Remonstranten van de 16de eeuw aan te geven? De Remonstrant Reinier Tellier vertaalde Servets boek als "Boeken van de Dolingen in de Drievuldigheid" aan het begin van de 17de eeuw. Het boek werd gepubliceerd in 1620, kort na de Synode van Dordrecht, die de opvattingen van de remonstranten veroordeelde. Tellier vroeg eerst de mening van Episcopus over het boek. Deze keurde volgens Limborg in zijn *Remonstrantsche Brieven* (p. 383) de publicatie af. Er is verder een Remonstrantse uitgave uit 1612 van het manuscript dat Castillio in 1554 schreef als direct reactie op het boek van Calvijn van 1554 waarin hij de vervolging en het doden van ketters bepleit het manuscript *Contra libellum Calvinii* (Tegen het boek van Calvijn). Het is gecomponeerd als een dialoog tussen een zekere Vaticanus en Calvijn, waarin Castillio zowel de doodstraf voor ketters als het verbranden van de boeken van ketters als Servet afwijst.

Sebastian Castillio was de enige van de grote reformatoren die zich verzette tegen de executie van Servet en van ketters in het algemeen. Beza, Melancton, Haller en Bullinger verdedigden allen de terechtstelling van Servet. Stefan Zweig liet zich door Castillio inspireren om zijn pleidooi voor vrijheid van het geweten te laten horen in het Duitsland van de Nazi's in zijn boek *Castillio gegen Calvin oder Ein Gewissen gegen die Gewalt* (1936).

Ferenc David, geboren 1510 in Koloszvar, was een leeftijdsgenoot van Servet en is ongetwijfeld door hem beïnvloed. Hij werd de Reformator van de Unitarische Kerk in Transylvanië. Hij heeft zeer veel gepubliceerd, hoofdzakelijk in het Hongaars. Ferenc David is in Oost-Europa nog steeds zeer in ere.

[Lezing uitgesproken op het IARF Servet Symposium in Bilthoven op 30 maart 2012](#)

## Het IARF Wereldcongres: Van Kochi naar Birmingham 2014

Lucie Meier, penningmeester IARF Nederland

**Ik wil hier een paar ontwikkelingen noemen, die in de loop der jaren de IARF congressen hebben veranderd, qua activiteit, qua sfeer. Van ieder congres is wel iets bijzonders te noemen. Even in het kort: vroeger werd het iedere 3 jaar, nu ééns in de 4 jaar gehouden. Het is een open congres, iedereen kan deelnemen. Tevens wordt er de jaarvergadering van de aangesloten groepen en chapters (dat zijn de individuele leden) gehouden.**

We beginnen in 1903. Als je de foto van de congresgangers voor het gebouw van Paradiso ziet zitten dat was toen de Vrije Gemeente in Amsterdam – dan zie je een groep in het zwart geklede statige mannen, en een enkele vrouw. Ons land was gastland voor dit congres, pas het 2<sup>e</sup> in de geschiedenis, dus zolang gaat de nederlandse betrokkenheid al terug.

Ik maak nu een sprong naar 1972. In dat jaar werd ik als jongeren-vertegenwoordiger in het IARF hoofdbestuur gekozen, de Council. Het congres in Heidelberg benoemt dat jaar de eerste full-time algemeen secretaris, Diether Gehrmann. De naam was recentelijk veranderd in International Association for Religious Freedom. Daarvoor heetten wij: ...for Liberal Christianity AND Religious Freedom. Het was een grote stap om de centrale plaats van het christendom los te laten en het interreligieuze karakter meer te benadrukken. Sinds het begin in 1900 waren er al niet-christelijke groepen bij aangesloten, maar pas in de zestiger jaren kwam de deelname uit Japan, India en de Filippijnen op gang en werd de naam aangepast.

Drie jaar later reisde ik met de IARF jongeren-groep in een yellow school bus door Amerika. De reis eindigde op het congres in Montreal en van Diether Gehrmann mocht de jeugd daar een avondprogramma verzorgen. Dat was toen, 1975, nog een hele eer, en werd zeer gewaardeerd door de oudere generatie die wel wat luchtigs tussen de lezingen door konden gebruiken.

Op dit congres werd de eerste IARF Albert Schweitzer Award uitgereikt, *an award for distinguished service to the cause of liberal religion worldwide*. De nadruk ligt hier dus op 'vrijzinnigheid' (liberal religion) en niet zozeer op 'godsdienstvrijheid' (religious freedom). Dr. Lajos Kovacs, unitarische bisschop uit Transylvania, ontvangt deze onderscheiding voor het bewaren van de vrijzinnige traditie in de moeilijke jaren onder het communisme.

Weer drie jaar later, in 1978, wordt op het congres in Oxford de eerste vrouw tot IARF President gekozen, de Amerikaanse Carolyn Howlett. Ook wordt het eerste IARF hulpproject in het leven geroepen. Dat project was een poging om de segregatie van wijken in Belfast tegen te gaan - door middel van moeder- en peutergroepen met gemengde samenstelling, dus katholiek en protestant. Twee Jaar geleden, op de Europese conferentie in Belfast, hebben wij gehoord dat dit uiteindelijk geen blijvend resultaat heeft gebracht. Maar dat neemt niet weg dat de Noord-Ierse IARF groep gepóógd heeft een teken van hoop te brengen, van hoop op vrede, maar de tijd was er blijkbaar nog niet rijp voor.

In 1981 zou het congres in Noordwijkerhout gehouden worden. Ik was toen al twee jaar werkzaam op het IARF secretariaat in Frankfurt; dus werd ik naar Nederland gestuurd om praktische zaken voor te bereiden, en dat beviel mij prima. Bij dit congres hebben wij voor het eerst *Church visits* georganiseerd, bezoeken aan plaatselijke gemeenten. Na afloop hoorden wij dat bij diverse Nederlanders de oorlogsherinneringen bovengekomen waren door de aanwezigheid van jonge Japanners. Gelukkig had er ook verzoening plaatsgevonden met de na-oorlogse generatie, en voor sommigen was het een bevrijding geweest en een opening om nu samen verder te kunnen gaan.

Op initiatief van de Japanse deelnemers werd voor het eerst een lunch overgeslagen, door wie dat wilde. Het uitgespaarde geld werd bestemd voor één van de IARF projecten; deze actie ging Donate-one-Meal campaign heten, en werd een vast programma-onderdeel.

Dat jaar werd de eerste niet-westerse IARF President gekozen, de Japanner Nikkyo Niwano. Het was dan ook logisch dat het volgend congres in 1984 in Tokyo gehouden zou worden.

Daar werden wij ontvangen in de Great Sacred Hall, dus de prachtige centrale kerk van de boeddhistische lekengemeenschap Rissho Kosei-kai. Wij conferereerden in hun Fumon Hall, dat was toendertijd het *grootste* congrescentrum van heel Azië. Als tegenwicht voor deze grootschaligheid had men *Home visits* georganiseerd, dus bezoeken bij Japanse families aan huis. Dat werd een groot succes.

Ik zelf had kindertekeningen uit Japan en andere landen bijeengebracht. Die werden op de laatste avond van het congres uitgewisseld. Dus de niet-Japanners kregen tekeningen van Japanse kinderen mee naar huis en vice versa. Het was erg leuk om te doen, maar volgens mij is het bij die éne keer gebleven.

Het congres in 1987 vond in California plaats. Meestal droegen de Councilleden en andere VIP's naamkaartjes met verschillende kleuren linten eraan, om hun status kenbaar te maken; maar in het egalitaire Amerika wilde men daar niet aan; iedereen kreeg hetzelfde naamkaartje, ongeacht rang of stand. In dezelfde lijn stonden circle groups op het programma, kleine gesprekskringen om elkaar beter te leren kennen. In die groepen was dus ook weer iedereen gelijk.

Het daaropvolgend congres, in 1990 in Hamburg, bood eigenlijk alle - hiervóór genoemde – nieuwere programma-onderdelen. Maar ook, als vast element door de jaren heen, de morning- en evening devotions. Dat zijn korte diensten uit de verschillende religies die volgens mij een diepe indruk achterlaten. Als je weer thuis bent en alle mooie woorden langzaam uit je herinnering verdwijnen, zie je nog steeds de beelden van deze bijzondere diensten op je netvlies. In Hamburg kreeg Diether Gehrmann de *Distinguished Leadership award* voor zijn grote inzet en leiderschap sinds hij aantrad in 1972, voor de periode waarin de organisatie was gegroeid en zoveel vernieuwingen hadden plaatsgevonden.

Tenslotte maak ik een sprong naar 1999, het congres in Vancouver waar het 100-jarig bestaan van de IARF gevierd werd. Ik heb daar de geschiedenis van het Social Service Network, mogen presenteren, het IARF Werelddiakonaat dat ik in 1980 samen met Diether had opgezet.

Genoeg over het verleden, we in augustus 2014 gaan kijken en luisteren naar onze internationale IARF vrienden in Birmingham.

## **Servet and Erasmus** by **Jaume de Marcos Andreu**

Master in History of Religions (UAB), Member of the Board and coordinator of Foreign Relations of the Michael Servetus Institute in Spain, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)

**The topic of my presentation is the influence that Erasmus of Rotterdam had on Michael Servetus. As you know, Erasmus was a huge influence in the cultural and religious life in Europe in the first decades of the 16th century. It is perhaps less known that one of the places where Erasmus was**

**most influential for some time was Spain. This may be surprising for some, because there is a dark legend about the Inquisition in Spain and a long and sad history of intolerance to religious ideas, but before the Inquisition could impose its yoke on the country, many Spaniards, including many clergymen, read Erasmus' books and were trying to reform the Spanish church according to the principles proposed by Erasmus and other humanists. We'll talk again about this later and how this relates to the story of Michael Servetus.**

### **Erasmus and the Reformations**

The Dutch humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam, looms over all the reformation movements that appeared in the first half of the 16th century in Europe as a reference that is both polemic and impossible to ignore. Erasmus is present in all the discussions and in all religious developments. He certainly reflected better than anybody else about the spirit of the times. His main points were: hard criticism and sarcasm about the excesses in which the clergy and the rulers of the Church had fallen; mistrust of monastic life; a Christian response to the widespread anguish at the end of the Middle Ages, and the recovery of "original Christianity", which was considered authentic and saving, and which both the world and the Church had abandoned.

One of Erasmus' main achievements was the publication of a new edition of the New Testament, which was intended to clean the text from corruptions and mistakes due to faulty translation. This edition, which was very polemical then, was later used by Luther, Calvin, and other reformers and, at first, it was also one of the main references for their own editions in their native languages.

On the other hand, the intellectual milieu of the times demanded Erasmus to comment on the reformation movements and their theological grounds. Again, Erasmus did this with great reluctance, because he was well aware that he would obtain no good from the polemic and, rather, it would cost him many problems and misunderstandings. And therefore, Erasmus finally started a debate on the relationship between human will and the saving grace in his book *De libero arbitrio*, which received a very hard reply from Luther.

Certainly Lutheranism and Calvinism were not the only currents of the Reformation that were influenced by Erasmus, either through affinity or through debate and opposition. The intellectuals and theorists of the so-called Radical Reformation paid particular attention to Erasmus's work and proposals.

Our initial premise is that Erasmus's work was indeed known, studied, and as admired as it was criticized by the different standard-bearers of the radical reformations that appeared after the third decade of the 16th century, as a reaction against what many saw in the early Reformers as timidity, cowardice, and even treason against the true spirit of Christianity, that they were committed to restore in its integrity.

Of all the currents of the Radical Reformation, I will concentrate mainly upon the "Antitrinitarians" and particularly on Michael Servetus, whose theological radicalism has often been shadowed by his scientific discoveries, even though he never gave great importance to his research in the area, except when it could be applied to his first and main passion: theology and the restoration of Christianity in its original purity as he understood it. Necessarily, we need to refer as well to differences between them, which are not a few, and which are not trivial.

### **Servetus versus Erasmus: a one-way fascination**

Michael Servetus' true name was Miguel Serveto y Conesa, the son of public notary Antón Serveto and his wife Catalina Conesa. He was born in the village of Villanueva de Sigüenza, in the old kingdom of Aragon, which by then had joined Castile, one of the other two great Medieval kingdoms in the Iberian peninsula, thus paving the ground for the emergence of what was increasingly known as the unified kingdom of Spain, ruled by the future Holy Roman emperor, Charles of Hapsburg.

Servetus was born probably in 1509 or 1511, and died at the stake in Geneva on October 27, 1553.

Even though in his native country he has historically been better known for his famed discovery of the pulmonar (minor) blood circulation, he actually thought of himself more as a theologian and a reformer of Christianity rather than as a physician or a scientist, which is the way that he is usually portrayed in Spanish journalistic and even academic circles.

He actually took the medical profession as a cover for his true vocation, in order to preserve his anonymity in a social milieu that was hostile to religious reforms. And his scientific research was not aimed at the advancement of science but as a physical correlation to the great theological construct that he was building and which reached its peak in 1553 with the publication of his *Christianismi Restitutio*, Servetus' definitive work that would lead him to the stake, in effigy by the Catholics and in the flesh in Geneva by the Calvinists.

How did Servetus make his first acquaintance with Erasmus's work? Most probably, in his teenage years, when he became the pupil of friar Juan de Quintana, who was a notorious Erasmist and humanist, a doctor from La Sorbonne and a member of the Aragonian Parliament (the "Courts"), and who would later become the personal confessor of Emperor Charles. Servetus became his pupil at a very young age, and this allowed him to leave the rural milieu of his childhood and travel around Spain and Europe.

Quintana was most probably Servetus's first source about Erasmus' thought. We do not know whether Quintana initiated him with some readings, or whether he simply transmitted the spirit of Erasmus's message through his private talks and his personal example.

According to José Barón, the outmost Spanish biographer of Servetus, Quintana "was the kind of humanist that had to fascinate Servetus. A more dogmatic personality would have meant, if not an impediment..., at least a diminished influence". The Erasmian attitude to things spiritual was an inner disposition rather than an external gesture. It was the imagen of a "Christian knight": serene, aware of what his faith is and means, innerly armored to resist the world's temptations, untrusting of riches and fame, and sceptic in front of excessive piety or ritual pomp.

After two years, Servetus went to Toulouse, France, to study Law. He was seen there in the company of people that were sympathetic to the Reformation, to the point that his name appears in a list of students that were "suspect" of doctrinal deviation. Quintana, already Charles V's confessor, then called him again to be by his side when Charles went to Bologna in Italy to be crowned by the Pope in 1530.

Thus we reach the definitive turning point in Servetus's life. Witnessing the pomp and excessive luxury of the papal entourage in the Bologna ceremonies were a traumatic experience for that young idealist who, from that moment on, would definitely renounce all loyalty to Catholic orthodoxy and embrace the Reformation. Curiously enough, Erasmus himself had also seen in Bologna a triumphant papal retinue, but a few years earlier, in 1506, when Julius II conquered the city. He would later include the scene in one of his satirical dialogues.

Many years after the crowning ceremony, the imagen of the Pontiff in his throne would remain alive in Servetus's memory, who kept proclaiming his disdain and disgust at the Papacy.

Had the Erasmian spirituality, through Quintana and surely after later readings, any influence in Servetus's gut reaction to that display of ostentation and empty ritualism? We cannot know for sure but, Erasmus had certainly warned Christians to be faithful only to Christ, and not to any earthly prince.

Anyway, there is little doubt that Servetus, disgusted at the sight of the power and riches of the princes of the world, the Pope and the Emperor, Servetus made his decision that would mark the rest of his existence: he became a "soldier of Christ" and gave himself totally to the cause of the restoration of true Christianity. He would never marry, would live a sober, irreproachable life, and would launch his programme of radical renewal that would be completed with the writing of his *Christianismi Restitutio*. He would remain faithful to his convictions to the end, challenging everybody and facing death without yielding an inch in his prophetic mission as the bringer of Christ's truth, to whom he swore eternal loyalty.



Servetus left the court and reached Basel in 1530, where Erasmus had been writing some of his main work, and especially the famous edition of the New Testament in Greek and Latin (1516). Was he looking for Erasmus himself? However, the Dutch humanist had left the city only a few months before to go to the Imperial city of Freiburg.

In Basel, Servetus found instead the reformer Oecolampadius. Their relationship was tense, but their conversations helped him to put order in his own reforming ideas and start the preparation of what would be his first and controversial book, *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, that was published the following year, in 1531.

Servetus did not get Erasmus's approval of his book. The old scholar, who was very concerned already by the reformations that were carried out in several points of the continent, did not want to hear a word about the theories of the young upstart Spaniard, who had just launched the most brutal and carefully documented attack against the most holy of all Christian dogmas: the Trinity. Only one letter by Erasmus has been preserved that refers to a book that, almost without doubt, is Servetus', although there is no direct comment or criticism (it is obvious, nevertheless, that the general tone is of disapproval), but it is only quoted to blame Oecolampadius for not doing anything to stop the publication of such a book.

Servetus, overwhelmed by the furious reaction of all the leaders of the Reformation and persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition, and after a failed attempt at appeasing his outraged readers with a new book, *Dialogorum de Trinitate*, vanished from the public scene and adopted the false identity of Michel de Villeneuve, a native from the old kingdom of Navarre and a student of medicine in Paris. He lived a discreet life in France for twenty years, until he finally published anonymously his main work, *Christianismi Restitutio*, that would lead him to death, and where the mark of the estoic Erasmian spirituality was complemented by more ambitious approaches, mainly Renaissance Neoplatonism and Anabaptist radicalism. Meanwhile, Erasmus was already dead and his work would soon enter the Index of forbidden books. If everybody had been scandalized by Servetus's proposal, very few would later dare to admit Erasmus's influence in his works, at least for the time being.

### **Erasmian elements in the Servetian system**

Let us examine now in a more detailed way the fundamental elements of Erasmus's influence in Servetus's work and thought. Even though in some aspects they both would take similar approaches, strictly speaking we are not talking about the contents, because the character and the fruits of the work of the quiet Rotterdam scholar and of the rebel Aragonian innovator cannot be more different. We are rather talking about approaches and research tools that Erasmus gave to those who, like Servet, felt discontented with the state of religion and aspired to reformulate it to bring back to it a spirit and a purity that they consider lost or corrupt, with no hope of recovery unless it is radically regenerated.

### **The philological method in the discernment of truth**

With the arrival of Renaissance Humanism, interest in the original purity of Christianity, which already existed in the Middle Ages, actually grew. This interest was not limited to the theological and organizational scope, but it reached all spheres of knowledge in those times. Specifically, the most restless scholars and philologists started to worry about the authenticity of Christian teachings as they had been transmitted from generation to generation, under the only basis of tradition.

Among the first humanists, Lorenzo Valla included the text of the Vulgate in his philological investigation, identifying some copy errors and asking for corrections. If humanists wanted to recover what Christianity was originally meant to be and find a solution for the crisis of the Church, they had to go back to the authentic texts, which were seen as a safe source of inspiration. They did not trust the monastic institutions and their copyists, and preferred to work on older versions, looking for their original wisdom.

Erasmus's edition of the New Testament from the original Greek was saluted with joy and intellectual devotion both by Catholic humanists and by Reformation pioneers. Erasmus himself had doubted before starting a task that was exceptionally arduous for him, who was expert in Latin but not in Greek. Erasmus

was not merely interested in the work as a scholar, but also as a religious man: by getting access to the sources of revelation in the language in which it was written, he could gain the salvation of his soul by accepting the resolution of the one true teaching.

Servetus, however, started the philological study of the sources of revelation both in Greek and in Hebrew, going thus beyond Erasmus in the scope of his investigation. His domain of both languages shows to be more than remarkable in his early work, *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, which is quite surprising for a young man whose only high education until then had been some studies of Law in Toulouse.

In his early work, Servetus dared to confidently quote the Bible both in Greek and in Hebrew. Nevertheless, quotes in Greek are much more frequent and are often used to belie the theological postulates of his adversaries. He frequently insists that the Gospels' teaching and Jesus's words are "of utmost simplicity" and do not require much elaboration, i.e., the reading of the text in its original form would save problems in exegesis, because the teaching is clear, and it only seems complicated and controversial when it has been subject to later elaborations that have altered the original clarity.

Likewise, his negation of the trinitarian dogma and his reinterpretation of Jesus's nature under the light of a reading of the Gospel is supposedly also "very clear": "Christ's words, which are the most plain and simple, are the grounds of the Church; let us imitate the Apostle, who preached Christ using words that were not composed by human artifice"; and that simplicity is required of the disciples who listen to the teaching. He wanted to show this very simplicity in his own life, guided by a kind of plain religiosity, *simplex religiositas*, as he admitted in one of his letters to Calvin. This is, again, a typical Erasmian trait.

When Servetus referred to "human artifice", it is very likely that he was alluding to scholastic philosophy. Let us remember that Erasmus, and his masters in the school of "Devotio Moderna" before him, had expressed their concerns at the lucubrations and categorizations of scholasticism, and had asked for greater simplicity in the explanation of Christian theological thought. Servetus, insisting in simplicity and rejecting the conundrums of so-called "philosophers", proved that he was continuing a trend shared with Erasmus and other thinkers with similar views about theology.

Another characteristic aspect of the Servetian philological study of sources is his attention to detail and contextuality. For example, in one of the passages Servetus discusses the meaning of the word "Messiah", comparing the Hebrew term with the Greek and Latin equivalents, and he goes on to analyze the concept of "Anointed" applied to Jesus's human nature, confirming it with multiples quotes from the New Testament.

This inclination to focus on the apparently minute aspects of the Gospels's text is based upon the absolute importance that Servetus gives to the Bible as God's revelation to men. He read the Bible as literally as possible to confirm his arguments. Nevertheless, it was never a blind literality, but contextual: each word and expression is always framed in its own linguistic and historical context. This is one aspect that Servetus advances several centuries what will be modern research on the historical Jesus and the origins of Christianity.

### **Restoration of pure Christianity**

In the early 16th century, the crisis of the Church as an institution, after the Western Schism of the Papacy and the Savonarola case in Florence and reaching a peak in the scandal of indulgences that outraged Luther, the fragmentation of Christianity was unavoidable. Erasmus, although a severe critic himself, was contrary to division and favoured what could be defined as "inner reform". He preferred a kind of quiet spirituality, forged in the assimilation of the Gospels' teaching and practiced in the intimacy of one's own conscience, in order to avoid fights between Christians. He exposed his proposal mainly in the work *Enchiridion militis christiani*, or "Manual of the Christian Knight" as it is usually translated. The Erasmian spirituality as shown in the *Enchiridion* was believed to be close to the diverse movements of the *Alumbrados* in the Kingdom of Castille. An Erasmist like Juan de Quintana had the chance to have first-hand knowledge of some of those cases, perhaps in the company of his talented pupil, the young Miguel

Serveto.

In contrast with Erasmus's spiritualist proposal, Servetus's push for the renewal of Christianity had radical traits from the beginning, that would grow until the apocalyptic vision of the Restitutio. In this last book, there is little left of the sense of prudence that Quintana, his Erasmist mentor, surely taught him. Servetus called in the book for a rebellion, both in the hearts of all Christians and in the totality of the visible Church as the historical manifestation of Christ's invisible Church, in order to achieve its complete and integral restoration. Let us read his call in the preface to the Restitutio:

Convocation to the whole Apostolic Church to go back to its origins, to the integral restitution of God's knowledge, the faith in Christ, our justification, baptismal regeneration, and the Lord's Supper; to retribute us, finally, the heavenly Kingdom, dissolve the captivity of impious Babylon, and totally destroy the Antichrist and his minions.

“And Michael appeared in heaven” [In Hebrew in the original]

“And a fight was unleashed in heaven” [In Greek in the original]

Therefore, Servetus was reclaiming a radical restoration, an event of cosmic dimensions, in which the archangel Michael, his namesake, would lead the battle against the Roman Antichrist and the satanic forces. Maybe he even saw himself as the “Michael on earth” called to awaken the sleeping conscience of believers and “unleash the fight” in the world while the good fight was fought in the heavens. Maybe as well, this could be the explanation of his careless and fateful public appearance in Geneva few months after having fled the French Inquisition, after which he was imprisoned, judged, and condemned.

### **The Trinitarian problem**

For Servetus, the key element for the effective restoration of a pure Christianity need a Gospel-based definition of the nature and function of Christ in the history of salvation, and this needs a rejection of the trinitarian dogma. He devoted his first two theological works to its refutation, and they are also the basis for the first part of the Restitutio. To submit the Trinity to radical criticism, Servetus used the philological method, as explained before, the study of the Church Fathers, and even the defense of the unity of God done by Jews and Muslims.

Actually, Erasmus himself had been questioned in his faithfulness to the trinitarian dogma, because of the famous deletion of the so-called Comma Iohanneum in his 1516 edition of the New Testament. This debated passage is found in John's first letter, 1 Jn 5, 7-8, in which the Latin version included a reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Erasmus examined the oldest Greek sources that were available and removed this passage because he considered that it had been added later by copyists. This fundamental change in a text that was thought to be one of the key pieces of evidence of the Biblical basis of the trinitarian doctrine, unraveled a wave of criticism against Erasmus, who finally, in the third edition of the work (1521), reinstated the classical trinitarian text.

Nevertheless, doubts about Erasmus's trinitarian convictions lingered, because he pointed out in his *De libero arbitrio*: “According to dialectical logic, it is possible to say that there are three gods, but to talk about such things with simple people would be the cause of great scandal.” And he still insisted in the preface to St. Hilary's works, a text that Servetus read and which reaffirmed his antitrinitarian ideas. Anyway, Erasmus preferred to put an end to the debate and referred to the impossibility to know such things and the need to listen to the magisterial authority of the Church.

Servetus, who was less prudent or bolder than Erasmus, launched a fierce attack against the dogma of the Trinity in his *De Trinitatis Erroribus* (1531). For his attack, Servetus made a radical analysis of the texts in the Scriptures and reached the same conclusion that Erasmus hinted at in his work on free will: that, in pure use of logic, the dogma of the Trinity leads to worshipping three gods.

However, Servetus concentrated his dialectical weapons in the problem of the multiplication of hypostases and the non-validity of the concept of "Person" in theological discussion. He rejected the word in order to "not make bad use of it", and referred euphemistically to the first, second, and third "entities", adding with scorn: "because in the Scriptures I cannot find any other name for them." Thus he reached the point of his serious accusation against the believers in the Trinity of practicing a worship equivalent to an empty and confused tritheism, the worshipping of "three ghosts".

In an even more terrible way, in *Restitutio* he does not hesitate to call the Trinity "a three-headed Cerberus", a reference to the dog guarding the gates of hell, earning him the mortal hatred of Calvin and other reformers.

The question of the Trinity had always been treated more in metaphorical than in purely logical terms. Even St. Augustine had admitted that human intellect could only illustrate the concept of the Trinity, but not prove it. But, whereas Augustine was an enthusiastic defender of the Church's authority, and therefore he persevered in the effort of illustrating it through similes and equivalences, Erasmus seemed to shrug and admit with resignation that the subject was not open for debate.

Servetus, however, had no kind of respect for the authority of the Church. He had lost it all when he contemplated the sad display of Bologna. He only kept an overwhelming faith in Christ; but it was a kind of faith that, free from the ties of ecclesiastical dogmatics, was also free to question the truth that could not be questioned, even by those who thought it was legitimate and even necessary to question other things or even divide the Church because of them. Servetus is, therefore, a radical thinker: he would not permit that nothing or nobody could stop his search for truth. His honesty as a thinker, his unbreachable fidelity to his own conscience and to Christ, was higher than any human loyalty and fear to the inevitable reprisals.

### **Irenic temptations**

A fourth aspect that connects the thoughts of Erasmus and Servetus (particularly the young Servetus, when he wrote his early antitrinitarian works), and that we had already outlined at the end of the previous paragraph, is their common theological irenism. Irenism, a word derived from Greek *eirene* (peace), is defined as the theological position that tends to belittle or ignore altogether the differences between opposing opinions, with the intentions of appeasing and reach agreements over (or ignoring) differences. It can be applied to disputes between Christians or to the dialogue with other religions, particularly Judaism and Islam.

Erasmus practices it with some frequency when he tried to mediate in the debates between Christians. He particularly lamented the intestine wars that were lashing Christendom as an obvious transgression of the evangelical mandate for peace and concord, and the worst example for all other cultures and religions. This fact was particularly to be condemned when the Pope was one of the fighters, something that was not infrequent in those troubled years, when the Roman pontiff had lands under his dominion and specific political interests that had to be defended.

Up to this point, Erasmus's position was reasonable in a humanist and a sincere Christian concerned about the preservation of the spirit of his faith and was afraid of its being deformed and breached. This attitude extended to the different Reformations that rose after the publication of Luther's theses. Erasmus tried to keep a difficult balance, that in the long run was untenable, between Rome and the Reformations, and he ended facing both Luther, Oecolampadius, and Rome.

On the other hand, as Marcel Bataillon commented, Erasmian irenism extended to the so-called "infidels", i.e. the Muslim world, symbolized by the Turks, who were then threatening Europe with their unstoppable advance in the Balkans. Christendom was ready to resist at the gates of Vienna. However, Erasmus believed that war was not the way to create good feelings with the Turks. And anyway, who where the Christians to give lessons? Were they the best example of faithfulness to Christ and his teachings? Besides, from a theological view that was typically Medieval, if divine design was to decide the result of

wars, God could hardly help those who, even when invoking him, were constantly breaking His commandments; only if the Christian kingdoms made a practical example of the doctrines, they could rely upon divine benevolence. In those moments they were left to their own fate, because of their faults.

In his *Adagia*, Erasmus distinguished between the rulers of the Ottoman empire and the populations submitted to their rule in order to extend a friendly hand to them:

We are ready to annihilate all Asia and Africa by the sword, when a big part of the population is composed of Christians or semi-Christians. Why do we not acknowledge the first and caress the others, correcting them with clemence?... I prefer a sincere Turk rather than a false Christian.

Contrast between the sincerity of the infidels versus the lies of Christians was a rhetorical resource intended to be an attention call for the reader (Christian, of course) and that, as we shall see, was also used by Servetus. We remain in doubt about whether Erasmus really believed in the viability of his conciliatory proposals, which were based upon an admirable good will but of impossible application in those troubled times.

Servetus also made some rather naïve forays in irenism and, like Erasmus, he did it both in the area of divided Christianity and in the relation between Christianity and other religions.

It may sound shocking, but Servetus was convinced that his antitrinitarian proposals, as explained in *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, could unite the different Christian factions when they understood that it was impossible to refute his arguments and became aware of the true evangelical message that he had been able to discern through his philological and doctrinal research. None of this happened, of course, and he was the object of the most furious and terrible condemnations from both sides.

Perplexed, and in a reaction that was even more irenist than the first, Servetus published a second book, *Dialogorum de Trinitate*, with which he wanted to clarify some of the most polemical concepts of his first work, again hoping that he would be better understood this time: in the prologue, he blamed the scandal to “my own lack of skill and the typist's negligence”, and expected the reader to examine objectively his explanations and evaluate “the issue as it is, because if you focus your attention in it, my entangled words will not be an obstacle for you”. Obviously, his conciliatory effort failed.

Servetus also participated in a kind of evangelical irenism that wanted to favour the spreading of Christianity, as Erasmus himself had also done. Thus, in *De Trinitatis* he mentioned the need to remove the obstacles that impede unity between religions and the propagation of Christianity. It was implicit in his referring to the Qur'an in his argumentation against the Trinity (that evoked the definition of semi-Christians that Erasmus had given to Muslims), but in his reference to Judaism, he was completely explicit:

For Servetus, it was Christianity that moved away from correct doctrine when the concept of Trinity and the three divine Persons sharing a common ousia were introduced. What is the idea behind the argument? That the other religions, i.e., the Jewish (origin of the Christian religion) and Muslim (later and derived from it) had somehow preserved the original intuition of God's unity and had remained faithful, in this aspect, to the divine revelation, in contrast with a Christianity deformed by “philosophers” and the Magistery after the first Councils. Therefore, the other religions of the Book should not be rejected a priori as it was common in those days, but rather be used as a compass for inquiring Christians to aim at the correct teaching that had been lost. It was a notion that was revolutionary in the times of the Inquisition, forced conversions, and permanent war against the Turk.

### **On free will and good works**

A deep analysis of the problems of Erasmian free will in front of the Lutheran ideas on *sola gratia* and the Calvinist concept of double predestination doubtlessly exceeds the limits of this study, since in the Protestant field, it should be expanded, not just to the diverse forms of Anabaptism, but also to the debate between Calvinists and Arminians in 17th-century Holland and the later appearance and development of

Methodism in England, among many other branches of the question. Being this study focused on the convergence between the Erasmian view and Servetus's thought, we will limit ourselves to underlining the necessary disposition and coparticipation of human will in the saving mission of Redemption as it appears in Servetus, specifically in those fragments of his work that are more influenced by the Anabaptist current, as well as some consequences that he reached in the development of his thought, particularly in the scope of his conception of the human being. Therefore, we consider necessary to have a brief look at other Anabaptists who preceded him, in order to see Servetus immersed in that context. He must have read some of their texts or opinions although, as far as we know, he no constant or direct relationship with Anabaptist groups which, despite being persecuted, as he himself was, by both Catholics and Protestants, did not cease to spread their proposals in Central Europe.

As we mentioned in the first part of this study, differences between Erasmus and Luther regarding free will were framed in the great debate of 1524-25. The question has a soteriological formulation: has the human being, fallen and in need of Christ's atoning sacrifice to reconcile him/herself with God, the efficient capacity to cooperate in the process? Or are his/her efforts and will powerless and only the divine saving grace can free him/her from condemnation?

The Erasmian anthropological view, that carefully elludes Pelagianism, makes a parallel between the man that yearns for salvation and a small child who wants to reach the apples hanging from a tree. He needs his father's help to reach them and extends his arms to the sky to show his desire. His good father raises him in his arms so that the boy can take the apple. Likewise God, as the Father of the human race, expects from his children a "hint" (human will for salvation) to save them promptly. The efficient action, therefore, is only the divine one (up to here, no contradiction with Luther), but Erasmus adds the necessary disposition and desire in the believer so that it becomes effective. The Erasmian doctrine of coparticipation of the believer in his salvation has been called "synergism", because human will establishes a synergos (joint work) with divine grace, even if it is not needed. Therefore, for Erasmus, grace is equally essential, but the only force that participates in the process. For Erasmus, salvation is a process of cooperation between the human being and God.

However, for Luther, the human being is damned, and he can only trust divine grace to get out of his wretched state. This is the idea underlying his doctrine of justification by faith. Free will is mere appearance, an illusion of the impotent criature. The only alternative for believers is the hope to be counted among the chosen one, because everything is of no use: "Now God has freed my free will from the work of salvation, He has trusted His divine free will with it and has promised to save me, no because of my own efforts, but because of His grace and mercy".

Erasmism, however, achieved some presence in the Reformation field through Zwingli in Zurich. The former Swiss parish priest was a great admirer of Erasmus's work, at least during the first phase of his particular reformation.

Maybe it is not just a coincidence that non-violent Anabaptism was born in Zurich. It was started by a small group of radical reformers led by Grebel, Blaurock, and Sattler, and it was later continued by Menno Simmons (from whom the Mennonite church derives) and others, and which emphasizes the decisive cooperation of the believers in his own salvation through baptism. The Zurich Anabaptists underlined the importance of inner conversion, the mature human decision of contributing to his or her own salvation through a new baptism and the continuous expression of that commitment in a life of Christian discipleship, that included, among other elements of conduct, renouncing to the use of violence. Except for the external sign of the new baptism, that probably would have seemed to Erasmus an unnecessary formalism, in all other aspects the Zurich Anabaptists could hardly be differentiated from the "Christian knight" described in Erasmus' *Enchiridion*.

Michael Servetus's position in *Christianismi Restitutio* shows the huge influence that this Anabaptist soteriology, inspired in the Erasmian view on salvation and the importance of conscientious commitment

and discipleship, had in his mature work. The question of baptism, that had been totally omitted in his antitrinitarian works of youth, appears in *Restitutio* as a key issue in his theological system (Calvin also noticed it, because it was one of the two basic accusations –the other being the denial of the Trinity-- that would take him to the stake), devoting a good part of the second half of the book and some of his most firm statements.

Servetus starts his argumentation quoting Paul of Tarsus, affirming that circumcision of the spirit is previous to the flesh, i.e., it is an inner decision before it is a visible physical act. He takes as his model, of course, Christ himself, who was circumcised in the flesh being a baby, but only effectively baptized in spirit and water when he was thirty, an age that Servetus considered ideal for this act. Even though the baptism of the spirit (inner conversion) is necessary, this does not mean that the water baptism is superfluous. For Servetus, it is not mere formalism or a public testimony of faith, but an efficient sign through which the believer is regenerated and grace is conferred to him.

Servetus, like Erasmus and the Anabaptists, believed that the human being was “cooperant” in the process of salvation, that was in effect a joint task in which the participation of both sides was needed to take place. And as far as the believer was concerned, not just as a free, voluntary decision, but also as agent of divine grace in his brothers and sisters. Therefore, he gave considerable importance to good works and also to the ministry, that of course was not limited to the priestly order but it was a capacity of all true believers. He wrote about it: “If God was not using your ministry to spread His gifts, choosing so many ministers would be in vain. That we were called “ministers of the Spirit”, “cooperants with God”, and “dispensers of His mysteries” would be in vain... We are truly cooperators with God...”.

Therefore, human beings collaborate (again the Erasmian synergos) in their own salvation, therefore they need to have free will so that they can make that choice and act voluntarily, even acknowledging (as Erasmus did) that it is God who saves. No just that, but through faith, the Kingdom of God is “already inside us, through Christ Heaven has been brought to us, for him it has been opened to us... and we have already entered it”. From this understanding of the Kingdom as a reality already present in the true Christian, the one who is baptized in spirit, the discussion on free will is overcome, because it is not just an aspiration but a reality that one only needs to be fully aware and accept it: “this is the time for your vocation: when, by faith, you apprehend Christ... you start reigning with Christ”. It is a vocation, a personal response to Christ's call in the heart of the believer. Therefore it is not strange that Servetus locates will just in the heart, leaving only rationality in the brain.

On the other hand, blind determinism would totally nullify the heart-based will, to the point that even talking about a will would be absurd. Achieving the impossible or reaching the unreachable does not depend on will. In this context, Servetus included an explicit reference to the concept of *servo arbitrio* used by Luther in his polemics with Erasmus, and he ridiculed it with his typical intensity:

As a consequence of all this, you can understand the error of those who, because it is impossible the entry in that kingdom [of God] for us, reach the sinister conclusion of the enslaved will, when one should rather conclude the sublimity of the kingdom. (...) To deduct... that our will is enslaved, is like saying: “I cannot fly, therefore my will is enslaved.” Even more, to see the excellence of Christ's grace, we need some strength from our birth that, on the other hand, are not sufficient... because true grace is that through which you can reach what we cannot only with our own strength.

That strength, which is the will for salvation, necessary but not sufficient by itself, is for Servetus as it is for Erasmus and the Anabaptists: a manifestation of the vital predisposition in the person that allows grace to act. However, what is the reach of that grace? According to Erasmus, it is simply the tool that God uses to save us, the safe entry into the heavenly kingdom. Servetus, on the other hand, is more ambitious.

The notion of the nature of human being as fallen and corrupt, that cannot be restored but only through undeserved divine mercy, as expressed in the Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines, is very far from the Servetian concept, much more positive about the human being. We mentioned before a fragment that spoke

about “reigning with Christ” and that those who exert the ministry as “cooperators” with God, agents through whom God transmits His gifts. In terms which are similar to those used by Hubmaier, Servetus saw the true baptized one as a “new creature” . Through faith and baptism, we become “sons of God”, which for Servetus is no mere honour or a beautiful metaphor, but an ontological reality: “nobody can be called son of God without being engendered from the substantial semen of God... Substantial, by virtue of the divine substance that is inherent in the inner man, so that man may be participant in divine nature. This generation is therefore substantial and a participation in the heavenly kingdom, and it is started and verified in us through the washing of regeneration, “by water and the spirit” which, in growing the life of faith through baptism, leads us to an effective position in the heavenly kingdom” .

Therefore, reaching this extreme of the argument on the activity of the human being and the adult decision of being baptized “by water and the spirit”, we can understand the anthropology that was underlying Servetus's thought since the beginning, as well as his radical originality, that takes him much farther away than Erasmus and obviously the Zurich Anabaptists could ever dare to go: because it is divinity itself that is latent in the human being, waiting only to be manifested through the voluntary act of conversion. Once the decision is taken and made real in the physical plane (baptism in water) and in the spiritual plane (baptism in the Spirit), the divine substance that is innate in every human person can be fully revealed, and so the human being is already, in the world, participating in the heavenly kingdom and a true “son of God” as Christ is, and this way, believers come to be “inserted, embedded in Christ”, participating in some ineffable way of his very being and glory. What is more, all things are subtly pervaded by the divine presence. During the Geneva process, when the accusers put in his mouth the affirmation that God's substance was present in the Devil itself, Servetus did not hesitate to reply: “And you doubt it? As for me, my conviction is that all things are a part and portion of God and that all nature is his substantial spirit” .

These passages and quotes have led critics to accuse Servetus of trying to make the human being divine, removing the ontological distance between the Creator and his Creation; some have qualified his system as pantheistic. It is very likely that Servetus, in the full maturity of his thought and using sources well beyond the reading of the Bible and the Church Fathers, was applying a scheme of “Deployment” of the divine in the world in a Neoplatonic sense. We need to take into account the influence that he received from Symphorien Champier during his years of hiding in France. Champier was also a physician and perhaps the main figure of Renaissance Neoplatonism in France. In this context, talking about mere pantheism would be an oversimplification. On the other hand, in *De Trinitatis Erroribus* he had already hinted at the presence of the divine in every person . Anyway, the mature Servetus's theological reflection had led him much beyond the initial Erasmian influences of his youth.

## **1. Appendix:**

### **Erasmian influences in the post-Servetian churches**

While Erasmus's work was rejected among the institutionalized Reformations and condemned by the Roman Catholic Church, to the point of including his texts in the Index of forbidden books, his influence would remain in an unsuspected sector: the antitrinitarian churches that appeared in Central Europe a few years after Michael Servetus's death.

But the Erasmian spirit, in questions such as tolerance, questioning Biblical arguments that justified the Trinity, or the defense of free will against Calvinistic determinism, could only bring Transylvanian Unitarians closer to Erasmian postulates.

As a confirmation of that implicit affinity, the Italian Antitrinitarian Giorgio Blandrata included, in one of his most remarkable books, both Erasmus and Servetus as the forerunners of the antitrinitarian church that was being built in Transylvania:

[God] brought Erasmus of Rotterdam, who in our times was the first to move this obstacle [belief in the Trinity], and in no dark terms, he taught about the one God, the Father, certainly taking more advantage in it



than others who talk openly; after Erasmus, He brought Michael Servetus.

Thus, paradoxically, while Erasmus was condemned by his beloved Catholic Church, from which he never wanted to part ways completely, in spite of his proposals for renewal and his early flirting with the Reformation, now he was being revered as a pioneer and spiritual luminary by a small radical church in Central Europe. If the genius from Rotterdam had lived enough to see it, perhaps he would have hinted a smile, wondering about the paradoxes of History.

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## **Veiligheidspact tegen discriminatie (Pact tegen fysiek en verbaal geweld gebaseerd op discriminatie van homoseksuelen, joden, moslims en andere minderheidsgroepen)**

### ***Preambule:***

**De Nederlandse samenleving anno 2013 is zeer divers. Verschillen in levenswijze en verschillen van mening over allerlei zaken (seksualiteit, Midden-Oosten, islam) kunnen inzet zijn van dialoog of debat in een pluriforme samenleving. Deze verschillen kunnen heel fundamenteel zijn, maar zij mogen nooit een motief zijn om elkaar te discrimineren, laat staan om elkaar met verbaal of fysiek geweld te bejegenen. Ieder mens heeft het recht om te zijn zoals hij of zij is én om gerespecteerd te worden door anderen, mits hij of zij ook de ander respecteert in diens eigenheid. Wederzijds respect is de grondslag van een humane maatschappij waar plaats is voor iedereen die zich houdt aan onderling overeengekomen maatschappelijke spelregels. Bescherming van minderheden is een belangrijk uitgangspunt in onze democratie.**

Onderstaande organisaties en personen verklaren hierbij actief stelling te nemen tegen geweld op discriminatoire gronden. Het voortouw wordt genomen door onder andere homo-, joodse en islamitische organisaties omdat zij regelmatig slachtoffer zijn van geweld vanuit de samenleving. Dat geweld is gericht op individuen vanwege hun seksuele, etnische of religieuze identiteit of op gebouwen, zoals moskeeën, synagogen en woonhuizen.

Andere organisaties en personen worden opgeroepen zich hierbij aan te sluiten en om eveneens stelling te nemen tegen discriminatie in het algemeen (zoals discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt). Onderstaande organisaties en personen beloven in het bijzonder zich actief in te zetten tegen iedere vorm van discriminatoire agressie, zowel verbaal (zoals schelden en pesten) als fysiek (zoals mishandeling en brandstichting). Overigens kunnen ook andere groepen dan de hierboven genoemde slachtoffer zijn van discriminatoire agressie, zoals asielzoekers, gehandicapten en vrouwen.

### ***Artikel 1.***

Onderstaande organisaties en personen verklaren zich bereid om publiek stelling te nemen, met name bij incidenten en dreigende situaties of brandende kwesties in het publieke debat rond bovengenoemde thema's. Ook verklaren onderstaande organisaties zich bereid om bovengenoemde boodschap uit te dragen en indien nodig daarover de discussie aan te gaan met de eigen achterban en gelijkgezinden.

### ***Artikel 2.***

Onderstaande organisaties en personen zijn bereid om naar vermogen bescherming aan te bieden van acuut bedreigde gebedshuizen, woonhuizen en personen.

Toelichting: nadat de Koptische gemeenschap zich bedreigd voelde vanwege ontwikkelingen in Egypte is aangeboden vanuit de islamitische gemeenschap in Amsterdam en omstreken om de Koptische kerk in Amsterdam-Noord bescherming te bieden. Dit is een mooi voorbeeld van wat wordt bedoeld in dit artikel.

### ***Artikel 3.***

Onderstaande organisaties en personen zijn bereid om naar vermogen mee te werken aan schoolbezoeken in gemengde groepjes om discussies te voeren met leerlingen over bovengenoemde thema's.

Toelichting: een jood, een homo en een moslim (en een christen en een ongelovige, afhankelijk van de situatie) gaan in discussie met een klas of grotere groepen. In principe wordt aangesloten bij bestaande initiatieven. Een en ander zou ook tot verdere initiatieven kunnen leiden, zoals het versterken van het anti-pestbeleid of de oprichting van tolerantiecomités van leerlingen/docenten en dergelijke.

### ***Artikel 4.***

Onderstaande organisaties en personen zijn bereid om naar vermogen mee te werken aan buurtbemiddeling bij het (weg)pesten van en spanningen tussen buurtbewoners.

Toelichting: bemiddelingsteams vanuit netwerken van organisaties en personen met verschillende achtergronden. Er zijn al dergelijke initiatieven geweest die als voorbeeld kunnen dienen.

U kunt (als organisatie of individueel) het Veiligheidspact ondertekenen door een reactie te sturen. Daarbij is vermelding van naam vereist en van adres en telefoonnummer gewenst. Inmiddels hebben meer dan 100 organisaties en personen het Pact onderschreven, waaronder de Unie van Marokkaanse Moslimorganisaties in Nederland (UMMON), het Centraal Joods Overleg (CJO), de Protestantse Diakonie Amsterdam, het Rooms Katholiek Dekanaat, COC Amsterdam en enkele (afdelingen van) politieke partijen, zoals GroenLinks, PvdA en 50 plus.



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De IARF is in 1900 opgericht met als doel om mensen te verenigen die zoeken naar “de zuivere religie en de volmaakte vrijheid.” IARF is nu een wereldwijde gemeenschap van organisaties, groepen en individuen met een verschillende godsdienstige of levens-beschouwelijke achtergrond. De IARF strijdt voor het fundamentele recht op godsdienstvrijheid en bevordert begrip en respect tussen mensen uit verschillende godsdienstige tradities. Er zijn afdelingen in: Bangladesh, Canada, Duitsland, India, Ierland, Japan, Nepal, Nederland, Pakistan, de Filippijnen, Sri Lanka, Thailand, het Verenigd Koninkrijk en de Verenigde Staten.

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