INTRODUCTION

Religious pluralism became an enduring feature of Dutch society after the Catholic Church had lost its status as the sole church in the Low Countries. The Dutch rebelled against their Spanish oppressors in 1568, and the northern provinces united themselves and founded the Dutch Republic. Jews, Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, and numerous other confessional groups no longer had to fear from Spanish Catholicism and the Inquisition. Pro-tolerance thinkers could voice their opinion without repercussion, and as the nascent Republic gradually took shape, an extensive debate ensued about the role and place of the Reformed Church as the public church and the large number of dissident groups. This era of monumental change in the Low Countries coalesced with the rapid expansion of its empire in the Western Hemisphere. As European colonists scrambled to expand their country’s sphere of influence by constructing trading posts and by founding colonies, they were each thrust into an unknown world with its own challenges. Despite the perils involved, many colonists, fleeing from religious persecution in the Old World, found their safe haven in colonies dotting the Atlantic Basin. In this respect, the Dutch colonies were no exception. Much like the Republic itself, its colonies drew in myriad religious groups who were confident that the Dutch would allow them the measure of tolerance the Republic became known for during the seventeenth century. The true nature and extent of “Dutch” tolerance, however, remains question. It is also unclear how well the Dutch were able to transplant their religiously tolerant views to their colonies in the Western Hemisphere.

The first obstacles that more recent scholars had to overcome were the terms “tolerance” and “toleration” themselves. Their meanings are ambiguous, while the way in which they are defined impact on the way in which religious tolerance is perceived. Benjamin Kaplan argues that while “today the phrase ‘religious tolerance’ implies religious freedom … [b]y contrast, until the Enlightenment to tolerate something meant merely to ‘souffrir’, or grudgingly concede its existence.”¹ Matters have been complicated as scholars have used these ambiguous terms “variously as an ideology, attitude, pattern of social behavior, governmental policy, or legal structure.”² It will become evident in this study that religious tolerance in the Republic and the colonies was more closely related to the seventeenth-century definition of tolerance. Willem Frijhoff defines it as “connivance with what was not allowed

… the non-application of legally prescribed practice, and the will to turn a blind eye.”

Evan Haefeli, in *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, also comments on the difficulties with the terms tolerance and toleration. Haefeli argues that tolerance is a dynamic relationship “between two or more different religious groups in which one group has more power, authority, or influence than others.” In this study, tolerance will also be defined as a dynamic relationship, but not necessarily between religious groups alone. The dynamic between the Reformed Church and the various dissident groups on both sides of the Atlantic plays an important role. However, the role of the West India Company (WIC) in the colonies, and the Republic’s civil authorities and influential merchants is equally important. The Republic was inherently commercial, and its colonial ventures were aimed more at extending the reach of commerce than at spreading the gospel of the Reformed Church. Furthermore, the WIC and its Dutch colonists, as the only representatives of “Dutchness” in the Western Hemisphere besides the Reformed Church, were determining factors in the degree of tolerance that spread to the colonies. This study will bring to light that the secular authorities, and the merchants who filled the coffers of the state, generally dictated life in the Republic and in the colonies. Commerce, politics, and religious tolerance were inextricably bound to one another.

In line with recent scholarship, this study will look at the ways in which civil authorities in the Republic and the WIC adopted policies of connivance to obscure ulterior motives. Most historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century have celebrated the remarkable degree of religious tolerance in the Republic. They found legitimization for their claims by underlining the peaceful coexistence of the various confessional groups in seventeenth-century Dutch society. In the last few decades, however, revisionist historians have attempted to debunk this myth. Kaplan argues that this scholarly trend ties in very well with contemporary culture, where “nationalism has yielded place to anti-nationalism, [and] veneration of the past to the deconstruction of historical myths.”

Jonathan I. Israel, who has written extensively on religious tolerance during the Dutch Golden Age, argues that as soon as the Reformed Church was embraced by the provinces as the Republic’s public church, Dutch regents consciously parted ways with religious tolerance because the orthodox Calvinists sought to extend their power and influence by curbing dissenting religious groups.

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through oppression and persecution. Where Israel has tried to whittle down the scope of religious tolerance, other historians, such as Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, have attempted to demonstrate how religious tolerance was usually born out of ulterior motives such as using tolerance as a way to foster commercial relations with dissenting groups. Kaplan continues Hofstra’s argument by arguing that tolerance was also employed by civil authorities as a means of maintaining social peace. This study is closely linked to revisionist scholarship, but it extends the scope of the discussion on religious tolerance in the Republic to the Western Hemisphere. Interestingly enough, by looking at the modus operandi of the WIC in the colonies, it becomes clear that the underlying motives for extending or restricting religious tolerance at home prevailed abroad.

The colonies were home to a degree of tolerance and intolerance not found in the Republic. New Holland offers an interesting insight in the workings of tolerance as a means to an end. Its tolerant climate was exceptional, which forces this study to parts ways with Israel’s argument that the Dutch, after having embraced Calvinist orthodoxy, could no longer be viewed as tolerant. On the other hand, the chapters on Curaçao and New Netherland demonstrate that the WIC did not adopt a unilateral approach toward religious dissent. In these colonies, religious intolerance gained a foothold. In this respect, this study ties into another trend in revisionist discourse on religious tolerance: regional difference. R. Po-chia Hsia argues that the focus of historians on Holland and Amsterdam has distorted the image of religious tolerance in the Republic. Hsia mentions that “[b]y moving away from Holland, we immediately acquire a very different picture of society and religion in the Dutch Republic.” Religious tolerance was not exclusive to Holland, but it was certainly not a nationwide phenomenon. Haefeli, who looked at Dutch religious tolerance in the Republic and New Netherland, argues that “regional variation was the Dutch norm … [and that] the mix of influences in the colonies – English Puritans, Lutherans, Jews, and Catholics – was the same as in Europe – albeit in different proportions.” This study, however, moves beyond the geographical confines that has restricted other scholars. Existing studies on Dutch religious tolerance focus on one of the colonies, on the Republic, or on the Republic and one of the colonies. By providing a trans-Atlantic and cross-colonial perspective, this study not only provides a more comprehensive view of the attitudes of Dutch secular and ecclesiastical

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authorities toward religious dissidents, but it also demonstrates that the regional differences, which are important to our understanding of religious tolerance in the Republic, also existed in the colonies.

The extensive scope of this study also allows it to engage more broader themes previously explored in relation to Dutch religious tolerance, but from a different perspective. Joyce D. Goodfriend argues that New Netherland’s ‘version of pluralism, in which various groups of Europeans learned to coexist … still stands as a noteworthy precedent for the multicultural American in which we now live.’ \(^{11}\) Haefeli continues Goodfriend’s argument by stating that the Dutch period in North America was a stepping stone for American religious liberty. He argues that “[w]ithout their tenure in North America, the United States would have been deprived of the unique hearth of religious and ethnic pluralism that the middle colonies became.” \(^{12}\) This study will attempt to reveal whether these claims are also true for the wider Dutch Atlantic world. Did religious pluralism become an enduring feature of Curaçao and Brazil because of Dutch rule?

While it is impossible to discuss the large variety of confessional groups in the Republic and its colonies at length, this study focuses on Catholics and Jews in the Republic, New Holland, and Curaçao. In the absence of a significant number of Catholics in New Netherland, that chapter will limit itself to the Jews. Because the Dutch colonial endeavors in the Western Hemisphere are largely set in the revolutionary context, the story of the Catholics must not be overlooked. The long struggle against Catholic Spain tested the limits of religious tolerance as it forced the Dutch into strained relations with the Catholics under their rule. Nonetheless, the importance of the large number of Catholics in the Republic and New Holland obstructed the aims of the ecclesiastical authorities to root out Catholic practice. The politico-religious struggle between the Dutch and the Catholics is an interesting story in itself, but it does not complete the picture of Dutch religious tolerance. In this respect, the story of the Jews provides an important angle. They were not involved in the discussion on Protestantism, and they did not threaten to upset the political status quo in the Republic. Many of the Jews that settled in Amsterdam around 1600 were wealthy traders who had strong ties with Jewish merchants across the Atlantic. The Jews found a safe haven in most places of the Dutch Empire because of their worth to the Dutch merchant elite, but even under Dutch rule they were not safe from the religious intolerance that had a way of finding them wherever

\(^{10}\) Haefeli, *Dutch Origins*, 282.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 279.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 287.
they went. In this study, the cases of the Catholics and Jews in the Dutch Empire in the seventeenth century will serve as exemplars of Dutch religious tolerance in more general terms. By looking at the period between roughly 1630 and 1664 – which traces Dutch influence in the Western Hemisphere from its height to its ultimate downfall – it is evident that, as in the Republic at the time, tolerance was bound to regional differences, and that ulterior motives for tolerance, such as commerce and societal stability, were hugely important underlying factors in the different attitudes towards religious dissent in New Netherland, New Holland, and Curaçao.

I
THE REPUBLIC: TOWARDS GREATER TOLERANCE

Before attempting to unearth the measure and nature of tolerance that the Dutch transplanted to their colonies in the Western Hemisphere, it is paramount to first assess what “Dutch” tolerance entailed in the Dutch Republic itself. The Revolt, as mentioned earlier, is the period which marked the beginning of a comprehensive debate on tolerance as it “shattered the previously prevailing religious, academic, educational and intellectual framework in the Netherlands, creating in the northern provinces the conditions for a society more flexible and tolerant” than elsewhere in Europe.13 For the duration of the Revolt against Spain – which lasted eighty years from 1568 until 1648 – theologians, scholars, magistrates, regents, stadholders, merchants, and myriad confessional groups clashed over the breadth of tolerance that was to be adopted in the nascent republic. This tumultuous time was very important in that it allowed the Dutch to shape their society according to their own views. Despite the fact that the measure of tolerance found in the Republic during this period was certainly not unlimited, it was greater than anywhere else in Europe at the time. Even so, it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that the Dutch Republic could be typified as a truly tolerant nation.

In a period called the First Refuge, which began in 1575 and lasted until 1625, huge numbers of immigrants flocked to the Dutch Republic because of political strife or religious oppression elsewhere in Europe, giving shape to Dutch society. Estimates of the number of immigrants are up for debate and vary from anywhere between 100,000 and 150,000 – which is roughly eight percent of the Republic’s total population in 1600 – but, even though the

13 Israel, Emergence of Tolerance, 3.
immigrant numbers are somewhat unclear, they had an unmistakable impact on Dutch society. Because the Republic was in great demographic flux, had a very complex sociopolitical structure with “towns, cities, provinces going their own way … [and was] in constant danger of splitting up, [it] needed symbols of unity to stay together.” Between 1572 and 1594, the various autonomous provinces in the Republic all agreed to adopt the Dutch Reformed Church as the public church, and, despite its relatively low number of adherents, it was the perfect unifying element in Dutch society because of its unanimous provincial support. The large number of immigrants, many of whom were dissident immigrants from elsewhere in Europe, were expected to help shape this Dutch Calvinist society. In a period where a Calvinist hegemony was gradually carved out, the Calvinists felt there was no place for subversive religious activities, conflicting doctrines, heretics, and politico-religious opponents such as the Catholics. However, despite the Calvinists’ growing influence it turned out that they could not always set the course for the Republic.

For the many Catholics that lived in the rebellious north of the Low Countries life was not always easy. Sir William Temple, an English diplomat who wrote extensively about the Republic, observed that Dutch hatred against the “Spaniards, who made themselves Heads of the Roman Catholicks throughout Christendom … and their Dominion, was so rooted in the Hearts of this People, that it had Influence upon them in the very Choice of their Religion.” The Calvinists, who were ardent supporters of the Revolt, embodied Temple’s observations, and certainly did not share the views of the revolutionary leader William of Orange, who felt that religious tolerance should also extend to the large number of Catholics in the nascent Republic. The Calvinists suspected the Catholics of colluding with the enemy, and these suspicions were not unfounded. In the years following the inception of the Revolt, Catholics were involved in “counter-revolutionary plots in Haarlem, Delft, Gouda, and Dordrecht, where wealthy and well-connected citizens intrigued to open the town gates for the Spanish army.” Anti-Catholic sentiment, fomented by staunch Calvinists and their clergy, swept across the northern provinces.

In 1573, the States of Holland and Zeeland prohibited freedom of worship for Catholics, and while this measure appeased the supporters of the Revolt it nowhere near

15 Israel, Emergence of Tolerance, 49, 50.
17 William Temple, Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands (London: Gray’s Inn, 1705), 199.
ended the debate on religious tolerance, which was to intensify in the decades to come. The adoption of the Union of Utrecht in 1579 marked the beginning of that even more comprehensive debate on religious pluralism and tolerance. The Union of Utrecht, which formed the basis for a later constitution, unified the various provinces militarily, but it also stipulated “that every individual should be free in spite of religious preference.” The autonomous provinces could arrange religious matters to their own insight as long as they respected the freedom of conscience of each individual. The interpretation of the freedom of conscience would dominate the religious debate for almost a century, but the Calvinists made it clear that, whatever interpretation might prevail, it was not to include the Catholics.

The reality of life in the Republic, however, allowed the Catholics to escape the restrictive measures issued against them. Calls for greater restrictions on Catholic practice followed almost immediately after the Revolt had begun and were revived intermittently for at least a century. In 1581 a string of laws was passed that denied Catholics full citizenship and that frustrated their efforts to organize themselves as a community. However, the complex political structure in the Dutch Republic made it very hard to take concerted action against Catholic religious practice and to persuade local authorities to carry anti-Catholic legislation into effect. Even though from the 1580s onwards, “hardly a year passed without a fresh batch of anti-Catholic edicts,” the frequency with which they were renewed hints towards the laxity of local authorities in actually upholding them. It is important to understand that even though they were the most influential religious group in the Republic, the Calvinists, in terms of numbers, were but a minority for much of the seventeenth century. Simon Schama notes that in the 1650s and 1660s, Catholics still accounted for a third of the population of the Dutch population. Despite the fact that they were despised by many, the Catholics numerical strength made them essential to the well-being of the Republic. Henk van Nierop mentions that “[d]emographically and economically, the towns were heavily dependent on the influx of immigrant labour from the surrounding countryside and from Catholic areas in the Empire.”

If the Dutch would have suppressed Catholicism in the way the orthodox Calvinists would have wanted, it would very likely have created civil unrest and it would have been harmful to

22 Ibid., 108.
the economy. Besides intermittent periods of more rigorous opposition, the civil authorities usually turned a blind eye to Catholic religious practice as long as it remained hidden from public sight.

Another important reason for law officers to connive at Catholic activity was the fact that they were easily corrupted by the lure of money. Christine Kooi mentions that “[i]n the early 1600s, Catholics paid 400 guilders per year in recognition money to the city’s bailiff (baljuw) to allow priests to celebrate the sacraments in peace.” This, however, did not refrain the bailiffs from regularly harassing Catholics by forcing them to pay even higher sums. Temple’s observations reveal that fifty years later, after the Revolt had been concluded in the Republic’s favor, little had changed: “[t]he Roman Catholick Religion was alone excepted from the common protection of their [Dutch] Laws, making Men (as the States believed) worse subjects than the rest.” Godfried Loeff, a missionary priest in the Dutch Republic, corroborated Temple’s views, when he wrote in a report to the Vatican in 1652, that Catholics paid bailiffs several times a year to be able to attend Catholic services in private homes behind closed doors. In some towns, however, fervid Calvinist bailiffs refused to take bribes from the Catholic community they so despised; here, Catholics held their services at nighttime under the cover of darkness. For the large Catholic minority in the Republic “any strategy … from official goodwill to aristocratic shelter, from disguised priests to corrupt sheriffs, presented an occasion to pry open a bit wider the window of accommodation.”

The Jews formed a separate category in the religiously pluralistic landscape of the seventeenth-century Republic, but they too faced opposition from the public church. Judaism stood outside the realm of Protestantism and they did not compete for members with the public church. For these reasons, Hugo Grotius, as early as the 1610s, pled that the Jews should be allowed to practice their faith in private as long as they did not criticize the public church nor attempt to convert Christians to Judaism. For the orthodox Calvinists, however, toleration of Judaism was out of the question. If official toleration was extended to the Jews then the Calvinists ran the risk of having to extend similar rights to politically suspect

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26 Temple, Observations, 200.

27 Kooi, “Paying off the sheriff,” 91.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 101.

dissidents such as the Catholics. Winds of change were blowing through the Republic, however. An internal split in the Reformed Church between the orthodox Calvinists and liberal Calvinists was concluded in the favor of orthodox Calvinism at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1619. Having lost their sway over the political arena in the 1620s, the orthodox Calvinists were forced to accept that they could no longer pass legislation to support their intolerant views. Israel argues that the fierce debate on religious tolerance and the subsequent political shift in the 1620s were “immediately followed by a substantial and irreversible shift towards a freer, more flexible society, if not yet in the United Provinces as a whole, then at any rate in Holland.” With the liberal Calvinists firmly in power, and with the influential merchants supporting their tolerant visions, dissident groups such as the Jews were granted ever more rights from the 1630s onward such as rights to public worship and to build temples.

The civil authorities were reluctant to heed the orthodox Calvinists’ call for greater restrictions on Jewish religious practice because the Jewish merchants and artisans were a valuable asset to the Republic. The Jews “did not sever relations with their native soil, but created a commercial network that tied together Portugal, northeastern Brazil, and Amsterdam into a neat triangle.” The Jews, with their extensive trade network that spanned the Atlantic Basin, were to play an important part in the plans of the Republic to control the entire sugar trade – which Brazil’s Jews and the Jewish merchants from Amsterdam were heavily involved in. Holland’s influential merchants financed the war effort against the Iberian nations, and the political power they gained from this allowed them to protect the interests of the Jewish community, whose expertise was instrumental in the merchants’ desire to seize control of the sugar industry. Even so, the Jews could “not penetrate the traditional branches of Holland’s trade and were excluded from most guilds, but in the trade with Portugal and the Portuguese colonies they retained a virtual monopoly.” Because the Jews did not compete with Dutch merchants and artisans and contributed to wealth of the Republic, they were welcomed in Amsterdam – much to the regret of the disgruntled orthodox Calvinists.

The Jewish community could thrive because they were isolated from the traditional branches of the economy, but their tacit acceptance was also inextricably bound to their social and religious isolation. The Jews formed a tight-knit community who shared a common

34 Wim Klooster, “Communities of Port Jews and Their Contacts in the Dutch Atlantic World,” Jewish History: Port Jews of the Atlantic (June 2006), 130.
ancestry and who conversed with each other in vernacular Spanish and Portuguese. Jewish newcomers were immediately schooled in order to make the transition and assimilation into the community run smoothly. The fact that they mostly kept to themselves socially contributed to the fact that the civil authorities had little interest in allowing that peace to be disturbed by religious oppression of Judaism. The Calvinist clergy grudgingly accepted the policy of connivance on the part of the civil authorities. Nonetheless, the “boundaries of their community were sharply drawn and strictly guarded. Intermarriage and conversion of Dutch subjects were not allowed … and they had no claim on common poor relief.”

Poor relief was a key element from both an economic and a religious perspective. With an increased influx of Jewish artisans and merchants also came an increased influx of poorer Jewish immigrants. These poorer Jews who often took up jobs as peddlers – which meant additional competition for local retailers – were viewed with contempt by the Amsterdam’s patriciate. The Reformed Church’s *diaconie* who saw after the arrangement of poor relief for their own subjects, refused to make similar arrangements for poor Jewish newcomers. In order to secure their relatively peaceful life, rich Jews had to “conduct frequent fund-raising campaigns to pay for the relief of the poor,” which indicates that tolerance came at a price. Because the Jewish social, economic, and religious spheres were sharply demarcated and separated from the rest of society, they posed no threat to social stability nor to the politico-religious order. They were granted similar liberties as other dissident groups. However, these liberties went hand in hand with the restrictions that dissidents faced, and the Jews were forced to provide poor relief for those in their community that needed it. Further evidence of equal treatment is found in the fact that the Jews were allowed to build synagogues in Amsterdam in the late 1630s – around which time the Lutherans and liberal Calvinists were allowed to build their churches.

Originating in the minds of eminent scholars and theologians, the changing ideas and perspectives on religious tolerance of the early revolutionary period gradually seeped down to the civil authorities and the general populace – only to firmly take root in Dutch society in the latter half of the seventeenth century. The religious debate found itself wound up in the tumultuous politics of a Republic that was in the process of constituting its identity. With the

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36 Ibid.
37 Van Rooden, “Jews and religious toleration,” 142.
40 Ibid.
effective dismantling of the authoritarian Catholic Church, there was room for theologians and scholars to think about religion’s place in society in more practical ways. No longer did they have to answer to a single church whose power was unquestionable, but they could think freely about the restrictions and liberties of both the public church and the many dissident groups in society. Even though the autonomous provinces expressed a longing for a single religious structure by adopting the Dutch Reformed Church as the public church, it was never to resemble the all-powerful Catholic Church in any way. The ecclesiastical authority of the Reformed Church was allowed to grow over time because of its importance as a unifying symbol in a religiously and culturally pluralized landscape, but the merchants and secular authorities wielded greater political power, and they were sure to keep the Reformed Church and its spirited clergy in check. Furthermore, the complex structure of the political arena “made a comprehensive Protestant Church illusory, even though the ideal was strongly present” among the Calvinists.\footnote{Spaans, “Religious policies,” 78.}

There were also other factors that steered the Republic towards becoming an increasingly tolerant nation. As a seafaring nation wholly dependent on trade, the Republic was driven by commerce, and its most influential citizens were bourgeois merchants who wielded a lot of political power. The tacit toleration of the Jews serves as a perfect illustration of the way in which economic interests prevailed over religious interests at a national level. Spaans correctly asserts that “[t]olerance was … conducive to the trade interests of the merchant elite that ruled the cities and eventually the state itself, and [it] was in accordance with the Erasmian humanism prevalent in this period.”\footnote{Spaans, “Religious policies,” 78.} At a local level, the prevalence of economic motives in Dutch society is corroborated by the absence of strong religious convictions in the many bailiffs that had a penchant for filling their pockets. The Reformed Church tried to do everything in its power to stop the widespread corruption, but they largely failed to do so. On the other hand, factors that threatened to curb the spread of wealth invoked rumblings of discontent. Neither the civil authorities nor the Reformed Church were willing to bear the burden of poor dissidents, and “any disaffection among [the dissidents’] poor with established authorities could no longer be deflected to secular magistrates, but had to be met by the lay leadership” of their own church.\footnote{Ibid.} Dissident groups were thus forced to make ends meet and to look after their own poor because they could not run the risk of losing the favor of

\footnote{Israel, “Intellectual Debate,” 21.}
\footnote{Spaans, “Religious policies,” 78.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
the city magistrates and town who permitted their existence in the first place.

Besides that it created economic opportunity for Dutch merchants, religious tolerance, or, connivance of dissident religious practice, was also a very effective tool for the civil authorities to maintain societal stability and peace. Temple wrote that:

If the Followers of any Sect grew so numerous in any place that they affect a Publick Congregation … they go and propose their desire to the Magistrates of the Place where they reside [who] inform themselves of their Opinions, and Manners of Worship, and if they find nothing in either, destructive to Civil Society, or prejudicial to the Constitutions of their State … they easily allow it. ⁴⁵

Temple’s observations are very telling in that they corroborate the fact that the civil, and not the ecclesiastical, authorities governed whether dissenting factions were to be tolerated. They also underline that the civil authorities were generally accepting of religious dissent as long as it did not cause any disturbance to societal peace and stability. Spaans argues that dissidents were “expected to preach social obedience to lawful authorities … Criticism of the political status quo, demanding bizarre devotions or causing schism and unrest within their community, could, and usually did, get dissident clergy banished.” ⁴⁶ As long as dissidents abided by the unwritten rules set by the local authorities, the various confessional groups could enjoy relative freedom in most parts of the Republic.

It is important to understand that while religious tolerance up until now has been viewed mainly from the perspective of the Republic as a whole, there were marked regional differences in the degree of religious tolerance. Because power was decentralized in the Republic and the autonomous provinces, cities, and towns each had their own centers of decision-making, dissidents could be welcomed in one region but ousted from another. In regions where the liberal Calvinists held key government positions religious dissidents were granted much more freedom than in regions where orthodox Calvinists were in power. Also, Po-Chia Hsia is right to point out that “Holland had a disproportionate influence within the Republic, and much of the Republic’s image was based on Holland’s image … where Gouda and Haarlem consciously cultivated reputations for tolerance, Dordrecht and Groningen certainly did not.” ⁴⁷ In general, Holland was much more open and tolerant because of its immense cultural and religious variety, but also because of the overwhelming influence of the city’s patriciate and merchants – influence they used to safeguard the interests of their dissident trading partners. For example, while the Jews were pivotal trading partners to

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⁴⁵ Temple, Observations, 202.
⁴⁶ Spaans, “Religious policies,” 82.
⁴⁷ Hsia, Calvinism, 17.
Amsterdam’s merchants, “tolerance for Jews outside of Amsterdam was virtually non-existent.”

In the discussion on the degree and nature of religious tolerance in the Republic, the arguments of a variety of revisionist historians have been continued. Revisionists such as Kaplan and Israel do not argue against the peaceful coexistence of various confessional groups in the seventeenth-century Republic, but they raise important questions about what it was that created those conditions in Dutch society. To simply tout the Dutch as a tolerant people by nature is to ignore the underlying factors that made the Dutch a tolerant people. Furthermore, revisionist scholars have also scrutinized the true extent of religious tolerance in the Republic. Israel argues that tolerance during much of the Golden Age can only be defined as “an ambivalent semi-tolerance … a partial toleration seething with tension.” Israel’s argument applies to the story of the Dutch Catholics, but not so much to the Jews in Holland. They enjoyed a degree of tolerance that their counterparts elsewhere in Europe certainly did not. It were usually the orthodox Calvinists who complained about the growing Jewish presence in Holland. The strong ties of the Jews with the merchant and regent class, and the rights they acquired over the course of the seventeenth century, does away arguments that they suffered from a “partial toleration seething with tension.”

Another aspect of revisionist scholarship which has come to light is regional difference. Spaans argues that the “degree of religious tolerance in the Dutch Republic varied from region to region … [and that while] the Reformed Church insisted on its exclusive character, the civil magistrate was reluctant to insist on a national comprehensive Church.” Because the Reformed Church never became the Republic’s official state church, religious pluralism, with its regional idiosyncrasies, became an enduring feature of Dutch society. Regional difference is important in the discussion on religious tolerance in the Republic, but even more so in the discussion on tolerance in the colonies. With the revisionist discussion on Dutch religious tolerance in mind, the following chapters will extend that discussion to the New World and attempt to reveal whether the Dutch were as tolerant abroad as they were at home. Did similar policies of connivance evolve in each of the Dutch colonies or were there intercolonial differences, and were there similar motives for that acceptance, or did the hostile environment of the early colonial period force the Dutch into different relations with religious dissidents?

II
SPREADING THE ZEAL OF TOLERANCE: NEW HOLLAND

A driving force behind the establishment of the WIC was Willem Usselincx, a wealthy immigrant from Antwerp, who felt it was necessary for the Dutch to expand into the Western Hemisphere if they were to compete with the Spaniards and Portuguese. Usselincx estimated that Brazilian sugar alone would yield the Republic at least 4,800,000 guilders annually – which in today’s money amounts to nearly 750 million euros.51 Usselincx did not wish to capture any Portuguese or Spanish-owned colonies, but to found new ones with the explicit approval of the Iberian nations. However, realizing that the Iberian nations were unlikely to consent to Dutch interference in the Western Hemisphere, Usselincx felt that the Twelve Year’s Truce with the Habsburg dynasty had to be interpreted as a truce confined to the European theatre, which would allow them to continue the war in the Americas.52 Usselincx’s plans of establishing the WIC were discarded, because it was feared that it would put extra tension on an already delicate peace with the Iberian nations.53 With the renewed war with Portugal and Spain in 1621, however, Usselincx’s plans were given new life and the WIC was founded in that same year. Contrary to Usselincx’s visions, the WIC’s primary focus became the disruption of Iberian trade and colonial enterprise in the New World, and capturing Portuguese Brazil quickly became the centerpiece of their future plans – plans the Dutch realized in 1630.

Cuthbert Pudsey, an Englishman who visited Brazil in the years between 1629 and 1640, wrote about an incident with a Franciscan missionary that occurred shortly before the arrival of the Dutch in 1630:

Their was a Relegiouss man of the order of sainct ffrancis, a preacher amongst them, in the Citty of Olynda, who through the spyrritt of god p’phyced amonst them, preaching unto them repentence and amendment of lyfes, showing them how deeply god was offended wth them for their synfull lives…that soddainly he would raise a nation against them, that should arrive upon the coast wthin short space, That should brin ge them under Subjection, abayte there pryde and lye a heavye hande of them by the swoorde. all whch wholsoome admonitions they not only sleighted but continued Banishing the good man out of the land, as soome of them affirme. But othersoome say they put hi m to death. 54

50 Spaans, “Religious policies,” 85.
51 The International Institute for Social History’s website calculates the present-day purchasing power of 4,800,000 Dutch Florins in 1621: http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate-nl.php.
53 Ibid.
Whether banished or put to death, the actions and ultimate fate of the Franciscan missionary hint to an ostensible lack of religiousness in the Portuguese colony, but it is more likely that the missionary was seen as a firebrand whose words instilled fear in the colonists. In the Portuguese colonies, the Franciscans, Jesuit missionaries, and ordinary Catholics did not run the risk of persecution, but the large number of Crypto-Jews who secretly practiced Judaism did. The Portuguese probably thought the Franciscan was a raving madman, and even when the Dutch practically landed on their doorstep with a considerable force, Pudsey described how the “Portigezes weree very Incredulous to believe, that the hollanderes would dare attempt att thinge soe Farr abowe their reatch.”

With the Dutch capture of the Portuguese-owned territories in Brazil, the religious situation for the Jews improved quite drastically. Initially, a score of Portuguese Jews came to Brazil on a lease from the Portuguese Crown in the early sixteenth century, and, as the Dutch traveler Johan Nieuhof described, many that followed them in subsequent years came there because “they were banished from Portugal for refusing to convert to Catholicism.” In time, the Portuguese Crown interfered, and with it came the Inquisition, which meant that the Jews were now forced to live as New Christians. Arnold Wiznitzer claims that if a “victim embraced Roman Catholicism at the last moment, he was strangled and then burned as a milder form of execution.” Despite the inherent danger of living under Portuguese rule, many New Christians remained because they were allowed to retain their influential positions in the sugar industry and trade. These Jews, through their strong ties with Jews in other parts of the world, must have been aware of the tolerance extended to the Jews in the Republic. Lope de Vega, a famous Spanish Baroque writer, wrote a play called El Brasil Restituido, which was published in 1625, about the Dutch capture of Bahia a year earlier. It reveals the prevailing sentiment among the Jews about the entrance of the Dutch on the colonial stage in Brazil, when it reads: “have we written Holland / to send a fleet / and received an answer / that it already sailed the waters / judging it will be better / to surrender to the Dutch / instead of the Portuguese / who treat us with such rigor.”

59 Lope de Vega, *El Brasil Restituido*, edited by Gino de Solemni, New York: Spanish Institute in the United States, 1929. My own translation from the original transcript which reads: havemos escrito a Olanda / que con
The Jews were right to expect that they would benefit from being subjected to Dutch rule, and they quickly became close partners in the colonial trade. The board of the WIC, the Lords XIX, had resolved that the Reformed Church would become the public church in every overseas possession in the Western Hemisphere they would lay claim to, and it was to be organized in much the same fashion as in the Republic. However, as in the Republic at the time, economic motives prevailed over religious motives. The Dutch colonial enterprise in Brazil was focused solely on controlling the entire sugar trade. Brazil’s sugar industry, however, had been ravaged by the war. Nieuhof described how in 1637 “a Spanish Count … with nearly two thousand soldiers … burnt, pillaged, and plundered our [Dutch] sugar mills, leaving the lands in ruin.” The primary objective of the Dutch, after the hostilities with the Iberian nations had ceased, was to recover the sugar industry with the help of the Jews. Governor Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, a Calvinist himself, knew that tolerating the Jews was vital to the success of their efforts in New Holland. Exploiting Jewish expertise did not restrict itself to New Holland, and many Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam were also encouraged to “settle in sizeable numbers in and around Recife … allowing them to become the main brokers and intermediaries supplying the cash, credit, and supplies needed to get the region’s sugar production in full flow again.”

Being granted a similar welcome they had received in Amsterdam, the Jewish community in New Holland flourished. Nieuhof described how “among the free people … were the Jewish nation, in great numbers, many of whom came from the Netherlands, had settled in Brazil. The Jews were heavily involved in trade, and, in time, even more so than our own people.” Indeed, the Jews became very numerous, but also because many New Christians now openly professed Judaism. Witznitzer claims that the Jewish population in New Holland reached its zenith in 1645. From a total white population of 2,899, around 1,450 were thought to be Jews. Under Johan Maurits’s reign, these Jews enjoyed a measure of tolerance that was absolutely remarkable for its time. In the Republic at the time, dissidents

armada se apresta / de quien tenemos respuesta / que sobre sus aguas anda / juzgando será mayor / entregarnos a Olandeses / que sufrir que Portugueses / nos traten con tal rigor.

60 Israel, “Intellectual Debate,” 17.
61 Nieuhof, Gedenkweerdige Zee- en Lant-Reize, 12. “Spaense Graef … met omtrent twee duizent krijgsknechten, zich aldaer onthield … met branden, verdelgen, en plunderen, onze zuikermolens en landeryen in rep en roer stellen.”
63 Nieuhof, Gedenkweerdige Zee- en Lant-Reize, 214. “Onder de vrye luiden … was de Joodsche natie in grooten getale, die met menigte uit Nederlant in Brafil gekomen was, en zich aldaer ter neer gezet had. De Joden dreven aldaer grooten handel, en, na gelang, vry meer, als ons volk.”
64 Arnold Wiznitzer, “The Number of Jews in Dutch Brazil (1630-1654),” Jewish Social Studies (April 1954), 111.
enjoyed freedom of conscience as stipulated by the Union of Utrecht and tacit approval of religious practice at best. Johan Maurits, however, cared little for the vague boundaries that restrained dissident religious life in the Republic, and he granted the Jews freedom of religion. The Jews were allowed to build their own synagogue in Recife as early as 1636. By contrast, the first synagogue in the Republic was built on the edge of Amsterdam three years later in 1639. In 1641, when the Jews of Recife were in need of a new synagogue because of their growing numbers, they were permitted to build it “if not on the market square, then in the best part of the city.”

The Jews in New Holland were granted privileges denied to the Jewish community in Amsterdam even though they did face similar restrictions. The Jews could take up jobs in the retail trade and the wealthiest brokers were Jewish – which meant that any sizeable transaction went through Jewish hands. Even the Dutch oftentimes favored Jewish brokers over their own because of the obvious linguistic advantage. Speaking both Portuguese and Dutch, the Jews found themselves in a very advantageous position which allowed them to outcompete both the Portuguese and the Dutch in business. However, when a large group of Jewish immigrants arrived from Amsterdam in 1638, they caused a panic because there were many poor among them. Even the tolerant Johan Maurits “believed these newcomers would be harmful to Brazil’s economy.” Like the Jews in the Republic, the Jews in New Holland were expected to look after their own poor if they wanted to retain the liberties granted to them. The fact that these poorer Jews were reason for consternation reveals that Johan Maurits’s motives for allowing religious freedom were inextricably bound to economics. Tolerance was a remarkably effective tool for fostering strong commercial ties with dissident groups, but never to the extent that the Dutch would look after their poor who threatened to cut back on the spreading wealth.

It should be noted, however, that there was not only resistance to the poorer Jews, but also to the disproportionate influence of the wealthy Jews. A number of Portuguese and Dutch colonists joined hands in their opposition to the Jewish community in 1641. F.L. Schalkwijk writes that the “Portuguese Catholics and Dutch Reformed submitted to the government a document entitled ‘Objections of Common Christians’ … [which included] some nasty

66 Ibid., 255, 256.
68 Ibid.
suggestions, such as requiring Jews to wear red hats or some kind of symbol to set them off from other people.”\(^{70}\) Not only was the concerted effort of the Reformed and Catholic colonists uncommon because they were usually pitted against each other, it was also futile. Even the Jews themselves realized that they were of higher social standing than the Catholics, which is evinced by Johan Maurits’s words, when he wrote that the Jews “thought they should enjoy more liberties than the papists … [because] they do everything in their power to maintain and defend this State, where the papist Portuguese have only proven to be very disloyal.”\(^{71}\) That privileged position soon changed, however, when the Portuguese rebelled in 1645. Fearing yet another period of Catholic oppression, many Jews fled the colony when the opportunity presented itself. The Jewish community in Recife dwindled from 1,450 in 1645, to 720 three years later, and, when the Portuguese finally regained control of Brazil in 1654, only 600 Jews were left.\(^{72}\)

Not surprisingly, the Catholics were less enthusiastic about being subjected to Dutch rule. Even Temple observed the deep-seated hatred of the Protestant Dutch towards the Iberian Catholics that apparently still manifested itself nearly a century after the Revolt first started in 1568. Gonsalves de Mello argues that many documents indicate that the Dutch did not regard every Brazilian or Portuguese to be their enemy. The Dutch did not extend this gesture of acceptance to the Catholics, however, not even to those among their own ranks.\(^{73}\) Joos Coecks, a Dutch captain, reflected this sentiment in a letter to his friend Paulus Serooskercke when he wrote that all papists, regardless of their country of origin, are the worst enemies of the Dutch.\(^{74}\)

The existence of this anti-Catholic sentiment is also corroborated by the active suppression of the Society of Jesus, which was an abomination in the eyes of many Protestants, and especially the Calvinists. Secret instructions to Admiral Lonck, who had conquered Brazil with his fleet in 1630, reveal how much the Dutch despised the Jesuits, when it reads: “[a]ll Jesuits, both priests and friars … shall be banned and remain banned from all places where submission is owed to the States General, and shall not go to these


\(^{70}\) Schalkwijk, Reformed Church, 260.

\(^{71}\) Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, “Sommier discours” (Recife, 1648), Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap, The Hilten Archives Utrecht, 1879, 284. “Sij meynden, datse meer vrijheyt behoorden te hebben als de papisten … [omdat zij hun] uytterste tot maintenue ende defentie van desen Staet bijsetten, daer de paepse Portugesen hadden getoont ons gans ontrou te sijn.”

\(^{72}\) Schalkwijk, Reformed Church, 266.

\(^{73}\) De Mello, Nederlanders in Brazilië, 247.

\(^{74}\) “Letter from captain Joos Coecks to Paulus van Serooskercke” (Tamarica, May 14, 1631), Letters and papers from Brazil, National Archives The Hague.
places under pain of being brought prisoner to [the Republic].”\(^{75}\) Many Jesuits were indeed shipped off to the Republic in the years between 1636 and 1640. Servaes Carpentier, a Dutch colonial official and member of the political council, revealed the perceived reason behind their deportation, when he wrote in 1636, that they had “heard on several occasions, which was to be expected of them, that [the Jesuits] corresponded with the enemy to inform them of our whereabouts.”\(^{76}\) Besides this source in which Carpentier raised suspicion of the Jesuits, there is no known source that provides actual proof that the Jesuits did indeed collude with the enemy. It is more likely that the Dutch were looking for reasons to banish the much-hated Jesuits – as instructed by the Lords XIX – without creating civil unrest in the colony, in which case suspicions of treason gave them more than enough justification to do so. In any case, the Jesuits themselves did little to abate this prevailing sentiment among the Dutch, and they were uncompromising in their aversion of the Dutch, which eventually led to their deportation in quite significant numbers.\(^{77}\)

In time, however, a situation evolved quite similar to that in the Republic where large dissident groups were allowed freedom of conscience and religious practice because it was conducive to societal stability and peace. It is estimated that at its peak the Catholics in New Holland constituted around sixty percent of the total population – despite the fact that around 10,000 Portuguese Brazilians left for Bahia, which the Dutch had only possessed for a year.\(^{78}\) These migrants, however, left “due to their own preference not to remain under Dutch rule, rather than [it] being an obligatory migration.”\(^{79}\) Physical extinction of Catholicism was out of the question. The Dutch, being severely outnumbered, had to walk a fine line between using religious tolerance as a way to prevent civil unrest among the large Catholic population and restricting their rights to such an extent that it demonstrated their unquestionable control over the colony. Until 1638, outwardly manifestations of the Catholic faith, such as processions, were allowed, but the Reformed clergy pressed the colonial authorities to prohibit these forms of religious practice that were not even allowed in the Republic itself, and the authorities heeded their call. In reality, however, the processions never really stopped. In any place where the Catholics formed the majority, they continued to carry the images of their saints through the streets on every occasion that called for such activity – much to the dismay of the

\(^{75}\) “Secret instructions to Admiral Lonck” (Amsterdam, Aug. 1, 1629), Secret minutes of the XIX 1629 – 1645, National Archives The Hague.

\(^{76}\) Servaes Carpentier, “Tweede deel des Rapports gedaen bij Servaes Carpentier, Raet in Brasil, nopende den stant van policie, traffique ende vruchte des lants” (Recife, June 11, 1636), Daily Minutes March 27, 1635 – January 5, 1641, National Archives The Hague.

\(^{77}\) Boxer, Dutch in Brazil, 74.

\(^{78}\) Schalkwijk, Reformed Church, 276.
Reformed Church. The Dutch did pass similar legislation over the course of the years, but it was largely ineffective.

Under Johan Maurits’s rule, the Catholics eventually enjoyed greater liberties than in the first six years of Dutch rule. Johan Maurits usually had little regard for the orthodox Calvinists’ calls for ever greater restrictions on dissident religious practice. Catholics, in areas where the Dutch presence was the strongest, were prohibited to hold services, but, even in Recife, these services continued behind closed doors, and they were tacitly accepted by the colonial authorities. Johan Maurits countered the Calvinists’ pleas for clamping down on Catholicism by arguing that “the right remedy is to ignore,” and he continued by stating that with this policy he had “accomplished [much] to the benefit of peace in the state. Connivance, or turning a blind eye in Brazil is more necessary here than in any other place where freedom of religion is allowed.” Interestingly, the Dutch acted exactly in accordance with the secret instructions given to Admiral Lonck. Besides spurring the colonial officials on to take action against the Jesuits, it also instructed the Dutch that: “[t]he liberty of the Spanish, the Portuguese, and those indigenous to the land, whether Roman Catholic or Jewish, shall be respected; these [people] are not to be molested … no one shall venture to disturb them … under pain of exemplary and rigorous punishment.” Besides the underlying reasons for his tolerant policies, Johan Maurits was right to compliment himself because in the years between 1636 and 1644, when the colony was under his direct rule, it was relatively peaceful. New Holland’s economy was given an impulse after the sugar industry was rebuilt and trade could continue. It could be argued that Johan Maurits’s tolerant modus operandi was a contributing factor in that respect.

As with the Jews, there were several colonists, however, who lamented the degree of tolerance that the Catholics were allowed to enjoy, and their fears became reality in 1645. The objections usually came from the Reformed Church, but some colonial officials and Jews also feared that the tolerance accorded to the Catholics could backfire. The Jews furnished “the government with secret information about Roman Catholic political activities,” and “[e]ven some of the Portuguese suggested that several of the more politically active priests should be

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79 Schalkwijk, Reformed Church, 276.
80 De Mello, Nederlanders in Brazilië, 247.
81 Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen, “Political Testament of the Count Johan Maurits of Nassau” (May 6, 1644) Rio de Janeiro, 1895, 234, 235. “De rechte remedie moet sijn de vergetinge, ende hiermede hebbe ick veel uyttgericht tot ruste van den state. De conniventie ofte oogluijckinge [is] in Brasil noodiger als eenich volck dat vrijheyt van religie is toegestaen.”
82 “Secret instructions to Admiral Lonck,” Aug. 1, 1629.
Not only were the Dutch the aggressors, but they were also heretics, which gave the Portuguese and Brazilian Catholics more than enough reason to harbor intentions to drive out the enemy. While religious tolerance had contributed to economic prosperity and had led to the existence of cooperative relations in a colony occupied by a mixture of otherwise hostile religions and cultures, it also enabled the Portuguese Catholics to amass the support required to effectively rebel against the Dutch. When the rebellion eventually did break out in 1645, the Dutch found themselves in dire straits because many colonists defected to the enemy. The political council in New Holland deplored that “[n]o French can join us, unless they are of the same faith, because many of them who are papists desert to the enemy.” After nine years of rebellion, the Portuguese successfully ousted the Dutch from Brazil in 1654.

A lack of funds and manpower was the main reason for the Dutch failure in Brazil, but it can also be argued that the tolerant nature of the Dutch was ultimately counterproductive. Already when Johan Maurits set sail for Brazil in 1636, the WIC found itself in financial dire straits. The Company intended to send seven to eight thousands troops to accompany Johan Maurits to maintain control over the colony, but this was reduced to 2,700 troops because of the Company’s outstanding debt of eighteen million guilders, and the outstanding arrears of nearly one million guilders of the chamber of Holland alone, in 1635. Niehof underlined that the severe lack of both Dutch colonists and soldiers was a contributing factor in the WIC’s decline, when he wrote:

It is reasonable to claim that the primary reason of the decline of Dutch Brazil has been the bad occupation, the few number of forts with soldiers, and … the scarcity of our own Dutch and ‘vrije luiden’ … a strong population could have secured the land against the enemy, and it could have manned the forts and garrisons … For it is custom in all people, to keep conquered peoples and lands in control and submission by using castles and garrisons or by colonies and population.

It cannot be argued that the Dutch would have remained in control if they had subdued the Brazilians and Portuguese. Even if they would have liked to implement more rigid control

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83 Schalkwijk, Reformed Church, 289.
84 “General Missives to the Council of the Lords XIX” (Recife, Dec. 4, 1646), Outgoing Letters 1642-1647, National Archives The Hague. “Geen Franschen mochten toecomen, tensij deselve van de religie waeren, also veele van deselve paepen sijnde, near den vijant overloopen.”
85 Bozer, Dutch in Brazil, 93.
86 Nieuhof, Gedenkweerdige Zee- en Lant-Reize, 234. “De voornaemste oorzake van het verval van Neerlants Brasil wordt by verstandigh geoordeelt, geweest te zijn het de slechte bezetting der sterkten en forten met krijghsvolk … en de schaerse en slechten bevolking van dien, door onze eigen Nederlanderds en vrye luiden … Want het is een gemeene stijl en by alle volken gebruikelyk, overheerde en overwonne landen of door kasteelen en garnisoenen of krijghsbezettingen, of door kolonien en bevolkingen in dwang en onderdanigheit te houden.”
over the colony, the Dutch simply lacked the manpower to do so. With what means they had, the Dutch, and especially Johan Maurits, felt that tolerance was more conducive to the success of the colony. In the Republic at the time, the Dutch were much more rigorous in, and effective at, subduing Catholic political opposition because it was in their power to do so. After the attempts of the Dutch Catholics to disrupt the Dutch cause in the early years of the Revolt, they had to settle for a second-rate position. Being an overwhelming majority in New Holland, the Portuguese Catholics refused to be treated as second-rate colonists. Their tolerated status was ultimately a contributing factor in bringing about the downfall of the Dutch because the Catholics could congregate, and politically active priests could spread their inflammatory ideas without much opposition.

Despite the fact that the degree of religious tolerance extended to the Jews and Catholics was remarkable for its time, it was born out of economic motives in the case of the Jews, and to a lesser degree of the Catholics – in whose case it was mainly born out of sheer necessity due to their large numbers. In this sense, the revisionist discussion on tolerance in the Republic still holds validity when it is extended to New Holland. The WIC in New Holland, much like the merchants and secular authorities in the Republic, employed tolerance as a means to an end – albeit in varying degrees. The traces of Dutch religious tolerance in Brazil were quickly erased, and they proved to have no lasting effect on the region. The Portuguese reconquered the colony and “rather than building on Dutch tolerance, [they] restored the Catholic Church … and suppressed heresy (meaning Protestantism) and Judaism.” Brazil’s brief episode of tolerance ended in 1654, and the Dutch colonists and many of the Jews fanned out to the Republic, New Netherland, and Curaçao.

III

TOLERANCE ABATED: CURAÇAO

The sugar trade lured the Dutch to South America, but their need for salt is what drove them there. The Dutch herring industry, which was the Republic’s most important domestic industry, had grown to sizeable proportions over the course of the sixteenth century, and salt was needed to preserve the herring. The export of herring to the Baltic – their most important market – grew substantially over time. Richard W. Unger notes that “[b]etween 1652 and
1657 the average annual import of Dutch herring into the Baltic was 5415 lasts,” and that the “best years for exporters were from 1600 to 1629, when an average of 8245 lasts of herring entered the Sound in Dutch ships.” The Dutch were like a spider in the web of European trade as they traded Baltic goods with the Spanish for salt, which they in turn traded for Baltic goods – striking up a nice profit in the process. Ever since the inception of the Revolt, however, advisors urged the Spanish Crown to deny the Dutch their influential position. From the 1580s onwards, measures were implemented to combat the Dutch role as an entrepôt in the salt trade. Dutch explorers quickly set sail to the Venezuelan coast to look for salt pans they could exploit to supply the expanding domestic herring industry. Finding only fortified positions of the Spanish there, the Dutch turned their attention to the Leeward Antilles, just off the coast of Venezuela, instead, where they had discovered several salt pans. Unfortunately, on closer inspection these proved to be of poor quality. Having lost the prospect of seizing control over lucrative salt pans, the WIC felt that Curaçao could be of great value in their efforts to disrupt Iberian trade in the area – which was one of the pillars of the WIC’s goals. The WIC sent out a fleet to capture Curaçao for exactly that reason in 1634.

Curaçao was an easy target for the Dutch because it was scarcely populated, and the Dutch commander Johannes van Walbeek took the island with relative ease. The Spanish commander Lope Lopéz de Morla “headed a Spanish population of 32 persons including the priest and Morla’s 12 children. There were also 500 Indians who were entrenched ready to defend the islands.” Apart from a few skirmishes, the Dutch quickly brought the island under control. The Indian presence on Curaçao was reason for immediate concern for the Dutch because they had been converted to Catholicism by Spanish missionaries. When on August 21, De Morla agreed to relinquish control over Curaçao to the Dutch, he explicitly demanded that he and everyone in his following should be allowed safe passage to Spanish-owned territories. Van Walbeek was suspicious of the large number of Catholic natives whose allegiances lay with the enemy, and he consented to De Morla’s terms on the condition that he would take all but some twenty native families with him. Goslinga argues that the Dutch,

87 Richard W. Unger, “Dutch Herring, Technology, and International Trade in the Seventeenth Century,” The Journal of Economic History (June 1980), 260. The last is a measurement used by the Dutch, which literally translates to shipload. In the herring fishery, however, Unger notes that a last was made up of fourteen casks each containing about 900 fish.
88 Ibid., 263.
90 Ibid.
92 Goslinga, Short History, 24.
however, remained suspicious of the twenty native families that stayed behind, and “fearing the consequences of an alliance between the Indians of the island and the mainland with the Spaniards, [Van Walbeek] pushed forward the construction on the Point, of the Waterfort … and of Fort Amsterdam … to protect the entrance to the Schottegat.”

Goslinga’s argument that the Dutch were suspicious of the remaining Catholic Indians, and of those whose allegiance they could not probe, is substantiated by a letter from the governor of Curaçao, Peter Stuyvesant, to the WIC in 1643, when he wrote:

However, because 2 to 3 foreign Indians have been seen there, and not knowing their intentions or whether they were left there by the Spaniards for a reason, or fled there against their will, we find it necessary for the maximum security of the island, as long as the Negroes remain working there, to keep 3 to 4 horsemen there together with 8 to 10 soldiers, in order to provide a guard for the countryside both against a surprise attack and the escape of the Negroes.

The Spanish missionaries were indefatigable in their conversion of the Caribbean and mainland natives, and many had indeed adopted the Catholic faith and sworn loyalty to the Spanish Crown, which made the Dutch careful in their dealings with the Indians. It is evident, however, that in time the relations between the Catholic Indians of the Leeward Antilles and the Dutch improved – quite possibly because the Dutch realized that the natives no longer harbored any intent to collude with the enemy. In 1643, Stuyvesant wrote about relocating Aruba’s natives to Curaçao; the natives, who “have given [the Dutch] great service and of whom more is to be expected if anymore raids are carried out on the mainland,” should be protected against any retaliatory attacks from the Catholic Indians the Dutch had raided. However, realizing that this protection would require the construction of a fort led Stuyvesant to believe that relocation was both a safer and a cheaper option.

Shortly after the Dutch captured Curaçao, a Reformed minister settled on the island, and Calvinism became the island’s only tolerated religion. Goslinga remarks that a law issued as early as 1629 stated: “no other religion would be allowed to be exercised,” and that the “Roman Catholic faith was strictly taboo.” While the Catholic Indians enjoyed official protection against violence and fraud under colonial law, the colonists were not permitted to “marry Indian or Black women before and until they [were] baptized, following sufficient

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93 Goslinga, Short History, 28, 29.
95 Ibid., 8.
96 Goslinga, Short History, 34.
instruction, and incorporated into the community of Christ.” The Reformed Church was not known for its missionary efforts, but it would take little effort to assimilate the small number of Indians still left on the Leeward Islands into Dutch colonial society by baptizing them and making them members of their faith – thereby undoing their allegiance to Catholic Spain, if there was reason to believe they still had any. Stuyvesant, when he left instructions for his vice-director Matthijs Beck in 1655, underlined the necessity of converting the Indians to the Reformed religion, and noted:

So that our reformed religion and the knowledge of the trinity and the true God is more revered, esteemed and regarded by the blind Indians and so that the edifying and necessary work of instructing and teaching the children our language as well as religion may be better promoted, he is strongly advised to urge the parents to maintain their children with the schoolmaster thereto ordained.

Interestingly enough, the Dutch demonstrated an antipathy towards Catholicism that crossed cultural and racial boundaries, but which, in Curacao’s case, was mainly political. Whether the Catholics under Dutch rule were Indians, French, Portuguese, Spanish, or Dutch, did little to change the Dutch attitudes towards them. The Dutch assumed that the Catholics’ political motives differed from their own. Obviously, the counterrevolutionary activities of Catholics in the Republic had instilled an awareness of the possibility of similar activities in the colonies. The ultimate loss of New Holland justified that apprehension. New Holland stood apart in terms of religious tolerance towards the Catholics due to their overwhelming presence in that colony. On Curacao, however, the situation was very different because the Spanish Catholics had all left after they capitulated. The occasional Spaniard that happened upon Curacao’s shores was not necessarily distrusted for religious reasons, but for their allegiance to a nation with whom the Dutch were officially at war until 1648. For the Catholic Indians, however, it worked the other way around: their official status as Catholic converts led the Dutch to believe that it was very likely that they were also loyal to the Spanish Crown. On Curacao, religious affiliation to Catholicism was thus more of a political matter than anything else.

That the Dutch struggled to sustain their dwindling colony on Curacao is revealed by

97 Gehring and Schiltkamp, Curacao Papers, 5.
98 Ibid., 78.
99 Ibid., 28. On August 20, 1643, Stuyvesant voiced his fears about the possible consequences of releasing a couple of stranded Spaniards to the mainland or to Spain. The Spanish captain talked of fetching several other Roman Catholics that he knew were stranded. The colony was struggling, and Stuyvesant feared that the Spaniards would pass this information on to the Spanish authorities, who could be led to believe that Curacao
the first references to a Jewish presence on the island. After the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Curaçao had lost its function and income as a privateering base. Bereft of natural riches and a fertile soil, the island yielded very little for the Dutch, and they struggled to maintain the colony. Stuyvesant, who became the Governor-Director of both New Netherland – where he stayed during almost the entire length of his term in office – and Curaçao, envisaged setting up an intercolonial trade relation between the Leeward Antilles and New Netherland, thereby giving the former region a new raison d’État. Goslinga remarks that Stuyvesant imagined that “New Netherland [could] furnish all foodstuffs in exchange for slaves from Curaçao, horses from Aruba, and salt from Bonaire.”

However, Stuyvesant’s plans largely failed to materialize, and the Dutch had to seize any opportunity to sustain the colony. Jan Dyllan, a Jewish patroon, asked the WIC to be allowed to settle in the dwindling colony in 1651. A letter from the WIC to Stuyvesant, dated March 21, 1651, reveals that Jan Dyllan intended “to bring a considerable number of people [to Curaçao] to settle and cultivate, as he pretends, the land.”

With the rapidly changing situation in New Holland, where the Portuguese were in rebellion against the Dutch since 1645, Dyllan must have been confident that he would find enough Jewish emigrants willing to settle on Curaçao. The WIC, eager to find a remedy for the dire position the colony found itself in, welcomed Dyllan’s proposal to cultivate parts of the island. A year later, a similar proposal to that of Dyllan was issued by the Jewish settler Joseph Nuñes de Fonseca, and again the WIC consented. Despite the fact that they were allowed to settle on the island, the WIC was not particularly enthusiastic about populating the colony with Jews. In a letter to Stuyvesant dated April 4, 1652, the Company remarked: “time must show whether we shall succeed well with this nation; they are a crafty and generally treacherous people in whom therefore not too much confidence must be placed.”

The WIC’s rhetoric is surprising to say the least. The Jews had been invaluable trading partners for several decades, and their connections with Jewish merchants had opened many doors that would have otherwise remained closed. On the other hand, it underlines once more that the WIC was only accepting of Jews as long as they contributed to the economy. It

was an easy prey. Stuyvesant decided to detain the Spaniards until the opportunity presented itself to send them away to New Spain, Cuba, or to Florida, where he apparently felt they posed no threat.

100 Goslinga, Short History, 35.
101 Jan Dyllan is given many names in a variety of sources: Jean Dillan, Jean de Illan, João de Yllan, Yeoyada Dalian, Jeudah Illanes, Yohannan Ulia, Juan Dilliano, Jan de Illau, and Jan d’Yllan, to name a few. To avoid confusion, Jan Dyllan will be used throughout.
103 Ibid.
quickly became clear that this colony was not the going to be the tolerant paradise New Holland had been – at least not for the first two decades of its existence.

Unfortunately, Jan Dyllan’s activities on the island did little to change the prejudiced attitude of the WIC towards the Jews. In a letter that outlined the privileges and exemptions granted to De Fonseca, which were much the same as those granted to Dyllan, it stated that they were given one year to cultivate, and four years to populate, parts of the island hitherto not claimed by anyone else. However, the letter also explicitly stated that they “shall not be permitted to appropriate any wood chopt in behalf of the company,” nor were they allowed to chop any wood themselves.\textsuperscript{104} As Dyllan settled on the appropriated lands, it quickly became clear that he had no intention to live up to his side of the bargain. In December 1652, the WIC wrote to Lucas Rodenborch, who governed Curaçao in Stuyvesant’s absence, that:

\begin{quote}
[W]e observe that the Colonist Jean de Illan [sic] and his companions do not intend, as they said, to cultivate the land … but simply to clear it of the logwood and trade with it and horses to the Caribbean Islands … henceforth we desire that no more horses shall be exported from Buenairo, Curaçao, and Aruba, but that they shall remain there to be used in time in our province of New Netherland. We notice and receive daily information that the best horses have been taken from the Islands and that in the end there will only be left there a lot of broken down animals; on that account we shall not grant any more colonies there. \textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

The letter reveals that the Dutch made efforts to bolster intercolonial trade, but it also affirms that they were not very successful. Curaçao had very little to offer, and Dyllan was a thorn in the Company’s side as, instead of cultivating Curaçao, he exploited what little was there for his personal gain. Not only had Dyllan affirmed the Company’s prejudices, he also undermined the Company’s willingness to allow further colonization. The Chamber of Amsterdam pressed the director of the WIC that precautions should be taken so that the “fraudulent nation may not further proceed to destroy this wood and export it from the woods of the company.”\textsuperscript{106} In 1654, the conflict with Dyllan was still not resolved. Dyllan owed the Company a quite significant sum which he was trying to pay off by “selling old curtains and other old scraps of cloth for three times higher than they would cost in the fatherland.”\textsuperscript{107}

Furthermore, Stuyvesant noted that Dyllan’s “term of 4 years shall soon expire by which he must have 50 settlers or be deprived of all his privileges. He now has no more than 10 to 12 settlers for his colony, who would be gladly discharged by him to farm for the honorable

\textsuperscript{104} Cone, “Jews in Curaçao,” 149.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 150.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 148.
\textsuperscript{107} Gehring and Schiltkamp, Curaçao Papers, 59.
Company.”

The Company replied that Stuyvesant should give not Dyllan any respite, and that he should continue to try and settle the debt with him.

The negative relation with Dyllan made the Company wary in their dealings with subsequent Jews who wanted to trade with Curaçao. A Jewish merchant named Isaac de Fonseca ran into a quandary with the Company. Having arrived from Barbados with a ship laden with flour, brandy, oil, and dry goods, Isaac also brought several letters of recommendation with him, and he offered to set up a trade relation with British-owned Barbados if the Company permitted him to trade freely with the colony’s inhabitants. Quite possibly driven by their frustratingly difficult relations with Dyllan in the past, the colony’s officials voiced their concerns and wrote to the Company in 1656:

[B]y permitting of a free trade in this island not only a large part of the bleating stock of sheep and goats should be carried off and this island ere long should be left without them, but further that through the high prices and artful trading of the Jewish nation the natives of this country would soon be destitute of their bleating stock, by which they would soon be bereft of the means of subsistence to the great loss and injury of the company.

Three years later, the colonial officials were again alerted to the “artful trading of the Jewish nation” when a Jewish merchant from Jamaica wanted to trade foodstuffs and wood for a number of slaves. When Stuyvesant was informed that the Jewish merchant had managed to make a very profitable deal, he clearly stated that the Jews were not to be favored over other foreigners:

[F]or the benefit of the people on the Island, you sell negroes to the usurious Jews at a lower price than to Spaniards and other foreigners. We believe and are quite sure, that for the sake of promoting the trade between the two places, of encouraging agriculture and advancing the welfare of your subjects here, your Honors will give them, if not more, at least the same privileges and demand the same taxes, as from the usurious and covetous Jews.

From these sources it is evident that the tolerant climate of New Holland did not extend to Curaçao. From the 1630s until the 1660s, the colony found itself in a state of perpetual want of colonists, troops, and foodstuffs. This extremely challenging situation made colonial officials very rigorous in their dealings with both the Catholic Indians and Jews. The Dutch could not run the risk of blindly trusting the Catholic Indians that still lived on the

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110 Ibid., 152.
111 Ibid., 154.
island. Because of the small number of soldiers and their meagerly fortified positions, a Spanish invasion based on Indian intelligence was feasible, and a very real threat to the Dutch at the time. In time, however, these suspicions were cast aside, and a more friendly relation with the natives was developed. The Jews were met with similar trepidation. Despite the fact that the rhetoric of both the colonial officials and the WIC was oftentimes unrelenting and generalized “the Jew” as a deceitful person, the dismal state of the colony was probably what frustrated them the most. Jews such as Dyllan and De Fonseca thwarted the tireless efforts of the WIC to sustain the colony. The WIC had to be unforgiving against people who put the colony in an ever worse position. New Holland was much more accepting of Jews, but also in that colony there were colonists who voiced their dissatisfaction with Jewish involvement in the colonial economy. Nonetheless, New Holland’s Jewry were contributing to colony’s prosperity, whereas the Jews on Curaçao seem to have mainly undermined the WIC’s efforts to create a healthy and stable colony.

The cases of New Holland and Curaçao reveal that there were no set guidelines that directed the colonial officials’ approach toward religious dissent. Spaans argues that in the Republic “[a]rrangements were concluded at a local, rather than at a central level.” In the colonies, where officials were largely left to their own devices, it was much the same. Governors responded to the particular needs of their respective colonies the way city and town magistrates in the Republic responded to the particular needs of their region. This decentralization of decision-making resulted in varying degrees of religious tolerance in the Republic, and, as the previous two chapters have revealed, in the colonies. If tolerance was conducive to the economic growth of a particular region, then both the civil authorities in the Republic and the WIC in the colonies would easily allow it. On the other hand, colonial officials were at liberty to assess for themselves whether a more intolerant approach toward religious dissidents was necessary to protect the interests of the colony, as was the case on Curaçao. However, as the next chapter will reveal, there were limits to the decisions that could be concluded at a local level. As in the Republic, local authorities had to answer to a higher authority in the case of more pressing matters.

As New Holland was lost to the Portuguese in 1654, the situation for the Jews at Curaçao changed rapidly when “[t]he large number of Israelites that came from Brazil and the immense quantity of wealth they brought with them, caused the old prejudices against the

112 Spaans, “Religious policies,” 85.
Jewish nation to disappear.” \(^{113}\) Rich Jews were always welcome, and as they settled on Curaçao in ever greater numbers, and the colony became a hub in the burgeoning slave trade in the late seventeenth century, the WIC and its colonists on Curaçao grew increasingly tolerant. Despite the growing number of Jews from the 1660s onward, religious pluralism never gained a foothold on Curaçao the way it did in New Netherland. The reinstatement of the Catholic Church helped erase the traces Dutch religious pluralism in Brazil, but it was the Reformed Church that did the same on Curaçao. The Reformed Church spread to Curaçao with the intention of becoming its sole church, as it did in the other colonies. However, the fact that Curaçao was only a small island enabled the Reformed Church to be much more effective at rooting out religious dissent than in other parts of the Dutch Empire. Israel mentions that “open Catholic worship was allowed only from the 1730s and Lutheran worship not until the 1740s.” \(^{114}\)

IV

AN ABSENCE OF TOLERANCE: NEW NETHERLAND

Among the Jews that fled from Recife was a group of twenty-three Jews whose exact travails are somewhat nebulous. Many sources indicate that they fled from Recife as soon as it fell into Portuguese hands; however, evidence suggests otherwise. After he successfully wrested Pernambuco from Dutch control in 1654, the Portuguese commanding general Barreto de Menenez fully cooperated with the capitulation agreement that was written up that allowed all Dutch colonists a peaceful retreat. \(^{115}\) This included the Jewish population: “in this Agreement shall be included all nations of whatever quality or religion they may be… are all hereby pardoned from having been in rebellion… consenting that the same shall likewise apply to all the Jews who are in Recife.” \(^{116}\) David Franco Mendes who wrote a biography about Rabbi de Aguilar, and who first traveled to Brazil in 1642, revealed that the Dutch and Jewish colonists were indeed given a peaceful retreat when he wrote: “[a]nd he [de Menenez] gave permission to our brethren … to return to our country here [the Republic].” \(^{117}\) Sixteen vessels


\(^{116}\) *Accoord van Brasiliën Mede van’t Recife, Maurit's-Stadt, ende de omleggende Forten Brasil* (Amsterdam: Claes Lambrecht's. Wolf, 1654).

\(^{117}\) Oppenheim, *Early History*, 38.
carrying Dutch and Jewish settlers left for the Republic. Mendes’s account also revealed that one ship was overtaken by a Spanish raider during the voyage, but that “God caused a savior to arise onto them, the captain of a French ship, arrayed for battle, and he conducted them until … they reached New Netherland.”¹¹⁸ The French ship was a bark called the St. Charles, and the captain who saved the unfortunate passengers from the Spanish went by the name of Jacques de la Motthe. Unwilling or unable to go to the Republic, the passengers – twenty-three Jews and several Dutch colonists – consented to be brought to the colony of New Netherland in return for a payment.

Shortly after their arrival in New Netherland, the Jewish immigrants quickly learned that that De la Motthe was perhaps not the god-sent savior described by Mendes. He requested from his twenty-three Jewish passengers – men, women and children – a payment of 2,500 Guilders. Samuel Oppenheim, in his Early History of the Jews in New York, writes that a passage from the Dutch Republic to New Netherland cost roughly thirty-six Guilders, and rightfully claims that at this rate, even with twenty-three people, it would nowhere near amount to 2,500 Guilders for a voyage from somewhere in the vicinity of Recife to New Netherland.¹¹⁹ However, Oppenheim then wrongfully claims that the voyage from Recife to New Netherland is much longer than from the Republic to New Netherland, which supposedly makes up for the difference in cost.¹²⁰ In reality, the former voyage is not much longer than the latter which seems to indicate that the Jews were forced to strike a deal under duress and that De la Motthe reaped the benefits from their predicament.

After having received less than half of what he requested, De la Motthe refused to leave matters as they were and insisted that the Jews had to repay what they owed him. The Jews soon learned that this Dutch colony was nothing like New Holland. De la Motthe requested that, “whatever furniture and other property they may have on his Bark … be publicly sold … in payment of their debt.”¹²¹ It is unclear whether De la Motthe acted out of hatred toward Jews or simply because he saw an opportunity to make money, but the court proceedings reveal an antagonistic stance toward these twenty-three Jewish refugees. At the conclusion of the last meeting, the Jews were given several days to settle the debt with De la Motthe after which they would be called to court again.¹²² Stuyvesant was probably aware of

¹¹⁸ Oppenheim, Early History, 38.
¹¹⁹ Ibid., 47.
¹²⁰ Ibid., 48.
¹²² “Extraordinary Meeting, holden on Wednesday the 16th September, 1654, at the City Hall,” Records of New Netherland (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1896), translated by Berthold Fernow, 244.
the impossibility of his requests as the Jews had nowhere to turn to pay for the remainder of the debt and it would take several months to receive word and money from any gracious Jew in Amsterdam willing to help them out.

Stuyvesant’s actions against the poor Jewish refugees mirrored the wariness of Amsterdam’s patriciate, but he was also driven by a staunch orthodox Calvinist doctrine. A year before the twenty-three Jews arrived in New Amsterdam, two Jews from the Republic settled in the colony, and they did not run into any problems with Stuyvesant. Jacob Barsimson and Solomon Pietersen had “some capital and … passports giving them full permission to land and to trade in the colony, [and] their Jewishness was not an issue to Stuyvesant.”123 The group that arrived a year later; however, were left with no belongings and soon proved to be a burden to the colony. In New Netherland this burden invoked the kind of intolerance that the Jews in Amsterdam faced with regard to the burden of poor relief in their community. Reverend Megalopensis, reminiscing the events of 1654 in a letter which he sent a year later, reveals that he, and possibly some other wealthy colonists, had given money to the Jews to sustain them since the legal issues with De la Motthe had rendered them penniless.124 As with De la Motthe, Megalopensis’s seemingly accommodating actions were not what they seemed. Megalopensis’s orthodox visions were similar to Stuyvesant’s intolerant stance towards having Jews in the colony, when he stated: “[t]hey came several times to my house, weeping and bewailing misery, and when I directed them to the Jewish merchant they said he would not lend them a single stiver.”125 The Jewish merchant – who, Megalopensis argued, should have taken care of the Jewish refugees – is thought to be Jacob Barsimson, but he could never have sustained twenty-three refugees by himself.126

In his letter, Megalopensis revealed the true reason of the grudge against the Jews. It was not so much their Jewishness that bothered the colonial officials, but their poverty. As on Curaçao at the time, New Netherland was in dire need of colonists that would cultivate the land and contribute to the colony. Anyone that threatened to undermine these efforts was not met with a warm welcome. On Curaçao and in New Netherland, the officials, however, referred to the Jews’ inherent deceitfulness and blasphemous religion as excuses for their underlying economic motives. Despite these underlying motives, however, Megalopensis’s view of Judaism, one that was shared by many orthodox Calvinists in the Republic, is telling:

123 Hertzberg, Jews in America, 9.
124 Johannes Megalopensis, “Letter to the Classis, the Governing Board of the Dutch Reformed Church in Amsterdam, March 18, 1655” (New Netherland Papers, Bontemantel Collection, 1655).
125 Ibid.
“[t]hese people have no other God than the unrighteous Mammon, and no other aim than to get possession of Christian property, and to win all other merchants by drawing all trade towards themselves.” Megalopensis then continued his letter by stating that the colony was already populated by a wide variety of religious dissidents, and that “it would create a still greater confusion, if the obstinate and immovable Jews can also settle here.”

The arrival of the Jewish refugees, and the supposed arrival of more Jews in subsequent years, caused distress in the colony. Megalopensis wrote that the Jewish refugees had mentioned that “many more of [them] would follow, and [that they would then] build here a synagogue,” and he continued that “among the congregation [this caused] a great deal of complaint and murmuring.” Haefeli argues that “throughout their tenure, the Dutch displayed a tenacious support for the supremacy of the Dutch Reformed Church, and a deep disinclination to foster religious diversity.” Compared to New Holland and Curaçao, the Reformed Church in New Netherland was much more influential. Johan Maurits realized that religious tolerance was conducive to the aims of the WIC, and he largely ignored the Reformed Church’s calls for greater restrictions. Stuyvesant, however, had a much stronger affiliation to the Reformed Church. Haefeli mentions that “Stuyvesant rested on years of theorizing and polemicizing by [orthodox Calvinists] over how to reconcile Calvinist aspirations with the Union of Utrecht.” For Stuyvesant, the freedom of conscience “had clear spatial limits, namely, the interior (spiritual, intellectual, and physical) of the individual.” Permitting outward manifestations of dissent religious practice stood in diametric opposition to his orthodox beliefs. In this respect, a synagogue was the most visible representation of religious dissent. The construction of synagogues in New Holland and the Republic, roughly two decades earlier, could not have escaped Stuyvesant’s attention. It is quite possible that Stuyvesant and Megalopensis feared that the WIC would consent to the construction of a synagogue if the Jews in the colony became more numerous. As will become evident, Stuyvesant could arrange matters in the colony to his own insight, but he still had to answer to the WIC.

After De la Motthe had been satisfied in his demands, and the court cases came to an end on September 17, 1654, Stuyvesant needed only five days to reach the conclusion that he

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128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Haefeli, *Dutch Origins*, 284.
131 Ibid., 45.
should strive to expel Jews from the colony. Stuyvesant, using rhetoric similar to Megalopensis’s, asked the Company if he could banish the Jews from the colony. Stuyvesant’s words reflect a deep contempt for Jews and Judaism: “the deceitful race – such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ – [should not be] allowed further to infect and trouble this new colony.” Stranded on a continent that had only seen Jewish people on a few occasions, and in a colony that proved to be very intolerant towards dissidents, the Jewish refugees faced the unexpected reality of being subjected to a governor who sought to expel them, and who branded these perennial scapegoats as “Christ-killers.”

The Jewish refugees were well aware of the powerful position of the Jews in Amsterdam, and they asked them to coax the WIC to take steps against Stuyvesant. In January 1655, the Jews in Amsterdam that were involved in trade with the WIC, after having received word of Stuyvesant’s unfair treatment of the Jews in New Netherland, penned a petition in which they claimed that the Jews had been loyal subjects of the Republic for many decades, and that they had become principal shareholders in the WIC. Also, the Jewish merchants in Amsterdam argued that the Jewish nation in New Holland, like the WIC itself, had incurred heavy losses in terms of capital after the colony was lost to the Portuguese. Ultimately, “the petitioners [requested] … that your Honors be pleased not to exclude but to grant the Jewish nation passage to and residence in that country; otherwise this would result in a great prejudice to their reputation.” The strong language of the Jewish merchants in Amsterdam reveals the degree to which they could press the Company to take action on their behalf.

The reaction of the WIC to Stuyvesant’s course of action underlined the influence of the Jews in Amsterdam, and that commercial interests both abroad and at home triumphed over religious interests. A month after Megalopensis wrote his letter to the classis in Amsterdam complaining about the Jewish presence, the WIC replied in April 1655. The WIC’s wording reflected the prevailing religious climate of Calvinist orthodoxy, when they stated that, “[they] would have liked to … fulfill [Stuyvesant’s] wishes … for [they] foresee … the same difficulties [he fears].” The letter concluded, however, that the WIC observed “that [it] would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by this nation [the Jewish community] … in the [Portuguese re-]taking of Brazil.”

132 Peter Stuyvesant, “Letter to the Amsterdam Chamber of Directors, September 22, 1654” (New Netherland Papers, Bontemantel Collection, 1654).
133 “Amsterdam Jewry’s Successful Intercession for the Manhattan Immigrants, January 1655,” The Jew In the Atlantic World, edited by Jacob Rader Marcus (Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP, 1996), 32.
134 Ibid.
135 “The West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant, April 26, 1655,” The Jew In the Atlantic World, edited by Jacob Rader Marcus, Detroit (MI: Wayne State UP, 1996), 32.
In the letter the WIC acknowledged the claim of the Jews in Amsterdam that they were principal shareholders of the company. The letter reveals that safeguarding their commercial interests was the WIC’s primary objective despite the fact that they might have agreed with Stuyvesant. The WIC attempted to nullify anything that could undermine the accumulation of wealth in the colonies or their powerful position in Amsterdam, which entailed a good understanding with dissident groups. The Jews in New Netherland, after Stuyvesant had been reprimanded, could trade, settle and travel freely, but they faced restrictions and obligations similar to those affecting the Jews in Amsterdam and New Holland: “the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community. [In the future poor Jews would not be supported by the Manhattan churches], but be supported by their own nation.”

From the court proceedings in subsequent years it is evident that the relation between the Jews and Stuyvesant remained complicated. It is true that the Jews were allowed to stay and could work and trade, but they faced restrictions that only applied to them. Stuyvesant’s actions seem to have rubbed off on the colonists, because the prevailing sentiment towards the Jews was not very obliging. In a letter dated August 28, 1655, Stuyvesant requested the Company to allow him to exempt the Jews from guard duty, because of the “aversion and disaffection of this militia to be fellow soldiers of the [Jewish nation],” and to “prevent further discord, that the aforesaid nation shall remain exempt from general expedition and guard duties … on the condition that each male above the age of 16 and under 60 years old shall contribute sixty-five stivers every month for the aforesaid freedom.” Stuyvesant's decision becomes even more painful in light of what happened a year earlier. The Jews themselves were willing to fulfill the duties required of them just like any other colonist, but Stuyvesant simply denied them equal treatment and requested payment in return – even though their economic situation probably did not improve much over the course of a single year. A petition written by two Jews, several months later, affirmed that they indeed suffered under the resolution passed by Stuyvesant. The Jews requested “to be permitted to keep guard with other burghers, or be free from the tax which others of their nation pay, as they must earn their living by manual labor,” but Stuyvesant dismissed their complaints and upheld the resolution he passed two months earlier. Even though Stuyvesant was rebuffed by the Company, he continued to govern New Netherland the way he saw fit and he showed no inclination to make life easy for the Jews.

137 Ibid., 81.
Despite the fact that, as penniless colonists, the Jews were a burden to the colony, Stuyvesant not only requested payment in exchange for exemption from guard duties, but he also deliberately frustrated their trade efforts. A petition, dated February 15, 1655, reveals how three Jews complained that, despite the fact that they were granted “permission and consent … to sail, live, and trade, and to enjoy the same freedom,” in reality they were obstructed in doing so. In the petition, the Jews wrote the following:

[We] humbly request that your honors will not prevent and hinder [the Jews] therein, but be pleased to allow and consent that … they may be allowed, along with other inhabitants of this province, to sail and trade there and in the South River of New Netherland, Fort Orange, and other places located within the district of this government of New Netherland.

The reaction of the colonial council is very telling. Stuyvesant’s advice simply read: “[t]o recommend that the petition be denied for important reasons.” Stuyvesant did not even take the time to elaborate on his reasons for denying the Jews rights that were extended to them in a document signed by him. De Sille, another official on the council, stated that he “would not like to go against the orders of the lords directors,” and La Montagne produced exactly the same advice as Stuyvesant. Van Tienhoven, the last official to reply to the petition, revealed that granting the Jews permission to “go to the South River and Fort Orange … [would] be very injurious to the commonalty and population of the aforesaid places.”

The advice of the colonial officials not only underline Stuyvesant’s unquestionable authority, but they also demonstrate that Stuyvesant did everything in his power to favor other colonists over the Jews. Curaçao was also governed by Stuyvesant, and all correspondence of the WIC concerning matters on Curaçao went through him. Stuyvesant would then send his advice, or that of the WIC, to his vice-director who was responsible for the execution of the course of action dictated by them. In his approach toward the Jews on Curaçao and in New Netherland, Stuyvesant repeatedly demonstrated an antipathy toward them and their religion. Haefeli argues that if “the Dutch [would have] kept New Netherland in 1664 or 1674, there is little indication that it would have developed the liberal diversity of Amsterdam. A more likely comparison is the constrained pluralism of Zeeland.”

New Netherland completes the picture of Dutch religious tolerance in the Atlantic

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138 Fernow, Records of New Amsterdam, 128.
139 Ibid., 149.
140 Ibid., 150.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 128.
world. As mentioned earlier, Frijhof argues that “tolerance for Jews outside of Amsterdam was virtually non-existent.”\textsuperscript{144} In the colonial context, toleration of Jews was virtually non-existent outside of New Holland until the 1660s. By this time, the acceptance of Jews was already firmly rooted in the Republic. Stuyvesant, however, held both Curaçao and New Netherland firmly in his grip. Stuyvesant and the Reformed Church would have liked to purify New Netherland of religious dissent. The WIC, however, deemed it unwise to upset the relations with the Jewish merchants in Amsterdam by allowing Stuyvesant to go his own way. Stuyvesant grudgingly accepted the WIC’s orders, which forced him to allow the Jews to settle, trade, and travel freely, but he obstructed them at every turn for the duration of the colony’s existence.

CONCLUSION

As early as the nineteenth century, Robert Fruin, a nineteenth-century Dutch historian, remarked that the inherent love of freedom of the Dutch “did not necessarily translate into ‘liberality’, a willingness to grant others the freedom you demand for yourself, citing as an example the way the Dutch ruled their colonies.”\textsuperscript{145} Dutch historians of the twentieth century have mostly failed to correct Fruin’s ideas by extending their discussion on religious tolerance to New Holland and Curaçao. In American discourse, there has been a tendency to make generalized claims about Dutch religious tolerance in the Western Hemisphere by just looking at New Netherland. Haefeli’s recent work does acknowledge the importance of adopting a trans-Atlantic perspective when discussing religious tolerance in New Netherland. However, his work largely ignores the ulterior motives for tolerance which have become increasingly important aspects in more recent discussions on Dutch religious tolerance. Another key element of revisionist discourse on tolerance in the Republic is regional difference. Haefeli does not fail to remark that regional differences in the degree of religious tolerance in the Dutch Empire existed, but he addresses New Holland and Curaçao far too briefly to be able to make a strong argument.

So far, there have been no attempts to look at Dutch religious tolerance from a trans-Atlantic and cross-colonial perspective by discussing the Republic, New Holland, and New Netherland at equal length. Doing so compels the scholar to renegotiate several

\textsuperscript{143} Haefeli, \textit{Dutch Origins}, 284.
\textsuperscript{144} Frijhoff, “Religious toleration,” 33.
\textsuperscript{145} Hsia, \textit{Calvinism}, 18.
preconceptions about Dutch religious tolerance in general. While it is true that Stuyvesant did indeed govern New Netherland as an orthodox Calvinist, this is but an episode in a much larger story, and it deserves to be offset by the tolerant climate that was allowed to prevail in New Holland under Johan Maurits’s rule. Interestingly enough, Curaçao, where an initial period of intolerance was followed by a successive period in which the Dutch became increasingly tolerant, finds itself balancing the other two colonies in terms of religious tolerance. These regional differences in the degree and nature of religious tolerance in the colonies also existed in the Republic. Holland set an irreversibly tolerant course as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, while other provinces, such as Groningen and Zeeland, were not welcoming of religious dissent for much of the century.

Besides similar regional differences, the underlying motives for the restriction or extension of religious tolerance was also very similar in both the Republic and in the colonies. In the Republic, there was a distinct religious hierarchy dominated by the Reformed Church. The Catholics found themselves ostracized in this clear-cut religious landscape for at least the first half of the seventeenth century due to their earlier efforts to subvert the politico-religious order. That order came into existence in the decades following the inception of the Revolt, and it was cemented in Dutch society with the orthodox Calvinist victory at the Synod of Dordrecht. Disallowing the Catholics to unite in their opposition of Dutch Calvinism protected the political status quo and preserved the peace in the Republic. Even though the Catholics also benefited from the religiously tolerant climate prevalent in the Republic which allowed them to practice their faith in private, their political opposition was effectively rooted out. The Catholic Indians on Curaçao aroused similar political suspicion. As in the Republic during the early years of the Revolt, the Dutch were fearful that the Indian converts would conspire against the Dutch by passing on valuable information to the enemy. In New Holland, where the Dutch were fearful that severe restrictions on the Catholic majority would be counterproductive to their aims, it was the exact opposite. There, religious tolerance was conducive to social peace and stability. While it can be argued that the Dutch were too tolerant and brought about their own demise, it is a fact that Johan Maurits managed to turn a colony in ruin into a prosperous one towards the end of his term. The acceptance of both Catholicism and Judaism was certainly a contributing factor in that respect.

Another important underlying motive was commerce, and the story of the Jews in both the Republic and in the colonies is intimately linked to that side of Dutch religious tolerance and intolerance. The seventeenth-century Dutch Empire was inherently commercial, and time and time again the Dutch found themselves driven by the prospect of greater wealth; religious
tolerance towards the Jews in the Republic and its colonies was inextricably bound to this drive in both a negative and a positive sense. The Jews in the Republic, isolated from the rest of society, fostered warm relations with Amsterdam’s patriciate, and they enjoyed a degree of religious tolerance that the Catholics would not be allowed to enjoy for quite some time. The Jews were of chief importance in the sugar trade, and they benefited from the prevalence of commercial interests over religious ones. The merchants in Amsterdam made sure that the civil authorities would turn a blind eye to Jewish religious practice, while they kept in check the Calvinist clergy, who wanted to clamp down harder on Judaism. Acceptance of the Jewish community extended to New Holland, where they were given even more rights, and they were allowed to build a synagogue three years before Amsterdam was home to one. The Jews, however, also experienced the downside of economics as a factor in the degree of tolerance. Curaçao’s seemingly untenable position invoked suspicion and intolerance, and, in the first two decades of Dutch rule, there were many parallels to be drawn to the way in which dissenters were treated in New Netherland. New Netherland did not find itself in a similar predicament as Curaçao, but it never thrived like New Holland. New Netherland, however, was subjected to Stuyvesant’s direct rule, and he tried to do everything in his power to save the colony from the corrupting influence of religious dissent – especially when these dissenters had to be supported by the colony. On Curaçao, the Jews were at first welcomed to settle, albeit under false pretenses. New Netherland also struggled with its small population, but Stuyvesant seemed more willing to settle for having fewer colonists than to allow twenty-three burdensome Jews to make the colony their home.

Religious tolerance proved to be a useful tool for preventing civil unrest and for strengthening commercial ties. Nonetheless, the degree of religious tolerance that existed in the Republic from the 1630s until the 1660s was not found on Curaçao, at least not until the late 1650s, and it was never found in New Netherland. While it is very important to bring New Holland into the equation because it both corrects and completes the picture of Dutch attitudes towards religious dissenters in the colonies, the brief period of remarkable tolerance under Johan Maurits’s rule does not support arguments that the Dutch were more or equally tolerant abroad. Furthermore, the Jesuits experienced first-hand that even New Holland was no stranger to religious intolerance. The situation in the colonies was decidedly more complex than the situation in the Republic at the time, and the WIC, in each of the colonies, was forced to renegotiate the ways in which they dealt with religious dissent. Nonetheless, as this study has shown, the framework of revisionist discourse on tolerance in the Republic fits the colonial context very well. This underlines the existence of a decidedly Dutch approach
toward religious tolerance. Whether it was the WIC in the colonies or the secular authorities in the Republic that decided on the degree of tolerance that was allowed to prevail, the mechanisms of that tolerance were the same in the entire Dutch Atlantic world.
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