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## **Globalization and the free exercise of religion worldwide**

- José Casanova

If by globalization we mean, in its objective dimension, the process of increasing interconnectedness of all societies, peoples, and cultures of the world and, in its subjective dimension, the growing reflexive awareness of belonging to one single global imagined community that inhabits one single global space and shares the same global time, then it should be obvious that religions and particularly the so-called “world religions” are today and have always been dynamically interrelated in manifold ways with processes of globalization.

Trans-societal migrations and the world religions, at times separately but often in conjunction with each other, have always served as important carriers of processes of globalization throughout human history. As you can see, I am using a very broad and expansive definition of globalization. In a certain sense, one could argue that the successive waves of migration of *homo sapiens* out of Africa some 50,000 years ago and the subsequent settlements throughout the globe constitute the point of departure of the process of globalization. But these migrations had no subjective dimension of reflexive consciousness and can only now be reconstructed objectively thanks to advances in DNA and other scientific technologies. By contrast, the subjective dimension of imagining a single humanity sharing the same global space and the same global time was first anticipated in all universalistic world religions. Yet, these imaginary, and thus utopian anticipations, while serving as preconditions for the civilizational expansion of the world religions lacked an structural, i.e. objective and material global base. Until very recently,

the civilizational *oikoumenē* of all world religions had very clear territorial limits, set by the very world regimes in which those religions were civilizationally and thus territorially embedded and by the geographically circumscribed limitations of the existing means of communication. The Bishop of Rome may have always claimed to speak *urbi et orbi*, to the city and to the globe. But in fact this has become a reality first in the 20th century.

What constitutes the truly novel aspect of the present global condition is precisely the fact that all religions can be reconstituted for the first time as de-territorialized global imagined communities, detached from the civilizational settings in which they have been traditionally embedded. Paraphrasing Arjun Appadurai's image of "modernity at large", one could say that the world religions, through the linking of electronic mass media and mass migration, are being reconstituted as de-territorialized global religions "at large." For that very reason, Huntington's thesis of the impending clash of civilizations is simultaneously illuminating of the present global condition and profoundly misleading. It is illuminating in so far as it was one of the first prominent voices calling attention to the increasing relevance of civilizations and civilizational identities in the emerging global order and in global conflicts. But it is also profoundly misleading insofar as it still conceives of civilizations as territorial geopolitical units, akin to superpowers, having some world religion as its cultural core. While by no means anachronistic, indeed the tragic events of September 11 and the ensuing global war on terror demonstrate the extent to which the thesis of the clash of civilizations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, nevertheless such a conception misses the fact that what is characteristically novel of the present global condition is the emerging dissociation of world religions, civilizational identities and geopolitical territories.

This process of dissociation is by no means uniform or homogeneous across world religions and civilizations, and indeed it encounters much resistance on the part of states which still aspire not only to the monopolistic control of the means of violence but also to the administrative regulation of religious groups and cultural identities over their territories, as well as on the part of “churches”, in the broad Weberian sense of the term, as religious institutions which claim or aspire to religious monopoly over their civilizational or national territories. Much of the problematic debates over religious fundamentalist resistance to secular modernity, as well as the conflicts, sometimes violent, over religious liberty, are related to those issues.

There is a fundamental tension in the modern world between two well-recognized principles. There is on the one hand the principle of the inalienable right of the individual person to freedom of conscience and therefore to freedom of religion, but also to freedom of conversion. This principle has assumed in all modern democratic societies the form of an unquestioned universal human right. Nobody should be coerced or forced to believe or not to believe any particular religious doctrine. Consequently, everybody has also the right to believe or not to believe any particular religious doctrine, including the right to conversion to any particular religion. On the other hand, there is also the increasing recognition of the collective rights of peoples to protect and preserve their traditions and their cultures from colonial, imperialist and predatory practices. Such recognition is primarily enshrined in United Nations documents on the rights of indigenous people. But it could easily be turned into a general principle of the reciprocal rights and duties of all peoples of the world to respect each other’s traditions and cultures, constituting the basis of what could be called an emerging global denominationalism.

Human rights, including the right to religious freedom, are presently in the process of becoming globalized. But the fact that religious freedom is becoming a universal aspiration does not mean that religious freedom means necessarily everywhere the same thing. It may mean different things in different countries, in different cultures and in different religious traditions, and these different meanings may be in conflict with one another. Policies intended to implement international religious freedom may conflict with other cultures' understanding of religious freedom, and will be resisted accordingly.

We need to be culturally sensitive to the fact that the individualist principle of free exercise of religion may be in fundamental tension with the collective principle of the free exercise of the religious culture of one's own group. Indeed, global public opinion surveys show that the overwhelming majority of the population in practically every country surveyed and in every religious culture, Christian as well as Jewish, Muslim as well as Hindu, affirm that freedom of religion is very important to them. In this respect, one may speak of a growing global consensus over the principle of free exercise of religion. Yet, it should be obvious that Christians and Jews, Hindus and Muslims may have very different cultural conceptions of what the free exercise of religion may entail. Increasingly, Christians understand this principle as an inalienable individual human right to freedom of conscience, to freedom of conversion and to freedom to proselytize. This is the taken for granted cultural understanding of the term, religious liberty, by most people, religious as well as secular, in most Western societies. Jews and Hindus, by contrast, who share a cultural conception of their religion as natal, namely one into which one is born, have a very different understanding of the principle of free exercise, as the right and duty to preserve their tradition, and have less appreciation for the right of

conversion, i.e., to be “born again,” or for the right to proselytize. Muslims have a deep appreciation for the fundamental right to exercise their own religion freely, without any external coercion, but show very little cultural understanding, much less support, for the right to conversion away from Islam, which they view as grave apostasy from the true faith. Simplifying one could say, “once a Muslim always a Muslim.” Moreover, since according to Muslim doctrine once upon a time before the “fall into ignorance” all humans were Muslim, conversion can only mean reversion to the true faith. Anything else can only mean renewed fall into ignorance and unbelief, i.e., *jahiliya*.

Or take the Chinese cultural definition. The overwhelming majority of Han Chinese, in mainland China or throughout the Chinese diasporas, including the United States, when asked to identify their “religion” usually choose the “none” category. That means, the majority of Chinese have no religious affiliation, do not belong to any religious denomination, and in this sense have “no religion,” But this does not mean that they may not be deeply “religious.” Indeed on any given day they may have offered prayers or practiced rituals of various “religious” traditions indiscriminately: they may have offered incense and showed reverence to their ancestors in their home altar, practiced *qigong* exercises in an open public space, entered a Buddhist temple on the way to work, and participated in some Christian prayer after work.

Clearly, we are dealing here with very different phenomena which we may be classifying under the category of “religion.” The difficulties of formulating a satisfying general definition of religion, not to speak of the even more serious difficulties of constructing an adequate general theory of religion are well-known. In fact, while the social sciences, particularly the sociology of religion, as well as legal scholars and most

people in the West, still function with a relatively unreflexive general category of religion, within the newer discipline of "religious studies" the very category of religion has undergone numerous challenges, as well as all kinds of critical genealogical deconstructions. There has been much debate in the last two decades concerning the competing genealogies of the "modern" category of religion, and its complex relation to the pluralization of Christian confessions and denominations, to the Western colonial expansion and the encounter with the religious "other," to the triumph of "secular reason," the hegemony of the secular state, and the disciplinary institutionalization of the scientific study of religion, as well as to the Western "invention of the world religions" and the classificatory taxonomies of religion which have now become globalized.<sup>1</sup>

Less disputed is the fact that "religion" in its contemporary usage is a modern Western Christian secular category. As Talal Asad has pointed out, "the historical process of secularization effects a remarkable ideological inversion.... For at one time 'the secular' was a part of a theological discourse (*saeculum*)," while later "the religious" is constituted by secular political and scientific discourses, so that "religion" itself as a historical category and as a universal globalized concept emerges as a construction of Western secular modernity.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the globalization of the category of "religion" and of the binary classification of reality, "religious/secular," which it entails is one of the most important global trends, itself both a carrier and an effect of globalization.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Hans Kippenberg, *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Originally published as *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte: Religionswissenschaft und Moderne* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997); Tomoko Mazusawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); Russel McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 269-284 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Hent de Vries, ed. *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) p. 192.

It is therefore appropriate to begin a discussion of global religious and secular trends with the recognition of a paradox, namely that scholars of religion are questioning the validity of the category of "religion," at the very same moment when the discursive reality of religion is more widespread than ever and has become for the first time global.<sup>3</sup> I am not claiming that people today everywhere are either more or less religious than they may have been in the past. Here I am bracketing out altogether the question which has dominated most theories of secularization, namely whether religious beliefs and practices are declining or growing as a general modern trend throughout the world. I am only claiming that "religion" as a discursive reality, indeed as an abstract category and as a system of classification of reality, used by modern individuals as well as by modern societies across the world, by religious as well as by secular authorities, has become an undisputable global social fact.

It is obvious that when people around the world use the same category of religion they actually mean very different things. The actual concrete meaning of whatever people denominate as "religion" can only be elucidated in the context of their particular discursive practices, namely what counts and does not count as religion, to which kind of diverse phenomena (beings as well as things, groups and institutions, beliefs, practices and experiences) we may attach the attribute or qualifyer "religious." Included in this latter "we" are not only us, scholars of religion or legal scholars, but all the religious practitioners (religious elites as well as ordinary people) who denominate what they do, what they believe, or what they experience as being somehow "religious," but also all the secular political authorities (legislators, judges and administrators) as well as citizens who have to make constantly decisions concerning what, when and where something is

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Beyer, *Religions in Global Society* (London: Routledge, 2006).

constitutionally protected or prohibited precisely for being or not being "religious." After all, practically every state constitution in the world today makes some reference to religion, to religious freedom or to the freedom to believe or not to believe.

The very fact that the same category of religion is being used globally across cultures and civilizations testifies to the global expansion of the modern secular-religious system of classification of reality which first emerged in the modern Christian West. This implies the need to reflect more critically upon this particular modern system of classification, without taking it for granted as a general universal system. Moreover, while the religious/secular system of classification of reality may have become globalized, what remains hotly disputed and debated almost everywhere in the world today is how, where, and by whom the proper boundaries between the religious and the secular ought to be drawn. There are in this respect multiple competing secularisms, as there are multiple and diverse forms of religious fundamentalist resistance to those secularisms. For example, American, French, Turkish, Indian and Chinese secularism, to name only some paradigmatic and distinctive modes of drawing the boundaries between the religious and the secular, represent not only very different patterns of separation of the secular state and religion, but very different models of state regulation and management of religion and of religious pluralism in society.<sup>4</sup>

I propose that we think of processes of secularization, of religious transformations and revivals, and of processes of sacralization as ongoing mutually constituted global processes, rather than as mutually exclusive developments. Much of the difficulty in analyzing processes of secularization, religious transformation and sacralization in our

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policy toward Religion. The United States, France, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

global age as simultaneous rather than as mutually exclusive processes derives from the tendency to use the dichotomous analytical categories sacred/profane, transcendent/immanent, and religious/secular, as if they were synonymous and interchangeable, when in fact they correspond to historically distinctive, somewhat overlapping but not synonymous or equivalent social systems of classification. The sacred tends to be immanent in pre-axial societies, transcendence is not necessarily religious in some axial civilizations, and obviously much contemporary secular reality (the nation, citizenship, the individual, inalienable rights to life and freedom) tends to be sacred in our modern secular age.

In other words, the modern “secular” is by no means synonymous with the “profane” nor is the “religious” synonymous with the modern “sacred.” Only “the social as religious” is synonymous with the sacred in Durkheimian terms. In this respect, modern secularization entails a certain profanation of religion through its privatization and individualization and a certain sacralization of the secular spheres of politics (sacred nation, sacred citizenship, sacred constitution), science (temples of knowledge), and economics (commodity fetishism). But the truly modern sacralization, which constitutes the emerging global civil religion is what Durkheim already announced at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as “the cult of the individual” and the sacralization of humanity through the globalization of human rights.

In this context, Durkheim was simply following a long line of Enlightenment prophets, Saint-Simon and Comte being the most prominent among them, who had assumed that a new religion of humanity would sooner or later replace the old theocentric religions. The triumph and the global expansion of human rights doctrines and

movements seem to confirm at least part of their visions. What none of these prophets and founding fathers of positivist sociology could have anticipated however was the fact that, paradoxically, the old gods and the old religions, whose death Durkheim announced, were going to gain new life by becoming the carriers of the process of sacralization of humanity.

The transformation of Catholicism in the second half of the twentieth century offers the most obvious illustration. The Catholic Church had consistently condemned modern notions of human rights since their emergence at the time of the American and French revolutions. Pope Pius VI viewed the Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French National Assembly as a direct attack on the Catholic Church. His 1791 papal Brief *Caritas* condemned the Declaration, stating that the formulation of the rights to freedom of religion and freedom of the press, as well as the Declaration on the Equality of all Men were contrary to the divine principles of the Church.<sup>5</sup> Pope Gregory XVI reiterated the condemnation in his encyclicals *Mirari vos* (1832) and *Singulari nos* (1834). Pius IX included the principle of human rights and most modern freedoms in the *Syllabus* (1864) of errors, pronouncing them anathema and irreconcilable with the Catholic faith. The principle of religious freedom was particularly odious since it implied making equal the true religion and the false ones, as well as the separation of church and state.

Only in the 1960's, as part of the *aggiornamento*, did the Catholic Church accept at last human rights doctrines. John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) first adopted the modern discourse of human rights, which has remained thereafter part of

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<sup>5</sup>José Casanova, "The Sacralization of the *Humanum*: A Theology for a Global Age," in *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 13:1, Fall 1999, pp. 21-40.

every papal encyclical and of most episcopal pastoral letters. Papal pronouncements have consistently presented the protection of the human rights of every person as the moral foundation of a just social and political order, the substitution of dialogue and peaceful negotiation for violent confrontation as the means of resolving conflicts and just grievances between peoples and states, and universal human solidarity as the foundation for the construction of a just and fair national as well as international division of labor and a just and legitimate world order.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, while earlier encyclicals were usually addressed to the Catholic faithful, beginning with *Pacem in Terris* the popes have tended to address their pronouncements to the entire world and to all people.

The Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, recognized the inalienable right of every individual to freedom of conscience, based on the **sacred** dignity of the human person. Thereafter the popes became untiring world travelers proclaiming everywhere the sacred dignity of the human person. Particularly, John Paul II denominated himself *defensor hominis*, the self-appointed spokesman of humanity. In this respect, the pope learned to play, perhaps more effectively than any competitor, the role of first citizen of a catholic, i.e., global and universal human society. One could almost say that the popes want to assume the role of high priest of a new global civil religion of humanity.

One can find within all religious traditions generally similar yet particularly different processes of adjustment and response to processes of globalization. Indeed each

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<sup>6</sup> See, Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (New York: Doubleday, 1985); David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); David Hollenbach, ed., *Human Rights in the Americas: The Struggle for Consensus* (Washington, D.C.: Woodstock Theological Center, 1981).

world religion is being constituted on the global level through similar interrelated processes of particularistic differentiation, universalistic claims, and mutual recognition. In this respect, as Roland Robertson has emphasized, universal particularism and particular universalism are intrinsically interrelated and inherent to processes of globalization.<sup>7</sup> Each “world religion” claims its universal right to be unique and different, thus its particularism, while at the same time presenting itself globally as a universal path for all of humanity. Global denominationalism emerges through a process of mutual recognition of the particular and universal claims.

It is the proliferation of de-territorialized transnational global imagined communities, or global ummas, encompassing the so-called old world religions as well as many new forms of hybrid globalized religions such as the Bahais, Moonies, Hare Krishnas, Afro-American religions, Falun Gong, etc, that I call the emerging global denominationalism. Of course, they compete with many other forms of secular imagined communities or ummas, as well as with modern nationalism. The emerging global denominationalism, in this respect, includes religious as well as secular denominations. By denominationalism, I simply mean a system of mutual recognition of groups within society, which is not regulated by the state. It is the name we give to ourselves and the name by which others recognize us. Indeed, what is distinctive of the American system of religious denominationalism is precisely that it is not state regulated, that it is voluntary, and that it is a system of mutual recognition of group identities. People in the

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<sup>7</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), and Roland Robertson and JoAnn Chirico, “Humanity, Globalization, Worldwide Religious Resurgence: A Theoretical Explanation,” *Sociological Analysis*, 46, 1985, 219-42.

United States are constantly inquiring about each others denominations. Yet the state has no right to inquiry about the denomination of its citizens.

The American constitutional formula challenged the notion, taken for granted and shared at the time by religionists and secularists (deists) alike, that the state or the political community of citizens needed a religion, ecclesiastical or civil, as the base of its normative integration and that, moreover, it was the business of the sovereign to regulate the religious sphere. The First Amendment raised not only a “wall of separation” protecting the state from religion (no establishment) and religion from the state (free exercise), but actually established a principle of differentiation between the political community of citizens and any and all religious communities. Eventually, all religions in America, churches as well as sects, irrespective of their origins, doctrinal claims, and ecclesiastical identities, would turn into “denominations,” formally equal under the Constitution and competing in a relatively free, pluralistic, and voluntaristic religious market. As the organizational form and principle of such a religious system, denominationalism constitutes the great American religious invention.

At first, this diversity and substantial equality was institutionalized only as internal denominational religious pluralism within American Protestantism. America was defined as a “Christian” nation and Christian meant solely “Protestant.” But eventually, after prolonged outbursts of Protestant nativism, directed primarily at Catholic immigrants, the pattern allowed for the incorporation of the religious others, Catholics and Jews, into the system of American religious pluralism. A process of dual accommodation took place, whereby Catholicism and Judaism became American

religions, while American religion and the nation were equally transformed in the process.

I would venture to say that there is no religion anywhere in the world that has not taken root at least individually but also most likely communally somewhere in the United States. Non-Western immigrant religions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, are taking roots and becoming American religions in the same way as Catholicism and Judaism became eventually after much resistance incorporated into Protestant Christian America and into the denominational system, as American religious denominations.

In this respect, to a certain extent the United States may be said to be anticipating developments which are also happening at a global level. Parallel to the general process of secularization which started as a historical process of internal secularization within Western Christendom, but was later globalized through the European colonial expansion, there is a process of constitution of a global system of “religions” which can best be understood as a process of global religious denominationalism. Like the internal denominationalism in the United States, global denominationalism is emerging as a self-regulated system of religious pluralism and mutual recognition of religious groups in global civil society.

It is generally recognized that denominationalism has played a crucial role in the constant revitalization of religion in American society, as the fashionable supply-side theories of free religious markets tend to emphasize. But this individualist, rational choice theory of religion tends to miss the equally important role of denominationalism in the process of incorporation of new immigrants into the American civil religion. It is not only that Americans are demonstrably a religious people and therefore there is a certain

pressure for immigrants to conform to American religious norms. Even more significantly, today, as in the past, religion and public religious denominational identities play an important role in the process of incorporation of new immigrants. Thus, the paradox observed again and again by students of immigrant communities that, in the words of Raymond Williams, “immigrants are religious – by all accounts more religious than they were before they left home.”<sup>8</sup>

Besides this process of globalization of religious pluralism, of plural religious identities and of denominationalism, there is a parallel process of increasing religious individuation, which was first initiated as a massive collective phenomenon by Protestantism but is now affecting and transforming all religious traditions. Indeed what is unique and novel of our global age is the fact that all religions of the world, old and new, pre-axial, axial, and post-axial, are becoming available for individual appropriation anytime and anywhere, thus multiplying the options of conversion, cross pressures and individual search for transcendence. Charles Taylor has characterized this phenomenon as the nova and supernova effects of the age of authenticity.<sup>9</sup>

The modern individual is almost condemned, one could say following Thomas Luckmann analysis of what he termed “invisible religion,” to pick and choose from a wide arrangement of meaning systems.<sup>10</sup> From a Western monotheistic perspective, such a condition of polytheistic and polyformic individual freedom may seem a highly novel

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<sup>8</sup> Raymond Brady Williams, *Religion of Immigrants from India and Pakistan: NewThreads in the American Tapestry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 29. The claim that immigrants become more religious as they become more American was central to Will Herberg’s thesis in his classic study *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960). The same claim has been restated by most contemporary studies of immigrant religions in America. See, for example, R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, eds., *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); and Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, eds., *Religion and the New Immigrants* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Luckmann, *Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

or postmodern one. But from a non-Western perspective, particularly that of Asian pantheist religious traditions, the condition looks rather like the old state of affairs. Individual mysticism has always been an important option, at least for elites and religious virtuosi, within the Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist traditions. What Ronald Inglehart calls the expansion of post-materialist spiritual values can be understood in this respect as the generalization and democratization of options until now only available to elites and religious virtuosi in most religious traditions.<sup>11</sup> As the privileged material conditions available to the elites for millennia are generalized to entire populations, so are the spiritual and religious options that were usually reserved for them. I would not characterize such a process, however, as religious decline, or as secularization. But what is certainly new in our global age is the simultaneous presence and availability of all world religions and all cultural systems, from the most “primitive” to the most “modern,” often detached from their temporal and spatial contexts, ready for flexible or fundamentalist individual appropriation.

It is worth pointing out, however, in this context the significantly different patterns of reception of “other” religions one finds in radically secular and religiously homogeneous Europe and in the highly religious and pluralistic United States. In Europe, the only visible collective dynamic is the massive conversion to secularity, either in the form of the movement from Christian affiliation to disaffiliation, that is, the unchurched of the European population, or from belief to unbelief, that is the growth in the surveys of the categories of “no religious” and “atheist.” Taylor's description of the nova and

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald Inglehart, “The Trend toward Postmaterialist values continues,” in *Citizen Politics in Post-Industrial Societies*. Eds. Terry Clark and Michael Rempel. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), and Ronald Inglehart and Paul Abramson, “Measuring Post-Materialism,” *American Political Science Review*, 93:3, 1999, 665-677.

supernova effects of the Age of Authenticity seems indeed hardly applicable to contemporary European societies which, I would argue, basically remain extremely homogeneous both, in their forms of religiosity and in their forms of secularity. At least when compared with the already highly religious and extremely pluralistic and dynamic denominational system in the United States. Similar evidence emerges from the radically different patterns of incorporation of non-Western immigrant religions in post-Christian secular Europe and in Christian secular America.<sup>12</sup>

It is an open empirical question, which should be the central focus of a comparative-historical sociology of religion, how these three ongoing global processes of secularization, sacralization, and religious denominationalism are mutually interrelated in different civilizations, sometimes symbiotically as in the fusions of religious nationalisms, or in the religious defense of human rights, but often antagonistically as in the violent conflicts between the sacred secular immanent norms (of individual life and freedom of expression) and transcendent theistic norms. From the Salman Rushdie affair to the Danish cartoons, from the destruction of Babri Masjid to suicide bombings, from the assassination of Theo van Gogh to the confrontation between the German Pope and the German Chancellor over the papal lifting of the excommunication of a remote integralist, Bishop Richard Williamson, who dared to commit publicly the sacrilegious crime of denying the Holocaust, what we are witnessing repeatedly on glocal media in the global public sphere are not so much conflicts between “the religious” and “the secular,” but rather confrontations over the sacred, over blasphemous and sacrilegious

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<sup>12</sup> José Casanova, “Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism: A European Union /United States Comparison,” in Thomas Banchoff, ed., *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 59-83. German version, “Einwanderung und der neue religiöse Pluralismus. Ein Vergleich zwischen der EU und den USA,” *Leviathan* 34:2, Juni 2006, 182-207.

acts and speeches, and over the profanation of taboos. It is all part of the global struggle for universal-particular, human mutual recognition.

Thankfully, there is a growing global trend of mutual recognition of cultures. There is increasing awareness of the need, if we are going to live together peacefully and constructively in a shrinking and increasingly interdependent world, for culture to have a right to protect themselves from imperialist, or overly aggressive, attempts to change them. It is this awareness that allows a balance to be struck between the individual right of religious freedom, with its accompanying right to proselytize, and the communal right to preserve a culture. Importantly, to be most effective, this balance calls for religious freedom advocacy that is contextually sensitive.

The global controversies after the publication of Danish cartoons which were perceived by many Muslims around the world either as a caricature of their religious tradition or as outright blasphemy, may serve as vivid illustration. Throughout Europe, following the violent mobilized responses throughout much of the Muslim world, many newspapers re-published the same cartoons, both as an act of solidarity with the Danish people and as an explicit affirmation of the modern secular (sacred) value of freedom of expression, notwithstanding the fact that the same Danish newspaper had previously made the decision not to publish caricatures lampooning the resurrection of Christ or the fact that no European newspaper would dare today of committing the blasphemous sacrilege of publishing anti-Semitic caricatures of the kind that had been common in the 1920's and 30's. In the United States, by contrast, no newspaper chose to re-publish the Danish cartoons, not because there is less respect for the principle of freedom of

expression or out of cowardly self-censorship in order not to antagonize Muslim publics, but as a form of voluntary editorial self-restraint out of the simple recognition of a need for mutual inter-religious respect.

Truly respectful religious freedom – the product of a creative tension and balance between individual religious freedom and communitarian religious pluralism – is becoming a universal aspiration and is transforming many of the religious traditions. It transformed Protestantism first. It has transformed Catholicism and Judaism and it is transforming the other world religions, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. But we should be aware of the fact that given different cultural conceptions of religious freedom, this process may take different forms in different contexts and it may unfold over the course of several generations.

Under conditions of globalization, moreover, all the world religions do not only draw upon their own historical and textual traditions but also increasingly upon one another. Inter-civilizational encounters, cultural imitations and borrowings, diasporic diffusions, hybridity, creolization, and transcultural hyphenations are as much part and parcel of the global present as Western hegemony, cosmopolitan homogenization, religious fundamentalism and the clash of civilizations. What is at stake, ultimately, is the recognition of the irremediable plurality of universalisms and the multiplicity of modernities, namely, that every universalism and every modernity is particularistic. One could say that we are moving from a condition of competing particularist universalisms to a new condition of global denominational contextualism.