THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY

*

VOLUME VII

Production, Destruction, and Connection, 1750–Present
Part 2: Shared Transformations?

*

Edited by
J. R. MCNEILL
Georgetown University
and
KENNETH POMERANZ
University of Chicago

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

7

Religion after 1750

PETER VAN DER VEER

The sacrality of the traditional state

In 1715 Pope Clement XI declared that Chinese Catholics were not allowed to conduct Confucian ritual or ancestral ritual.[1] Moreover, they should not use the Chinese term for Lord of Heaven to designate the Christian God. In 1721 the Chinese Emperor Kangxi banned Christian missions to China in response.[2] This ended a period during which in the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Jesuits had tried to accommodate their doctrine of God, the Lord of Heaven, with the Confucian worldview, for which (among other texts) we have Matteo Ricci's Tianzhu Shiyi (天主實義), "the substantial meaning of the Lord of Heaven," published in 1603.[3] The Confucian cosmology emphasizes Heaven (tian) as a metaphysical force that is impersonal and directs the universe and human society through its Mandate (tianming, 天命). This conception of a morally positive universe directed by the Mandate of Heaven had important ritual and political consequences: the emperor was the chief executor of the heavenly mandate in his ritual role as Son of Heaven. He was the performer of the great sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, the apex of a ritual-political system that integrated the Empire. This system was zheng 正, which one may translate as orthodoxy, but which is perhaps better translated with legitimate rule. Everything that was not in accordance with this political cosmology risked being xie 邪 (heterodox or illegitimate).

1 I want to thank Hartmut Lehmann for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
2 David E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).
3 Matteo Ricci, *Tianzhu Shiyi* (Beijing 1603), translated, with introduction and notes, by Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Guozhen; edited by Edward J. Malatesta (Taipei: Institut Ricci, 1985).

At the level of the state Confucianism can be understood as a political cosmology. If one accepted this cosmology one could fill in personal spiritual needs with Buddhist devotion or Taoist magic or indeed by the Jesuit doctrine of the Lord of Heaven. This looks syncretistic and tolerant, but it is under the condition that one accepts the political cosmology. All this points at the important fact that if we compare Confucian China with Christian Europe in the eighteenth century we need to look at political formations, the politics of religion and certainly from the sixteenth century onwards at global interactions. It is the Catholic Counter-Reformation that is significant in China–Europe interactions, because of the presence of the Jesuits in China.

The Jesuits brought the latest products of Western science to China.[4] Certainly, they did think that the belief in Christ as the Savior was the true faith, but one of the most important issues was to introduce the Christian doctrine without emphasizing its difference, rather by emphasizing the extent to which it could be adopted within already existing cultural schemata. This Jesuit policy of accepting the imperial order in which they could give Christianity a place came under increasing pressure from other Catholic missionary orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, in the early eighteenth century, which led to the Pope's condemnation of the Jesuit strategy. On the Chinese side one needs to remember here that the Qing rulers were Manchu "barbarians" and had adopted the Confucian cosmology in order to establish the legitimacy of their rule. Being outsiders they had to constantly show their orthodoxy in defending the Confucian political cosmology, while keeping their ethnic identity alive. In passing one might compare India and China and see how different the Qing strategy of adoption of Confucian political cosmology was from the Mughal strategy of keeping Islam as their faith while creating political alliances with Hindu rulers.

The confrontation between the Pope and the Emperor (both central in their respective cosmologies) led in 1721 to the banning of Christianity in China which lasted for a century. Civilizational superiority was not the issue in this dispute but power and the authority to determine ritual matters, as indeed it had been in Medieval Europe. Chinese intellectuals embraced the empirical science that the Jesuits informed them about, while Leibniz was inspired by Chinese ideas that were brought to Europe by the Jesuits.[5] The

4 Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking, 1984).
5 David E. Mungello, *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977).

issue was ritual power and thus a clash between the claim that the Emperor had the Mandate of Heaven as Son of Heaven and the claim that the Pope had the Mandate of Heaven as Primus Apostolus (the successor of Peter) and Vicarius Christi. The claims of the Pope were deeply politico-theological and disputed in the Reformation, which led to the wars of religion in early modern Europe. One of the ways to solve these conflicts was the emergence of a kind of territorial sovereignty that determined the state religion (cuius regio, eius religio). In China also any mobilization around heterodoxy (xiejiao, 邪教) could lead to rebellion against imperial authority and had thus to be repressed violently. In China these heterodoxies often took the form of millenarianism with a promise of an end to injustice, and the coming of a just polity, a Paradise on Earth with some Buddhist overtones, gesturing to the Maitreya, the Buddha who is to come to Earth at the end of time (at the end of the age of lawlessness).

In India there had been a similar confrontation between the Jesuits and the Pope, called the Malabar Rites Controversy. Here the so-called adaptationist method (accommodatio) of missionization was developed by the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), the founder of the Madurai Mission. De Nobili adopted a Brahmanical way of life and attitude, thereby dissociating himself from the lower castes. While the Jesuits in China adapted to the ritual hierarchies of the Emperor, they adapted in India to Brahman priesthood and caste. These social discriminations were the subject of a conflict among Jesuits which ultimately led to a change in missionary policy.[6] Since this dispute did not involve a direct conflict with political authority it did not have the consequences that it had in China. Again, it was not so much civilizational superiority that was at issue here, but rather a strategic difference about how to approach a deeply hierarchical society with an egalitarian Christian message. India and China were not the only societies in which the Jesuits ran into difficulties, though. By the mid eighteenth century the Jesuit order was banned in most of the world, even in Latin America, where it had become a considerable economic and political power. Both in India and in China Christianity has remained marginal in proportion to the population. Political authority in China and caste authority in India have continued to be a challenge for Christian expansion. It was tribal Africa (as well as Melanesia and Oceania) from the end of the nineteenth century that was going to prove the most fertile ground for Christian

6 Ines Zupanov, *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

(both Protestant and Catholic) conversion after the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christianization of Latin America.[7]

Eighteenth-century Hinduism was not connected to imperial authority as Confucianism was in China. Large parts of India were ruled by Muslim dynasties, foremost among which were the Mughals. The Mughals were challenged by Muslim Sultans in the South and East of India and by Hindu Maratha rulers in the West, while they had created alliances with Hindu rulers, primarily in the desert region of Rajasthan. Islamic (both Sunni and Shi'a) and Hindu rituals were part of the legitimation of these dynasties, but it would be anachronistic to speak of religion as the organizing principle of political power. Sanskrit and Persian were the languages of civilization, while Arabic was the language of the Quran, but those involved in administration would use several languages, including vernacular ones, such as Hindi (with Sanskrit script and vocabulary) and Urdu (with Persian script and vocabulary). Caste hierarchy was an important principle of societal organization, but it had a quite open and flexible relation to Hindu traditions of purity and purification. The Brahman caste had spread all over the subcontinent and was the guardian of traditions of law, ritual, and philosophy. Equally important were the devotional non-Brahmanical movements that swept large parts of the continent from the fifteenth century onwards. One of these movements, founded by Guru Nanak, in North India, called the Sikhs, became the basis of a politico-religious formation that challenged the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century and is still of political importance today.[8]

Muslim rulers in India and in the Ottoman Empire were under regular pressure from clergy to confirm to the fundamental tenets of Islam. The eighteenth-century Delhi-based preacher Shah Waliullah was probably the most important of those who called for a purist Islam.[9] In the same period Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), founder of the Salafi movement that has influenced Islamicists till today, argued along similar lines, but was able to consolidate his influence and that of his descendants by connecting to the emerging house of Saud, the dynasty that was going to rule Saudi Arabia (then still part of the Ottoman empire) and to be the

7 Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1: *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 1991).

8 W. H. McLeod, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

9 B. J. S. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī, 1703–1762* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

guardian of Mecca, the premier holy site of Islam. The criticism of these purists remained marginal till the twentieth century, however. Worship of Saints at Sufi shrines was universal in the eighteenth-century Islamic world (from Bosnia to Java) and that worship was open to participation for all and not restricted to Muslims.

Buddhism in the eighteenth century had hardly any remaining importance in the Indian subcontinent where it originated, but had been successfully exported to Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, and Japan as well as to Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In these societies it was always an important social and political force by way of its strong monastic organization, but variably connected to royal power. After having been a state religion in Korea, for instance, it was largely suppressed for many centuries till the twentieth century. In Beijing the Qing rulers gave patronage to Tibetan Buddhism, but in general kept Buddhist and Daoist orders under strict control.

Before the nineteenth century religion everywhere in the world was an integral part of statecraft. Surely, religion dealt with rites of passage, with agriculture, with health, with evil, and a range of other human concerns, but in all these cases it marshaled powers that had political salience. The legitimation of rulers came from heaven and was mediated by priestly and monastic classes. This is true in Christendom, but also in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, as well as for the tribal powers in Africa. The relation between worldly powers and religious authorities could range from forms of divine kingship as in China or Japan to the uneasy power struggles between state and church in Europe, but religion was central to state and society. It is the French (and American and Dutch) revolution at the end of the eighteenth century that signifies the change of the location of religion in Europe and North America. Similar changes happened in the rest of the world in the era of imperialism. Instead of kingship it is the sovereignty of the people that becomes the basis of the state. Nationalism is the ideology that enables the production of the people as a nation.

Religion in the modern nation-state

While nationalism is seen as modern, religion is commonly seen as either ancient or transcending history. In the common view of historians of ideas it is the European Enlightenment in its critique of religion that is the harbinger of modernity. The political expression of that critique was

anti-clericalism in the French Revolution and laicite (secularism) in the French Republic. Anti-clericalism was also an important feature of nineteenth-century liberal politics in Latin America, where the Catholic Church wielded considerable power. Leading students of nationalism have argued that modern, national society is by definition secular and depends on the disappearance or marginalization of religious worldviews and communities.[10] Similarly, an important distinction is made between civic identity, based on citizenship in a territorially defined nation-state, and primordial identity, based on kinship or language or religion or a combination of these elements.[11] According to this view civic identity should replace primordial identity in modern nation-building. The historical process producing modernity by replacing religious identity with civic identity is called secularization.

Much sociological attention and imagination has gone into first the development of the secularization thesis and more recently in its dismantling.[12] The secularization thesis has three propositions, namely the decline of religious beliefs, the privatization of religion, and the differentiation of secular spheres and their emancipation from religion. The causality of these connected processes is to be found in modernization. In Europe one can certainly find ample evidence for one or the other of these propositions, but it is hardly possible to combine them in one convincing narrative of secularization let alone connect them to stages of political or economic modernization. While generally there is an unchurching in Europe that process is highly uneven, both geographically and historically. At the same time, Christian Democratic parties are still important in the politics of a number of European nation-states and, especially, the highly advanced political economies of Western Europe, as in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. The process of unchurching that can be found in Europe in various stages, moreover, cannot be found in the USA, another highly advanced modern society. While the USA has had secular arrangements of the relation between church and state from the late eighteenth century, it does not show evidence of unchurching. Interestingly enough, it seems that the uncoupling of state and church in the USA has had a positive effect on the growth of churches. The narrative of decline of religion in the face of modernization does not fit the American case, while in Europe it is a much

10 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).
11 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
12 Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

more diverse narrative that cannot be connected to modernization per se. In the rest of the world the secularization thesis makes even less sense.

Nationalizing religion

While one cannot today accept many of the assumptions implicit in modernization theory one can still argue that both nationalism and religion are modern transformations of pre-modern traditions and identities. Indeed, there are continuities and sometimes really deep histories. First of all, proto-nationalist formations in ethnicity, language, or religion provide the material of nationalism. National traditions can be "invented" and nations are "imagined," but this is not done from scratch. Moreover, they do not form a seamless whole, a monolithic culture, but rather a discourse in which different versions compete with each other in social debate and conflict. But, deeper than proto-nationalism that precedes nationalism, there are ancient understandings of linguistic, religious, and ethnic unity, coupled with notions of territorial sovereignty that can be found among the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, Indians, and Chinese, for instance. These ancient understandings of sacred geographies together with sacred histories of particular peoples provide much of the material used in nationalist imagination. All of this material has to be transformed to serve for the nationalist cause. Religion thus has to be nationalized in the modern period.

In societies where religions were pitted against each other (like Catholicism against Protestantism or Sunni Islam against Shi'a Islam) they have to be (at least partially) cleansed of their divisive potential by being encapsulated in nationalism. They have to be made part and parcel of national identity and histories of religious conflict have to be tailored to fit a tale of national unity. Religious worship comes to be connected to moments of national glory and national remembrance. This process of homogenization is never entirely successful, because nationalism not only unifies but also diversifies by sprouting alternative nationalisms or regional identities. Well-known examples are modern Ireland and the Partition of India and Pakistan (as well as the further splitting of Pakistan and Bangladesh). Since in modern nation-states a politics of numbers, producing majorities and minorities, is important, religion can be used as the foundation of majority nationalism as well as the foundation of minority identities. Hindu nationalists in India had to constantly attempt to transcend caste boundaries as well as linguistic

differences. Their efforts, however, also created deeper divisions between Hindus and Muslims. In Britain and the Netherlands, which were seen as Protestant nations till deep in the nineteenth century, Catholics were included in the nation.[13]

In Germany unification under Bismarck resulted in the conflictual incorporation of the Catholic minority in the state. Whatever the successful incorporation of Catholics in Protestant nations may have been, the exclusion of Jews from the German nation a few decades later and the resulting Holocaust provides overwhelming historical evidence of the terrible consequences of connecting race and religion in the twentieth century. While the Holocaust is unique in its specificities dangerous combinations of race or ethnicity and religion have been made from the late nineteenth century till today. In the nineteenth century the British, French, and Dutch colonizers acquired a sense of religious and racial superiority towards the colonized people in the empire. In the postcolonial era the immigration of Muslims in Europe reminds us that these struggles are never completed and by their very instability important in the production of nationalism.

Secular nationalism and religion

Besides nationalized religion we find secular nationalism in the nineteenth century. At a theoretical level secular nationalism has sometimes been seen as the replacement of religion and as the religion of the nation-state, while modern statecraft can be seen as a secularized, political theology. Even in this view, however, religious communities are never entirely absorbed by nationalism and continue to be the object of secular regulation, such as in the separation of state and church. Secular nationalism as an ideology is important in creating and defining the spheres in which religions are allowed to operate. Forms of separation of church and state are defined in ways that are different in France, Britain, and the USA and Turkey and India, to mention just a few cases. The extent to which science is separated from religion differs greatly, although the power of science is such that it defines the spaces in which religious arguments can be allowed. In the political sphere democracy is often argued to be secular or that it ought to be secular, but it is not. There are several possible connections between democracy and secularity, but there is no necessary one. Secularity can be

13 Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton University Press, 1999).

promoted in a society by democratic means, but also, as in communist or fascist regimes, by dictatorial means.

Communism provides an important historical case of a radical atheist project to eradicate religion. This project has had major consequences in societies that came under communist rule (Soviet Union in 1922, most of the others after the Second World War), but it has nowhere succeeded in getting rid of religion with perhaps the exception of the former DDR which is one of the most secular societies in the world. In most cases the state kept a tight control over religious institutions and its resources (especially targeted by land reforms) and clamped down quickly on religious movements that seemed to constitute a challenge to its rule, as in the case of the Falun Gong in China in the 1990s. Under post-socialist conditions we see a resurgence of public manifestations of religiosity in many of these societies.[14]

Democracy, however, by no means depends on secularization. In fact, there are hardly any secular democracies in the world, because there are hardly any secular societies. As a form of political participation and representation democracy is typical for the modern nation-state. Liberal secularists may demand that the state is secular and that it treats religions equally and neutrally, but they have to acknowledge that if one allows freedom of religious expression religion more often than not will play an important role in the democratic process. One therefore needs to distinguish between the relative secularity of the state and the relative secularity of society and make clear how one defines that secularity. Modern states like England, Holland, and the USA all have had their own specific arrangements for guaranteeing a certain secularity of the state, but these states have found their legitimation in societies in which religion plays an important public role. To give one clear example: It can be safely said that the wall of separation in the USA is a demand that has emerged not from secularists, but from religious minorities that were persecuted in England and therefore that, at least in this case, the secularity of the state is in fact a religious demand. Such a religious demand for the separation of State and Church can in fact also be found in the Netherlands among Protestant dissenters in the second half of the nineteenth century who wanted to have an education system that was not controlled by the established state church.

14 Tam Ngo and Justine Quijada, eds., *Atheist Secularism and Its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eastern Europe and Asia* (forthcoming).

The role of the secular in relation to the religious is not only limiting, since religious traditions that are interpreted in a nationalist way are crucial in the formation of state–society and society–individual relations in the modern nation. These traditions become fields of disciplinary practice in which the modern civil subject is formed. They are also important in creating the modern public. In Britain Evangelicals have been instrumental in mobilizing a large public in anti-slavery societies as well as global mission societies. During the industrial revolution an entire spectrum of societies of "moral uplift" have targeted the working class. On the one hand religious institutions enable notions of individual conscience and civilized conduct; on the other hand notions of publicity, the public, and public opinion are produced by religious movements.

Religious nationalism

Nationalism does not have to be secular. It can also be explicitly religious in nature.[15] Religious nationalism may amount to not more than a civil religion in the sense that national leaders, for instance in the USA, express their belief that the nation is "a nation under God." Themes of death, sacrifice, and rebirth as well as that of a mission in the world are celebrated in a religious fashion in national holidays and with national monuments. This is especially the case when war and death are involved in relation to which the nation has to acquire a metaphysical existence beyond individual life. Important theological notions like that of the chosenness by God can be used to fuel nationalist projects abroad and at home. As important is the notion of rebirth or revival of the nation that is connected to the Protestant metaphor of Awakening. Finally, there is the notion of the coming of a messiah, a leader who is leading his people to the Promised Land. This important notion is shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but variations of it are found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and forms of Chinese religion. A religious symbolic repertoire of divine election, of ordeals to test one's convictions, conversion to higher truth, and martyrdom is routinely applied to the biographies of great, nationalist leaders.

Examples of radical religious nationalism can be found in India, Pakistan, Ireland, and Israel, but in all these cases they are contained within secular constitutions and state institutions. A case of radical religious nationalism that was able to capture the state is that of the Iranian revolution of 1979,

15 Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

leading to an Islamic state under Shi'ite clerical leadership. Islam (like Christianity, Confucianism, and Buddhism) contains ideas about just rule and divinely sanctioned law that were important in the ritual legitimacy of traditional states. To make them important in modern states is something quite different and requires a complicated relationship between clerical authority and democratic elections. While Iran may have wanted to export its Islamic revolution to other societies it has not been able to do so.

Imperialism and religion

The nineteenth century is not only the period of nationalism, but also of imperialism. Nationalism and the nation-state are not singular phenomena, but emerge during a process of European expansion and the creation of a world-system of economies and states.[16] Although sovereignty and self-determination are important elements of nationalism they are conceptualized in a larger framework of international relations on a global scale. Similarly, so-called "world religions" like Christianity can never be entirely captured by individual nationalisms, since they have a global mission. Europe has been globalizing and has been globalized over many centuries, depending on which starting point one wants to take for which kind of globalization. Religions like Christianity and Islam are globalizing formations. They have spread through expansion and conversion along trading routes and military campaigns within Europe and outside of Europe. This larger history of both competition and contact between Muslim and Christian expansionists is of importance for the way Muslims are perceived in Europe today. However long and important the history of religious encounters in Asia may have been, the modern period of imperialism and nationalism provides a specific rupture with the past, because of the externality of imperial power and the ideological emphasis on the difference of modern society from both its own past and from other, so-called backward societies. Comparison and an evolutionary perspective on difference became crucial in the high days of the empire. As Edward Said has argued, the new scientific knowledge of Orientalism also provided the colonized with a new understanding of their traditions.[17] Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism (all western terms translating such terms as dharma and jiao (teachings)) were discovered and evaluated by

16 Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Nationalism in Britain and India* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

17 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

philologists, archeologists, and other historians while traders, missionaries, and colonial officers tried to deal with the contemporary forms of these traditions. This apparatus of imperial knowledge has created an archive that is still crucial for any understanding of Asian traditions that have been transformed into "world religions."

Much has been written about the "British Discovery of Hinduism" in the eighteenth century and the question what "Hinduism" stands for has been repeatedly asked. The common view is that "Hindu" is a term applied by people coming from outside to the inhabitants of the Indus region and their culture. These Hindus had a great variety of traditions that were systematized and unified under the name "Hinduism" by orientalist scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as part of the colonization of India. It is an argument that has elicited the counter-argument that these various traditions were in fact already in constant conversation and, to an extent, unified and carried by a priestly caste of Brahmans that had spread all over the subcontinent. Both arguments contain elements of truth. It depends on which period is being examined. In the nineteenth century one has to account for the enormous impact of "European modernity" on the conceptualization of Asian traditions. The translation of Hindu traditions into the English-language category of Hinduism, being the religion of Hindus, has been of immense significance for Hindu understanding of their own traditions.

Rather than speaking of "the invention of Hinduism" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is preferable to note that Hindu traditions had already existed for a long time and were only reconceived and reformulated in debates in that period. Protestant missionaries were important interlocutors in those debates. Protestantism has, of course, always been seen as an important historical site of thinking about the reflexive subject, about unmediated access, and about agency. In Protestant conversion missionaries are concerned with the purification of improper forms of agency, a purification that is seen as liberation from false understandings of nature. These Protestant notions are paradigmatic of a wider Western and ultimately global discourse of the modern self.[18] These are issues that are crucial in missionary projects everywhere. They raise questions about materiality and transcendence that feed into nineteenth-century constructions of spirituality as opposed to materialism, as we will examine later.

18 Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

Directly related is another important issue, namely the tendency to define Christian religion not only as universalistic, but also as rational. The idea that Christianity is not backward, but in harmony with scientific progress becomes central in later Victorian evolutionism. It is the nature of modern rationality that needs to be explored further in its Protestant antecedents and secular consequences. It is not only the nature of religion that is under construction but also the nature of secularity and secularism.

Protestant missionary societies had become the most important cultural modernizing force in Asia and Africa in the late nineteenth century. Large parts of the population in sub-Saharan Africa were converted to Christianity. Education, healthcare, and in some cases part of the agrarian economy were managed by missionary societies. Also in Asia (India, China, Indo-China) these societies were important modernizing forces, but there they were soon imitated by Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and other religious groups who also started occupying civil society. After decolonization Christian churches were made indigenous by having native clergy. In sub-Saharan Africa a proliferation of independent churches has created a very diverse religious landscape despite the fact that it is majority Christian. The greatest competition in some African societies such as Nigeria comes from Islam, which is also expanding its reach.

In the later part of the nineteenth century the encounter between missionaries and heathens continues, but an important voice is added as a result of the secularization of the European mind, namely a new discipline, called "science of religion." One element of the modern transformation of religion is "the invention of world religions," as Tomoko Masuzawa calls it.[19] "World Religions" as a category is a product of comparative theology and the science of religion. Comparative theology begins and ends with the singularity of Christianity in comparison to other religions, while science of religion attempts to be a science that deals with all religions evenhandedly. In addition, science of religion derives part of its scientific status from being closely connected to historical linguistics and philology.

Of special importance is the "discovery" of Buddhism as another world religion besides Christianity. Buddhism came to be recognized in the nineteenth century as existing in various parts of Asia and thus as transnational. In contrast to the old enemy Islam it was also regarded as an ethically high religion with universal pretensions like Christianity. Scholars like Monier

19 Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Monier-Willams (1819–1899), the Sanskritist at Oxford, declared that Buddhism was a philosophy or system of morality, but not a religion. This is certainly an important issue that is debated over and over again till the present day, but besides such Western discussions on the essence of religion, whatever their importance, there were also crucial developments in colonized Asia. Above all, there were archeological attempts to find ancient Buddhism under layers of Hinduism in India in the same period. Major General Alexander Cunningham (1814–1893), the founder of the Indian Archeological Survey, found and explored long forgotten Buddhist sites in India, such as the famous Sarnath. These findings were an important element in establishing ancient Indian history in which Buddhism was portrayed as the enemy of Brahmanism, and came to be destroyed by Islam and ultimately supplanted by Hinduism. This was essential to the grand narrative of Indian history in which Buddhism was also seen as an alternative to caste-ridden Hinduism and taken up as such, half a century later, by egalitarian reformists like the leader of the Untouchables and leading politician Ambedkar. It is this simultaneous production of Buddhism as native to India and as a world religion that could be universally respected for its modern, egalitarian message that becomes important in the Indian location from where it had almost entirely disappeared as a living tradition.

In Sri Lanka something else happened. Here Buddhism comes to be reframed first by the publication of 26,000 pages of Buddhist texts (in Roman transliteration!) by the Pali Text Society, founded in 1881 by Rhys Davids (1843–1922) who had been a British civil servant in Sri Lanka and, as such, involved in the excavation of a famous site, the ancient city of Anuradhapura. Subsequently it is the Theosophist Colonel Olcott (1832–1907) who designs the Sri Lankan flag and creates a Buddhist catechism which transforms Sri Lankan Buddhist traditions into a recognizable religion. And finally, and most importantly, it is the efforts of the reformist monk Anagarika Dhammapala (1864–1933), who has been deeply influenced by Theosophy that result in the formulation of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, which is of central importance in contemporary conflicts between Tamil Hindus and Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka. It is precisely the reconfiguration of Buddhism in Western scholarship as a world religion within the imperial framework that enables it to become such an important element of religious nationalism among the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. On the side of the metropolis Buddhism is seen as a prime example of universal spirituality, a non-religious philosophy that fits with the unease about institutional religion that many intellectuals feel at the end of the nineteenth century. The

dialectics of orientalism and nationalism is of great importance on both sides of the imperial imagination.

The way in which colonial knowledge about religion was gathered to control populations can be well illustrated by two examples of first-class Dutch scholarship. The Dutch Ministry of Colonies supported research by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) on Islam in Arabia with a clear focus on gathering information on Muslims from Aceh who were living in Mecca. The colonial fear of Pan-Islamism (a suspected anti-imperialist plot to unify all Muslims) was operative then, as it is today. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje began as a student of Theology at Leiden University in 1874 and went on to become one of the most prominent scholars of Islam of his time. He stayed in Mecca in 1884–1885 and came in close touch with pilgrims from the Netherlands Indies. In 1891–1892 Snouck stayed in Aceh as an advisor of the colonial government. His analysis of local forms of insurgency led in 1898 to the bloodiest military expedition of the Dutch in the Indies, the war in Aceh that left 60,000 to 70,000 dead in a population of about 500,000. While Snouck's work is a good illustration of Said's arguments in *Orientalism*, it is also fundamental for imperial understandings of Islam as a rather recent layer of religion that has grown on top of earlier, more harmless layers of Hindu–Buddhism. Islam is seen as an aggressive, dangerous religion while Javanese and Balinese culture are seen as suffused by a more quietist and mystical Hindu–Buddhism. There is an uncanny relation between the Dutch colonial need for a de-politicized law and order (or Suharto's New Order) and the interpretation of Hindu–Buddhist culture as a deep structure of quietistic civilization in the Netherlands-Indies. The archeological recovery of the Borobudur as a world monument of Indonesian Buddhism from under the veil of a superficial Islam signifies this colonial theory. It is within the imperial context of Dutch control of the Dutch Indies and British control of British India that knowledge, archeological, philological, ethnographic, was acquired about religions that became the subject of the science of religion.

This is not only true in relation to the study of Islam, but of religions in general. An important contribution to our understanding of Chinese religion, including Chinese Buddhism, was made by the Dutch sinologist J. J. M. de Groot (1854–1921) who studied Chinese rituals in Amoy (Xiamen) in Southern China and then went on as colonial officer for "Chinese Affairs" in Borneo to advise the government on how to deal with the Chinese communities that were known in Borneo as "kongsis." When the Dutch established control over the Malay principalities in Borneo in 1854 they

destroyed most kongsis except for the Langong kongsi that was only dismantled in 1884 when de Groot was in Borneo. When de Groot returned to the Netherlands he was internationally recognized as one of the greatest experts on Chinese religion. It is the productive relation between these disciplines, based on fieldwork and textual study, and the colonial challenges of rule that should be central in our understanding of the Western approach to religion in the nineteenth century.

Modern spirituality

Besides the emergence of the twin concepts of religion and secular one can find the rise of the spiritual as a modern category in the second half of the nineteenth century.[20] As such it is part of nineteenth-century globalization, a thorough-going political, economic, and cultural integration of the world. The emergence of spirituality is tied to the better-known ascendancy of the secular. As many scholars have been arguing, religion as a universal category is a modern construction with a genealogy in universalist Deism and in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European expansion.[21] One needs therefore to analyze how the categories of "religion," "secularism," and "spirituality" are universalized. This is also true for the category of the secular that has a genealogy in Church–World relations in European history but is transformed in modernity both in Europe and elsewhere. The modern origins of "the secular" are already clear when we look at the first use of the term secularism in England by George Holyoake in 1846. Holyoake attacked Christianity as an "irrelevant speculation" and his attack was carried forward by Secular Societies that were formed in the early 1850s. One of the interesting aspects of these societies is that they combined radical anti-Church attitudes, anti-establishment socialism and freethinking with spiritual experimentation. Secular Societies had a membership that was hugely interested in connecting to the other world by do-it-yourself science. These practices were not considered to be anti-rational, but rather to constitute experiments that were scientific though different from what was going on in the universities. They did not need (or want) to be legitimated by a scientific establishment that was considered to be intimately intertwined with high society and the established church, as indeed Oxford and Cambridge were in this period.

20 Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Secular and the Spiritual in India and China* (Princeton University Press, 2013).

21 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

A good example of the combination of socialist radicalism, secularism, and spirituality is the prominent feminist Annie Besant. In the 1870s Annie Besant became a member of the Secular Society of London and began to collaborate with Charles Bradlaugh, a prominent socialist and President of the National Secular Society, in promoting birth-control and other feminist issues. She combined her radical socialist views and her scientific training as the first woman graduating in science at University College in London with a great interest in spiritual matters. After meeting Madame Blavatsky she became a leading Theosophist and after going to India she even became for a short moment President of the Indian National Congress.[22]

The idea of a spirituality that transcended the division of nations and religions gained in influence in response to imperialism and to the massacre of the First World War. Thinkers like the Indian poet Tagore rejected the aggressive materialism of the West and saw in Asian traditions a viable alternative. This optimism was more or less dashed with the emergence of Japan as an imperialist power. Nevertheless, in many religions forms of ecumenical peace-seeking emerged in this period and are still influential today.[23]

Science and scientific rationality are fundamental to the secular age and scientific progress is often seen to depend on the secularization of the mind. From our contemporary viewpoint it seems strange that spirituality and secular science were not seen as at odds with each other in the nineteenth century. A common view of the history of science is that science purifies itself from unwarranted speculation. So, for instance, while the contribution of Alfred Russell Wallace in developing evolutionary theory concurrently with that of Darwin is generally acknowledged, Wallace's spiritual experiments are generally seen as an aberration from which science has purified itself.[24] What falls outside of this teleological perspective on science as a process of progressive purification is the socially and politically embedded nature of both the elements from which science is purified and of purified science itself. Spiritualism was seen as a secular truth-seeking, experimental in nature and opposed to religious obscurantism and hierarchy. This was a truth-seeking that was hindered by both the State and the

22 Arthur Nethercott, *The First Five Lives of Annie* Besant (University of Chicago Press, 1960), and *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (University of Chicago Press, 1963).

23 E.g. Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

24 Peter Pels, "Spirits of modernity: Alfred Wallace, Edward Tylor, and the visual politics of fact," in Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (eds.), *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment* (Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 241–271.

Church, in England two intertwined institutions. It is within the context of spiritualism, spirituality, and the antinomian traditions of Britain that an anti-colonial universalism was born.

An important element in the emergence of spirituality was that it offered an alternative to religion. This was first and foremost institutionalized religion. In the West spirituality formed an alternative to Church Christianity. Together with the so-called secularization of the mind in nineteenth-century liberalism, socialism, as well as in science (especially Darwin's evolution theory) one can find widespread movements in different parts of the world that search for a universal spirituality that is not bound to any specific tradition. Good examples in the United States are the transcendentalists from Emerson to Whitman as well as Mary Baker's Christian Science. Theosophy is another product of spirit-searching America. In fact not only America is full of spirituality, as Catherine Albanese has shown, but there is a huge proliferation of this kind of movement that parallels the spread of secularist ideologies around the world.[25]

Simultaneously there is a search for a universal spirituality that transcends specific religions and for which the religions of the East are privileged sources. In Christianity, the religion of the colonial powers, we find in the second half of the nineteenth century attempts not so much to convert people to Christianity but to find a universal morality or spirituality in other religious traditions and thus a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung* of all traditions. This is exemplified in the Unitarian organization of the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 at Chicago, where representatives of World religions were invited to speak on a common platform, as well as in the newly developed discipline of Science of Religion that went beyond Christian theology. The term "world religions" was coined in this period to designate religious traditions of a high morality that could be treated as relatively equal. Buddhism was a perfect candidate to be included in this category, while Islam, despite its clear global presence and similarity to Christianity, was excluded at first.

Global religions today

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 there has been an increasing awareness of the continuing significance of religion in most parts of the world. Islam has

25 Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

received the bulk of the attention partly because of the geopolitical importance of the Middle East, where much of the world's oil supply is today, political structures of the nation-state are fragile, and the Palestinian conflict pits Jews and Muslims against each other. Islam under these conditions has a strong political significance that goes far beyond this region. In 2001 the United States were attacked by a radical islamicist group, Al-Qaeda, in response to what the Islamicists considered to be the nefarious geopolitical hegemony of the United States. This "holy war" against America was interpreted by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington as the new battleground of the twenty-first century, between civilizations (mostly defined by religion), replacing the older battle between capitalism and communism.[26] Such an emphasis on unclearly defined civilizations obscures the fact that most warfare continues to be between nation-states or inspired by nationalism, including the struggle of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, globalization does produce a larger playing field for transnational religious movements.

Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism have always been potentially global religions, depending on expansion of trade networks or political formations, but in the current phase of globalization, enhanced by new forms of communication such as the Internet, they have followed patterns of labor migration and have become truly global. In this they are joined by a variety of new movements, such as the Bahai, the Hare Krishnas, the Falun Gong, etc.

Most of these transnational movements are not of a radical political nature, although, as usual, they do have political significance. The most important Christian movement today is that of the Protestant Pentecostals and Evangelicals. They have a significant influence on American politics, but also on the politics (for or against them) in large parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The most important Islamic movement today is a pietistic movement, called Tablighi Jama'at, which originated in South Asia but has now spread to wherever Muslims live. A very significant Buddhist movement is that of Tzu Chi, originating in Taiwan, but spreading its humanitarian message globally. Such movements fit the emergence of the network society that does not replace the nation-state but is an important transformation of it.[27] Important in the network society is the development of the Internet

26 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

27 Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. I: *The Rise of the Network Society*; Vol. II: *The Power of Identity*; Vol. III: *End of Millennium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996–1998).

which may turn out as significant for religious change as the invention of the printing press. The Internet provides new possibilities to engage theological questions and discuss religious matters in a virtual online community.[28] To an extent the Internet gives a new twist to an old problematic in religion, namely the virtuality of communicating with the supernatural, but also the social character of religious communication. The movement through space in international migration which is an important aspect of today's global society is accompanied by transnational communication that produces new forms of religious sensibility and community.

Further reading

Albanese, Catherine. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Baljon, B. J. S. *Religion and Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī, 1703–1762*. Leiden: Brill, 1986.

Bunt, Gary R. *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*. London: Pluto Press, 2003.

Casanova, Jose. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Castells, Manuel. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. I: *The Rise of the Network Society*; Vol. II: *The Power of Identity*; Vol. III: *End of Millennium*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996–1998.

Comaroff, Jean and John. *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. I: *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Küng, Hans. *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*. New York: Doubleday, 1988.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. *The Invention of World Religions*. The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

McLeod, W. H. *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Mungello, David E. *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977.

Mungello, David E., ed. *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994.

Nethercott, Arthur. *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*. University of Chicago Press, 1960. *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

28 Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

Ngo, Tam and Quijada Justine, eds. *Atheist Secularism and Its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eastern Europe and Asia*. New York: Palgrave, forthcoming.

Pels, Peter. "Spirits of modernity: Alfred Wallace, Edward Tylor, and the visual politics of fact," in Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (eds.), *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*. Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 241–271.

Ricci, Matteo. *Tianzhu Shiyi*. Beijing 1603, translated, with introduction and notes, by Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Guozhen; edited by Edward J. Malatesta. Taipei: Institut Ricci, 1985.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1978.

Spence, Jonathan D. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Viking, 1984.

van der Veer, Peter. *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Nationalism in Britain and India*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.

The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Secular and the Spiritual in India and China. Princeton University Press, 2014.

van der Veer, Peter and Lehmann Hartmut, eds. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*. Princeton University Press, 1999.

Webb, Keane. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

Zupanov, Ines. *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India*. Oxford University Press, 1999.