

Call for Papers

**Religious Toleration in the Age of Enlightenment (1650-1800): Historical Perspectives  
on Current Debates**

Monday June 22nd & Tuesday June 23rd, 2015

Institute for Culture and Society – Religion & Civil Society Project

Universidad de Navarra – Pamplona (Spain)

Convenors: Prof. Dr. Rafael García Pérez ([rgperez@unav.es](mailto:rgperez@unav.es)) and Dr. Juan Pablo Domínguez ([jdfernandez@alumni.unav.es](mailto:jdfernandez@alumni.unav.es))

Enlightenment is not something of the past; many of the prominent ideas that shape current Western culture were generated in the context of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the history of the Enlightenment is being continuously rewritten and constantly employed in contemporary political, intellectual and religious debates. In particular, the relationship between religious toleration and Enlightenment has been the subject of numerous historical accounts that carry a great deal of weight in contemporary discussion. Some portray the Enlightenment as a celebration of the vast diversity of religious beliefs and practices in the world; others, as the discovery of a universal reason that tends to dissolve into uniformity the old religious divisions. There are also those who insist that the rise of toleration was not a matter of philosophical ideas but rather of political and social developments of a more practical nature. Discrepancies are even stronger with respect to the role of religious belief. For some, it was the decline of religious belief that gave birth to the modern idea of tolerance. For others, on the contrary, many of the Enlightenment ideas on toleration have clear religious origins.

For most scholars, toleration prior to the Enlightenment was no more than a practical measure taken by governments that could not enforce religious conformity. They argue that it was only during the Enlightenment that this limited view of toleration was transformed into freedom of religion understood as an inalienable human right. There are, however, several scholars who insist on the importance of ideas of religious freedom prior to the Enlightenment or consider that, far from being a right of individuals protected by the state, the religious tolerance advocated by Enlightenment thinkers was, in fact, a tool for the state to limit the freedom of churches.

The Religion and Civil Society Project at the Institute for Culture and Society is organizing an international conference to engage this discussion along two main lines. The first is to trace the many legacies of the Enlightenment present in the prevailing discourses on religion and freedom. The second is to reconsider the existing narratives about the place of the Enlightenment in the history of toleration. This approach aims to examine more critically the underlying presuppositions in recent debates about religious freedom and will contribute to a more rigorous and honest dialogue on this vital subject.

All scholars in fields related to these topics are cordially invited to participate in our conference. The Organizing Committee is happy to receive proposals from those interested in giving a lecture of 45 minutes, followed by approximately 30 minutes for Q & A. Lecture proposals of no more than one page in length should be submitted, along with a short CV, to [jdfernandez@alumni.unav.es](mailto:jdfernandez@alumni.unav.es) by February 15, 2015. A selection of proposals will be made and the authors will be notified by the end of February.