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Introduction

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As the cluster of recent books intended for a popular readership on the misunderstandings, hostility and suffering that religions have inflicted on humanity over the past millenniums suggests,[1] the association of religion with conflict and violence has been endemic to virtually all of human history. But the linkages between the two have been more pronounced in some religious traditions than in others, most notably in the monotheistic religions that have predominated in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and in recent centuries in the Americas, Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia. The conviction that there is only one true God and that *He* can be worshipped and invoked in times of tribulation or triumph has made for deep, often fatal, divisions among adherents to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It has also inspired missionary or militant crusading zeal in their more fervent believers' approaches to non-monotheistic dispensations – from Brahmanic monism and animism to what have been judged to be heretical variations on monotheistic beliefs, such as pantheism and dualism. Religious persecution or conflict has certainly occurred periodically in other religious traditions, for example in the campaigns to suppress Buddhism in the Tang dynastic era or the decades-old internecine warfare between the Hindu Tamils and Sinhalese Buddhists in contemporary Sri Lanka.[2] However, syncretism and co-existence with other widely dispersed faiths, as well as animistic rituals and beliefs, have been far more evident when monotheistic religions have not been within the mix of cultures converging or experiencing extensive contact and exchanges over time.

It is not surprising then that each of the cross-cultural clashes that are the focus of the essays in this issue of *Leidschrift* were not only shaped by religious encounters in fundamental ways, but also that monotheistic religions played key roles as ideological catalysts for aggression against or

[1] These range from Christopher Hitchens's non-stop polemic in *God is not great: how religion poisons everything* (New York 2007) and Sam Harris's rendition of the 'war of civilizations' in *The end of faith: terror, and the future of reason* (New York 2005) to Richard Dawkin's provocative, and a good deal more considered, *The God delusion* (New York 2006).

[2] Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: a historical survey* (Princeton 1964), chapters six and seven; Anton Balasingham, *War and peace - armed struggle and peace efforts of Liberation Tigers* (Mitcham UK 2004).

the repression of rival sociopolitical and belief systems. The focus of all of the studies is on the ways in which religious beliefs and rituals inspired and sustained resistance to regimes that were perceived as alien and oppressive by subject peoples and were in all but one of the cases colonial. But in each instance religion was also associated in important ways with the political systems and responses of those in power, who rather consistently labeled the adherents of the religions of protest deluded, fanatical or at the very least as blatant threats to the established order of things. As Johannes I. Bakker points out, but unfortunately does not explore in detail in his case studies on 'The Netherlands Indies in Aceh, Bali and Buton: degrees of resistance and acceptance of indirect and direct rule,' religious doctrines and those who interpret them to legitimize the power of some groups and the subordination of others can provide rationales for either collaboration or resistance. Each of the other essays in the collection deal in depth with protest movements that are illustrative of the latter option.

Only one of the case studies, James McLaren's 'Rendering to God not Caesar: The Jewish Revolts of 66-70 AD,' considers religious conflict in the classical age. Drawing on ample evidence, he demonstrates that Roman violations of the sanctity of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem provided the impetus for widespread revolt by the Jewish population in occupied Palestine in the first century AD. His discussions of the Roman efforts to spread their cult of the Caesars by building temples to enshrine godlike statues of the reigning Roman emperor in colonized areas underscores a persisting phenomenon in world history – the association of the conquests of expansive empires with the installation of religious icons or distinctive architectural structures in the capitals and towns of subjugated societies. For the peoples of Mesoamerica before the Spanish conquest, the dominance of imperially-minded peoples, for example the Aztecs, was expressed by the demand that Aztec gods, such as Huitzilopochtli (the warrior god of the sun) or Tlaloc (the god of rain and fertility), be placed alongside those of the chief non-Aztec deities worshipped by defeated enemies. Fittingly, the Spanish often replaced the stepped pyramid-temples of the Aztecs and other Mesoamerican peoples with cathedrals, built whenever feasible on the ruins and with the materials of destroyed temples. And in roughly the same decades as their sixteenth-century conquest of the Americas, the Spanish consummated their earlier *reconquista* of Iberia by building a cathedral in the

center of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, renowned then and now as one of the great architectural masterpieces of the Islamic world.[3]

As McLaren's narrative makes clear, however, the temple in Jerusalem was more than a symbol of Jewish religious and ethnic identity, it was also the financial and political base for the priestly elite that had become in effect the custodians of the Jewish tradition once the Herodian rulers were reduced to satraps of the Romans. When the sanctuary of the temple was defiled and its treasure threatened by a rapacious Roman provincial governor, simmering discontent burst into a full-fledged but ultimately futile rebellion. The messianic quality of the rebels' last stand, mounted by Jewish zealots who killed each other rather than surrendered at Masada in 70 AD, resonates in the millenarian themes that predominate in at least two of the other contributions to the *Leidschrift* collection.

Millenarian prophecies are central, for example, in Barend ter Haar's essay on 'Het Hemelse Koninkrijk voor de Grote Vrede' ('The Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace'), a sensitive and quite detailed examination of the revelations and teachings of Hong Xiuquan, the titular leader of the massive Taiping rebellion in nineteenth-century China. Suffering from a succession of mental breakdowns brought on by his failure to pass the exams that would have opened the way to a position in the Confucian bureaucracy, Hong's prophecies and proclamations sparked what began as a genuinely revolutionary movement that spread across much of south and central China between 1850 and 1864, and at one point threatened to topple the once mighty Qing dynasty. Ter Haar's analysis of Hong's troubled dreams and mesmerizing revelations provides a succinct survey of the much-studied[4] blend of Christian and indigenous Chinese religious teachings that he fashioned into something akin to an ideology with appeal across a diverse range of disgruntled social groups in southeast China. But as fascinating as Hong's ideas and remarkable rise from failure and obscurity may be, it was the very capable subordinate commanders and the far-reaching socio-economic and political reforms they promised that won the Taiping movement first thousands and then tens of thousands of followers.

[3] Jacques Soustelle, *Daily life of the Aztecs on the eve of the Spanish conquest* (Stanford 1961) 206-207; Markus Hattstein and Peter Delius ed., *Islam: art and architecture* (Königswinter 2007) [original title *Islam : Kunst und Architektur* (Cologne 2000)] 207-209, 220.

[4] Most notably, Vincent Y.C. Shih's magisterial study of *The Taiping ideology: its sources, interpretations, and influences* (Seattle 1967).

Consequently, it was the grave threat that the widely proclaimed, but seldom realized, schemes of Hong's lieutenants for several radical measures, for example land redistribution, the abolition of foot binding and the destruction of Confucian ancestral tablets that galvanized opposition to the movement, particularly among the Confucian gentry and at the Manchu court. However, once it became clear that Hong's visions were at best a badly garbled parody of mainstream Christian teachings, internal alliances, combined with a marked increase in European support for the rebel's Chinese foes, doomed the rebellion to defeat in brutal military campaigns that led to the loss of lives, which have been estimated to be in the tens of millions.

Rather than a syncretic ideology akin to that that inspired the Taiping movement, the prophecies that gave rise to 'The Lakota Ghost Dance and religious repression at Pine Ridge,' which are the subject of Lee Irwin's essay, were based largely on Native American belief systems and rooted in the desperation of many groups of these indigenous peoples in the face of defeat and dispossession by Anglo-American frontier settlers. Similar to the Taiping rebellion, the Ghost Dance has been one of the most studied of the millenarian religious responses to the disruptive and often oppressive transformations in societies colonized by the Europeans in the burst of expansionism in the nineteenth century that was undergirded by the industrial revolution.[5] Building on the classic account of the Ghost Dance religion by James Mooney and a close reading of government reports and the accounts of other contemporaries, Irwin identifies the aspects of the beliefs and rituals associated with the movement that agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. military, and some Indian peoples found so threatening. In the view of contemporaries who reported on the massacre at Wounded Knee (which marked the end of the plains Indians resistance to the settler takeover of their ancestral lands) it was ominous prophecies and intense communal ceremonies that led to the infamous slaughter of outnumbered and poorly-armed warriors and fleeing women and children.

[5] See, for examples, Brian Wilson, *Magic and the millennium* (New York 1973); Katesa Schlosser, 'Der Prophetismus in niederen Kulturen', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 75 (1950) 60-72; Johannes Fabien, 'Führer und Führung in den prophetisch-messianischen Bewegung der (ehemaligen) Kolonialvölker', *Anthropos* 58 (1963) 773-809; and Michael Adas, *Prophets of rebellion: millenarian protest movements and the European colonial order* (New York 1979).

Comparable, indiscriminate slaughters were a recurring feature of rebel depredations and fierce British revenge. These slaughters are the focus of Marina Carter and Crispin Bates's assessment of the interplay between 'Religion and retribution in the Indian Rebellion of 1857'. Drawing upon a number of important, recent contributions to the voluminous literature on what historians have generally referred to as the Indian Mutiny, they seek to view the rebellion from the vantage point, or 'subject position' of the Muslim *ghazis* or religious zealots who rallied to the call of the mutineers for peasants, local lords, and in some instances true believers to rise up and overthrow the British colonizers of the subcontinent. In piecing together narratives of a number of clashes that involved Muslim zealots, Carter and Bates make good use of published eyewitness accounts as well as official reports that focus on local risings. But they cannot reconstruct the *ghazis'* perspectives and motivations because the Urdu-language source base for this simply does not exist (or at least research has not yet uncovered it). In terms of the role of religion in the rebellion, however, it is critical to keep in mind that these incidents were more or less marginal even to the Muslim-led strands of what was in effect a series of largely disconnected risings rather than a unified movement. Both Hindu and Muslim resistance began in the military – hence the appellation 'Great Mutiny' that has so long persisted in connection with the disturbances. Each religious group within the *sepoy* ranks that mutinied was pushed to violent assaults on their British officers and European civilians by a combination of the threat posed by the increasingly aggressive proselytism of Evangelical missionaries in Indian units and the prospect of being polluted by the animal fat (both beef and pig) that was used to grease the cartridges supplied for the newly introduced Enfield rifles. In addition, the brutal reprisals that the British resorted to on a number of occasions in suppressing the rebellion were carried out on the orders of self-righteous, Evangelical Christian officers whose zealotry was clearly a match for that displayed by the *ghazis*. Finally, religious divisions – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh – were perhaps the most critical factor in the failure of the 'rebellion' that was in fact a constellation of disparate causes and risings that were often put down mainly by Indian troops, particularly Sikhs and Marattas, who remained loyal to the Raj.[6]

[6] Though amended in some respects by recent research, the classic accounts of the Great Rebellion have proved remarkably durable in all of these respects. See R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (Calcutta 1957); Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen fifty-seven* (Delhi 1957).

As Judith Pollmann suggests in her aptly titled essay '"De gemeente stond malkander bij". Katholieken en de Nederlandse Opstand' ('"The congregation has stood together." Catholics and the Dutch Revolt') deep religious divisions comparable to those in India had the potential to undermine the resistance of the diverse communities that made up the Low Countries in the early sixteenth century against the increasingly harsh rule imposed by the Spanish monarch Philip II and his repression-minded proconsuls in the Habsburg domains. Pollmann's comparison of the way that tensions, and at times open conflict, played out in specific locales, illuminates some of the factors that led ultimately to the successful freedom struggle in the northern United Provinces and their defeat in the southern Netherlands. As she shows, even in the northern provinces, Catholic support for the revolt against Spain in its early stages was severely tested in many towns by zealous Protestant assaults, often mounted by the *Watergeuzen* or the Sea Beggars, on Catholic churches and priests, the smashing of statues of the saints that adorned their sanctuaries and the outright looting by Protestant communities.

Pollmann's emphasis on the local dynamics that led to widespread reconciliation between the two congregations in the north and to continued division in the south provides insights into the everyday interactions that contributed to the very different outcomes of the rebellion in each of the regions. But in seeking to understand the increasingly unified resistance of the provinces that would defeat the Spanish and form the Dutch Republic, I believe it is critical to contrast the Dutch case not only with the course of the Eighty Years War in the southern Netherlands but against the other examples of religious resistance included in this collection. The only of the major instances of rebellion treated in these essays, the revolt in the United Provinces was based on an identity that transcended the religious divisions of its communities. Rooted in the remarkably strong sense of independence and self-government (mainly by patrician elites) that had been developing in the cities and towns of the region for centuries, an ever stronger sense of nationalism, in the modern sense of the term,[7] came to transcend the differences between Catholic and Protestant congregations. National identity made for unity of purpose and determined resistance not found in any of the other revolts or rebellions considered in this issue of *Leidschrift*. It

[7] Which in my view is best conceptualized by combining the main themes and attributes stressed in Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge 1990) with those in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities* (London 1991).

also facilitated the rise of not one but two exceptional leaders who contributed to the success of the Dutch revolt in very different ways: William of Orange, whose political skills and insistence on religious toleration made it imperative to supersede religious differences; and his son, Maurice of Nassau, whose variations on the global 'military revolution' that peaked in the decades of the Eighty Years War, made possible the series of victories that eventually humbled the once mighty Spanish empire. It is noteworthy that none of the other rebellions produced leaders, much less forces for unity, that could begin to match those that won independence for the Dutch, launched the Netherlands on the path to global empire, and, perhaps most critically from a longer-term global perspective, rendered the fledgling nation a haven for the sciences, free thinking philosophers, such as Spinoza, and champions of international law and justice of the stature of Hugo Grotius.