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Globalization and Glocalization

Contributors: Peter Beyer

Editors: James A. Beckford & N. J. Demerath III

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[p. 98 ↓]

Chapter 5: Globalization and Glocalization

Globalization is a relatively recent term. It appeared in English-language usage only in the 1960s, albeit without the heavy connotations that it began to carry in the 1990s. Other similar expressions, however, already popularized the core meaning of all people on earth living in a single social space, notably Marshall McLuhan's notion of a 'global village' (McLuhan 1964). Entering social scientific discourse in the early 1980s, globalization itself subsequently became such a widespread term that it has become something close to a general name for the current era in which we all live, for better or worse. And in fact, the evaluation of globalization oscillates uneasily between utopian promise and dystopian menace. Parallel to this ambivalent attitude has been a very consistent tendency to understand globalization in terms of analytic binaries, especially the spatial distinction between the global and the local, or that between universal and particular (see esp. Robertson 1992).

The global in globalization refers both to a geographic limit, the earth as a physical place, and to an encompassing range of influence, namely that all contemporary social reality is supposedly conditioned or even determined by it. This inescapable and inclusive quality contrasts with the notion of modernization, arguably the prime term that globalization has replaced both in popular and scientific discourse. While modernization excluded various 'others' that were deemed either pre-modern/traditional or only on the way to modernization, globalization includes us all, even our 'others'. Modernization temporalized its uni-versalism: eventually all would/could become modern. Globalization spatializes it: the local has to come to terms with the global. It (re)constitutes itself in the way that it does this. The reverse side of this mutual relation is that the global cannot be global except as plural versions of the local. Hence globalization is always also *glocalization* (Robertson 1995), the global expressed in the local and the local as the particularization of the global. This difference between modernization and globalization allows us to understand the different attitudes toward religion that prevail under the aegis of each term.

The discussion of this basic thesis in this chapter proceeds as follows: In a first section, I elaborate the idea of the pluralization of religion by isolating and then illustrating four important axes of variation along which this pluralization appears to proceed. On this basis, two further sections then focus on the sociological observation of religion. The first traces the reasons why sociological understanding has shifted away from a modernization emphasis [p. 99 ↓] which usually favoured the regional or national society as the default unit of analysis. The second looks at how the subdiscipline has since the 1980s been explicitly or implicitly expanding the basic unit of analysis to include the entire globe, while simultaneously moving away from the assumption of secularization as the dominant trend and toward variations on pluralization instead. These more literature-review oriented sections are then followed by a brief presentation of my own suggestion for how to theorize religion in global/glocal society. Finally, a concluding section considers possible future directions for the sociology of religion in light of the overall analysis.

Globalization and Pluralization of Religion

The dominant sociological thesis about the relation of religion and modernization has been one of incompatibility: a modernizing society was *ipso facto* a secularizing society. Religion, as a comparatively 'irrational' orientation in a modernity defined by rationalization, would lose its broader social influence or become a privatized domain. While not all observers of modernization agreed with this proposition, as globalization has become the regnant universalizing concept, the dissenters have quickly become the majority. In as much as the modern excluded its other side, namely the traditional, modernization could assign religion to that 'other side', allowing only certain restricted religious expression the status of modern religion (cf. Durkheim 1965; Bellah 1970). With globalization, the global includes its defining polar opposite, the local, such that when religion appears as the local, it is thereby also global, or better, glocal. Hence, what stands out with respect to religion in the globalizing as opposed to modernizing world is not secularization but *pluralization*, the inclusion of different *localizations* of religion. Theories of religion in the global circumstance correspondingly can be expected to emphasize notions of socially constructed religious plurality from both a global and a local perspective.¹ Notions of secularization, differentiation, privatization,

and the categorization of religion along 'modern/traditional' lines do not cease to make sense in this context. Instead, these ideas become subordinated to the now seeming self-evidence of religious diversity. Rather than an anachronistic presence better suited to bygone eras, religion now appears much more easily as a prime way of being different or particular and therefore as an integral aspect of globalization/glocalization. As such, religion becomes the site of difference, contestation and, not infrequently, conflict. Its previously defining qualities as a provider of *societal* cohesion, integration and solidarity virtually disappear from the screen. Applied to religion, they now make about as much sense as the idea that a globalizing society is also a secularizing society.

Axes of Variation in Glocal Religion

On the basis of this observation, the most persistent questions about religion and globalization will concern its plural manifestations, the different ways in which religion glocalizes. Numerous strategies suggest themselves for understanding this variety, but the following four axes of variation seem to stand out:

These axes of variation are not necessarily exhaustive; nor will the religious manifestations of today's global society fall neatly onto one side of a continuum or another. Rather, they serve as heuristic distinctions for marking out the field of religious pluralization under the rubric of globalization. Of particular note is that each pole of each axis of variation is itself subject to pluralization. Institutionalized religion, for instance, will manifest as plural religions; while non-institutionalized religiosity is inherently variable. Instances of local 'monopoly' or uniformity, by contrast, will call for special explanation, much like 'strong' religion under the secularization thesis had to be seen as an 'exception'. In addition, although these continua pose the implicit question of what actually counts as religion, defining religion would be misplaced because what is needed is not conceptual uniformity or the isolation of some sort of essence of religion. Instead, what matters is what people in *this global society* actually call and treat as religion. Such orientations can and will be contested and often ambiguous; they will themselves pose the question of pluralization and glocalization.

Some illustrations of how pluralization and glocalization express themselves through these axes of variation will serve to concretize the argument at this point.

Beginning with the institutionalized religions, in practically every country and region, we find a variable set of entities which people there call, treat, and enact as religions (or parallel words in other languages). These generally include Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism; and, less consistently, Judaism and Sikhism. Beyond these clearly globalized religions is a varied list of others recognized regionally, for example, Zoroastrianism, Daoism, Jainism, Rastafarianism, Baha'i, Candomblé, or Cao Dai. Two related global continuities are evident here: the specific globally present religions, and the seemingly accepted fact that there are religions which can be named and to which one can belong or not. In either case, the globalized category is already inherently plural. There is no such thing as a single global religion. These overall statements, however, tell us little about concrete situations in various regions. Different religions dominate in different places: Christianity in Europe, Latin America and several African countries; Islam from Northern Africa to Indonesia; Buddhism in eastern Asia; Hinduism in South Asia. Each of these has a significant, if usually minority, presence in most of the other world regions as well. Many of the smaller religions have regional concentrations, like the Punjab for Sikhs, Jamaica for Rastafarians, or Japan for Omotokyo. But like the larger 'world' religions, most of these also have presences in other parts of the world. Large or small, the religions are usually globally spread and locally concentrated. Moreover, the individual religions manifest themselves only as particular variations such as Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox Christianity; Sunni, Twelver Shi'a, or Ismaili Islam; Vaisnava, Saiva, or Advaita Vedanta Hinduism; Mahayana or Theravada Buddhism; and so forth. And within each of these categories there are most often more subvariants such as Anglican or Jehovah's Witnesses (Protestant), Bohra or Nizari (Ismaili), Zen or Shingon (Mahayana), and so forth. Most of these are likewise globally spread with local concentrations. The result is a different local mix of pluralized religions in different regions. In addition, each of the variants receives local colouring: Anglican Protestant Christianity is not the same in Uganda as it is in Canada or even different places in these countries; **[p. 101 ↓]** Sunni Islam is not quite the same in Indonesia as it is in Turkey, France, or Saudi Arabia; and similarly for all the others. Nonetheless, all this variation, far from vitiating the global singleness of the religions and their main divisions, actually constitutes them (see Beyer 2003). Both practitioners

and external observers understand these religions as unities through variation, in other words, as glocalizations. The universals are real abstractions; concrete, socially effective religions appear only as localized particular-izations of those global universals. Finally, the construction of both global unity and local manifestations occurs with reference to one another: the religions constitute and reproduce themselves in a context of recognized plurality of religions and subdivisions of religions. None of this, of course, excludes disagreement and conflict over and across the various boundaries; rather it explicitly includes such contestation.

As differentiated social entities, the institutionalized religions bear variable relations to domains of social life that are not religion. Thus, through their authorities and representatives, particular religions can seek to exert direct influence on these other domains, whether politics and law, economy, science, mass media, education, or a variety of others. They can also focus on their own reproduction through ritual and practice. Of course, most religious groups do both, the latter even being a condition for the former. The alternative of seeking to exert public influence or restricting oneself to privatized religious concerns is rarely that stark. Globally speaking, religion is both a privatized and public concern. The serious variation in this dimension is at the local or particular level, especially as concerns how heavily and effectively institutionalized religion is brought into play in non-religious domains. This variance only overlaps partially with the differences of the religions themselves. Thus, for instance, Islam is generally more publicly active than many other religions, consistently claiming direct relevance in the operation of all other spheres of life. It is often quite effective in this capacity. Yet even here we see substantial variation, whether over time as movements rise and fade, or geographically, for example, between relatively 'theocratic' Iran or Saudi Arabia and relatively 'secular' Tunisia or Turkey. In places where Islam is not dominant, usually for very practical reasons this religion tends to be a more privatized concern, but that does not exclude public visibility and Muslim attempts to influence what goes on in other domains. By contrast, although perhaps in the majority of areas where Christianity is dominant this religion leans more toward a concentration on its own strictly religious affairs, there are so many exceptions to this pattern that it is little more than a statistical generalization. In countries as varied as the United States, Poland, the Philippines, Zambia, Brazil and Russia, there have over the past few decades been various sometimes quite effective and long-lasting Christian forays into

the public arena. Similar statements could be made for virtually every other religion; for Buddhism in Japan or Thailand, for Judaism in the United States or Israel, for Hinduism in India or Great Britain, and so on. All these cases taken together show that, on a global scale alone, religions are both publicly influential and privatized. It is only at the local or particular level that their subvariants may lean more heavily toward one alternative than the other. Although almost all the movements seeking to assert public religious influence engage globalized structures such as the system of states, the world economy, cultural flows of various kinds, and indeed other (global) religions, the particular characteristics of such movements, how long they last, and how effective they are, these are a matter of local circumstances and not a global trend in either the direction of increased privatization or general 'resurgence'. An aspect of the glocalized pluralization is unpredictability.

Over the past three decades, the religious developments that have without doubt received the most attention as a global phenomenon are so-called 'fundamentalisms'. Chief among these have been the American Christian Right, Religious Zionism in Israel, Islamist movements in a number of countries, as well as Sikh and Hindu nationalist movements in India (see Marty and Appleby 1991–95; Kepele 1994). Perhaps the most evident common feature of these movements is [p. 102 ↓] that they are religio-political movements, ones that seek public influence for religion. From a slightly different perspective, however, they are also for the most part conservative or neo-traditionalist movements, meaning that their explicit rationale includes a reassertion of values and ways of living warranted by the past, by tradition, and thereby in opposition to orientations conceived as modern, liberal and secular. Among the symbolic issues that most consistently express this opposition are a call for comparatively strict control of (especially female) bodies in contrast to supposed permissiveness or decadence, and a separatist (often nationalist) claim to the exclusive validity of their truth over against a posited global relativism or anomie (Kapur 1986; Lustick 1988; Juergensmeyer 1993; Riesebrodt 1993). It is in fact the traditionalist, 'anti-modern' discourse that most clearly distinguishes those movements labelled as 'fundamentalist', since quite often not particularly militant movements like the Jewish Neturei Karta, the Christian Communion and Liberation, or the Islamic Tablighi Jamaat (see Ahmed 1991; Kepele 1994) are called 'fundamentalist', while publicly and politically engaged, but non-traditionalist, religious movements such as the liberation theology movement in Latin America do not. As

movements and as a category, 'fundamentalism' therefore points to the contemporary and global relevance of a kind of religion that, under the aegis of modernization, was deemed to be obsolete and destined to disappear. It represents a clearly possible variant of religious presence in contrast to more liberal and non-exclusive religion, both of which appear to belong in a globalized society.

The recognized religions do not have a monopoly on the religious in contemporary global society. Three other types of phenomena exist alongside and even compete with them. These are new religious movements, especially those that seek to become new, recognized religions; non-institutional, highly individualized, religiosity or 'spirituality'; and broadly speaking religio-cultural expression that is not differentiated as religion. Each of these illustrates the dynamics of glocalization and pluralization in a somewhat different way. New religions demonstrate the opened-ended possibility for additional institutional religions. From Scientology, The Family, and the Raelians to Won Buddhism, Falun Dafa, and I-Kuan Tao, a bewildering variety of groups often fall under this heading, with their origins in virtually every corner of the world (see Melton and Baumann 2002). Aside from the sheer plurality, what is of relevance here is that the category of a new religion, along with its pejorative version, 'cult' (with strictly parallel terms in other languages), is itself globalized, as is the suspicion with which new religions are treated by others, including recognized religions, mass media, schools and governments. There is in that context significant continuity in the anti-new religions discourse around the world (see Richardson 2004). Moreover, a very large number of these new religions try to establish an international and even worldwide presence, such demonstration of broader appeal clearly forming part of their claim to legitimacy. Thus, even though most new religions are quite small and show even more regional concentration than the larger and older 'world' religions, they participate in the globalized category of an institutionalized and differentiated religion quite as much as do the latter. They thereby further express the pluralization of religion both as a social reality and as a category of observation. Nonetheless, as with the world religions, new religions appear only in particular and local form: pluralization manifests itself as glocalization of these religious movements and that multiple localization is both a condition and a symptom of their globalization.

If the title of new religions refers to those movements that seek recognition as religions, the term 'spirituality' has in recent decades come to designate another important and

inherently plural religious phenomenon. Not coincidentally a word that is still in many ways but a synonym for the religious, spirituality now often refers to religion in a highly individualized mode, and in this sense outside or at the margins of the authoritative bounds of institutionalized religions. A variety of trends and manifestations can fall under this heading. From the somewhat amorphous New Age and [p. 103 ↓] Japanese new New Religions to the tendency for a great many people around the world to fashion their own combination of religious beliefs and practices with little reference to specific centres of religious tradition or authority (cf. Roof 1999; Heelas *et al.* 2005), a parallel style of religiosity appears to be gaining attention. Although the global aspect of this development can be subsumed under different headings, for instance Inglehart's notion of post-materialist (Inglehart 1997) religion, the concrete variety of such spirituality can almost by definition only be local. Yet, following Inglehart's analysis, this sort of religiosity seems usually to be pursued by the relatively more privileged segments of the global population, those with a higher probability of having broader global connections and thus being themselves less rootedly local than those large numbers without such power. This sort of highly particular and highly plural religiosity is therefore also in that sense more global and hence glocal.

In some quarters, however, the term spirituality carries a different meaning, shading over into the idea of religio-cultural expression that is not distinguished as religion. Spirituality refers also to the religious ways of aboriginal peoples and thus to a form of religiosity that is glocal in a rather distinct way. The category of 'aboriginal' or 'indigenous' is, from one angle, local by definition: it is what was 'here from the origins' as opposed to that which came here 'from somewhere else' relatively recently. Aboriginal and indigenous people are those who were in a place before its incorporation into globalizing structures. Their 'traditional' cultural expressions can and do thereby claim to be ones that belong to that locality more purely than others. A mark of that belonging is in many cases that the carriers of this indigene-ity reject differentiation among various functional modalities, including especially religion, when applied to their cultural traditions, such differentiated structures being seen as that which engenders the homogenization of the local into global patterns. The insistence on aboriginal spiritualities as a non-differentiable dimension of aboriginal culture is thereby a way of constructing the integrity and inviolability of those cultures or identities vis-à-vis global forces. Ironically, however, the category of aboriginal has itself become globalized,

a prime symptom of which is that aboriginal peoples around the world are often in contact and relate to one another as aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal spirituality is not so much a way of maintaining the local against the global as it is yet another instance of glocalization, doing the global in local mode. A further indicator of this role is that, in some cases, such as African Traditional Religion in countries like South Africa or Benin (cf. Mndende 1998), or various indigenous religious cultures in Indonesia (see e.g. Schiller 1997), 'aboriginal' people mobilize in the opposite direction: they seek to construct and have their religious ways recognized as distinct religions, with the same goal of cultural recognition and assertion. The situation points to the generally ambiguous but close relation between religion and culture as pluralized and glocalized categories.

Aboriginal people striving for cultural recognition and autonomy are not alone in insisting on an intertwining of religion and culture, thereby melding two categories for asserting glocal difference. The frequency of religious nationalism is another and more powerful manifestation. From State Shinto in pre-World War II Japan and Irish Catholic nationalism to Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka and Hindu nationalism in twentieth-century India, this strategy has been a constant of our world throughout the modern era. These and many other religio-nationalist movements have insisted on an intimate link among a particular religio-cultural way of life, a particular territory, and a particular group of people generally attributed with a common ancestry and history in that territory. In each case, a critical warrant for this identification is a rootedness in the past, often the mythic past. As with the aboriginal movements, however, religious nationalisms are not isolated occurrences that just happen to have certain features in common. They are local variations on a globalized theme, even model. The religio-cultural identities structure themselves in deliberate comparison with the rest of the world, almost invariably imagining this [p. 104 ↓] outside as homologous 'others', other religio-cultural identities.

The Sociological Understanding of Religion: From Modern to Global Context

In suggesting pluralization as the prime *leitmotif* for observing religion under conditions of globalization, I do not claim that religious plurality is anything new. Notions of multiplicity in matters religious are as old as the concept itself. What I am proposing is rather that the most significant dimension for understanding religion in the specifically *global society* of today is its pluralization along several axes of variation. The shift to a global perspective is key. Without that change in perspective, the argument loses much of its rationale. It is therefore important to understand how globalization has come to be such a ubiquitous concept and what effect that is having on the sociological observation of religion. Given the influence that the classical thinkers of the nineteenth century still have on this discipline, I begin with Marx, Durkheim and Weber.

Since its nineteenth-century origins, sociology has been informed by the guiding difference between modern and non-modern or traditional societies. Karl Marx focused almost exclusively on the development and fate of capitalism in contrast especially to feudalism; Émile Durkheim built up his theory on the distinction between modern organic and traditional mechanical solidarity societies; Max Weber concentrated on various dimensions of the shift from pre-modern to modern, including themes like rationalization, bureaucracy, political domination and modern capitalism. In one sense, religion occupied a central position for all three of them: as an ideological tool of the dominant classes for Marx, as a foundational aspect of society for Durkheim, and as a key factor in the rise of modern capitalism for Weber. Yet in each case, the prevailing fate of at least institutional religion was decline and even disappearance: to be discarded by proletarians and fade away under communism for Marx, to be superseded by the 'cult of man' for Durkheim, and to succumb to modern rationality in a disenchanted world for Weber. In one form or another, the reigning historical direction was modernization and the outcome for religion was secularization.

The passage from traditional to modern in classical sociology was in one sense a temporal transition from past to present and future, but it also had spatial reference. First, what we now call the West was modern or at least modernizing, while other

regions of the world were at best non-modern. Even though Marx, Weber, Durkheim and other classical sociologists took account of the wider world that they inhabited, their attention to the non-Western regions was limited because from their perspective that is not where their main concern, modernization, was happening. Where they did pay attention, such as in Durkheim's analysis of the religion of Australian Aborigines or Weber's comparative studies of China and India, it was as examples of the pre-modern or traditional. Second, the modernizing West for these thinkers (Marx is a partial exception) came to be seen as divided geographically into 'national societies', which could be compared as to the way modernization occurred in each case. The geopolitical unit of the nation-state, especially during the period from the late nineteenth-century to the early twentieth-century, became more or less synonymous with the idea of a society. From that time, sociological observation became primarily the Western, nation-state based observation of modernization in the West (Albrow 1990; Robertson 1992: 8ff). Somewhat ironically, however, that same period was one of the most intense in terms of the projection of Western power all over the world. In contemporary conceptual terms, classical sociology took place in a globalizing historical situation, but its understanding was national, perhaps international, but not global. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the self-evidence of this identity between the (nation) state and society has begun seriously to loosen, but it still informs the discipline to a great extent. This has had corresponding consequences for the understanding of religion.

[p. 105 ↓]

The secularization assumptions of the classics prevailed in sociology and, to a lesser degree, in the sociology of religion until the latter quarter of the twentieth century. Indeed, they reached a kind of apogee in the 1960s with the influential work of thinkers such as Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Bryan Wilson, Richard Fenn, Talcott Parsons and others. Although there were salient differences in their various perspectives, they shared a threefold assumption: religion was either declining or being pushed to the margins of societal importance; religion's role in society was integrative; and the modern societies of interest were national and Western (now including Japan). Their positions did, however, include a wider 'international' awareness. The national societies could be and were compared in terms of the way religion operated within them. The question of pluralization, usually in terms of pluralism, was also posed at this national level; and the prevailing question in this regard was how it affected the secularization of a society (see

esp. Berger 1967; Martin 1978). Pluralization across the nations was hardly even an issue.

What transformed that situation since the 1970s is to some degree a matter of speculation. But one can begin by noting a coincidence not often mentioned. The mid-1980s saw the publication of both Roland Robertson's seminal ideas on globalization and Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge's explicit theoretical rejection of the secularization thesis (Robertson and Chirico 1985; Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Both were the result of work begun in the later 1970s, both suggested a significant reorientation for sociological observation, and both have been highly influential since. They also represent two radically different approaches. What they nonetheless have in common is their shared historical context and here religious developments play a critical role. At the risk of oversimplifying, the year 1979 stands out. Its portentous events include the Iranian revolution, the founding of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in the United States, the Nicaraguan revolution, the accession of John Paul II to the papacy, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the first stirring of the Solidarity movement in Poland. All of these showed that religion could (still) be a public and mainstream force; all of them are to a significant degree incomprehensible without taking into view the wider global context in which they occurred (cf. Beyer 1994). Various ongoing and subsequent religio-political events in places like Israel-Palestine or Sri Lanka only reinforced that impression. What they encouraged is a shift in sociological observation, exemplified in the work of Robertson, Stark and Bainbridge, and a great many others, in which the sociology of religion moves gradually more into the mainstream of the larger discipline at the same time as most sociologists of religion hastily claim to abandon the secularization thesis and pay attention to religious diversity in new ways. Now, in this different context, the variety of ways in which religion and religiousness manifests itself as well as new developments in the religious sphere become that much more obvious and worthy of attention, whether we are speaking, for instance, of the abiding strength of religion in the United States, the continuing efflorescence of new religious movements in every corner of the globe, the growth of already longstanding Pentecostalism or Islamism worldwide, the religious assumptions of seemingly secular Europeans, or the vitality and ever changing face of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa.

There can be little doubt that the seemingly sudden and precipitous fall of the Soviet empire at the end of the 1980s marked a profound change in world order and,

inevitably, a significant shift in how people around the world, including sociologists, understood that world. In a few short years, the self-evident Cold War organizing distinction between East and West disappeared. The world was not just different, it had to be thought anew, and now without the socialist/capitalist divide. These had, in effect, been alternative paths of modernization from which a 'national society' could choose. The signs of transformed observation in the 1990s became quickly apparent. Two tendencies are particularly notable. One has tried to continue with a modified version of the old lines, effacing the socialist alternative and thereby leaving the 'capitalist road' as the [p. 106 ↓] only possibility. Francis Fukuyama's early 1990s declaration of the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1993) and the worldwide anti-globalization movements that emerged toward the end of the decade represent opposing versions of this direction. It touched off the rapid rise in popularity of the term, globalization, understood essentially as global capitalism without the socialist alternative. This understanding of globalization is modernization in a monopolistic guise. It therefore has had little cause to take religion seriously – except as defensive 'fundamentalism' (Barber 1996; cf. Beckford 2003: 103ff.) – and has typically imagined a decline in the power of the national state (see Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Beck 2000). Both features witness to the difficulty of continuing to observe today's social reality in the normative terms of the 'secular/modern national society'.

The other significant tendency has also adopted a global perspective, accepting that we evidently all now live in the same social world. The result, however, is the observed multiplication of difference rather than (just) progressive homogeneity. This is the direction that I emphasize here. It understands the global in terms of its glocal particularizations. It resonates strongly with the *post*-modern discourse that has paralleled the recognition of globalization (see Lyotard 1984, French original published in 1979). In announcing the end of grand narratives, post-modernism opened the door for the multiplicity of narratives, but also for their contestation. Important in the present context is that these visions no longer *have to assume* the national, territorially delimited, and solidary society as normative. It is also among them that one finds a much stronger place for religion. It is therefore this kind of approach that has more clearly informed very late twentieth and early twenty-first century sociology of religion.

The Sociological Understanding of Religion in the Globalization Era

A closer look at post-Cold War sociological observation of religion can begin by repeating that neither the national society nor the notion of secularization need be or has been abandoned. As noted, these maintain their importance, only now as aspects of pluralized variation rather than as guiding assumptions. That said, we should not expect the change to take place all at once. Current sociological thinking is in fact in a kind of transitional phase, combining 'modernization' and 'globalization' assumptions. Two of the clearer examples of this are analyses of European 'exceptionalism' and religious market theories, trends well represented in the work of Grace Davie (Davie 2003) and Rodney Stark and his collaborators (Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Finke and Stark 1992; Stark and Iannaccone 1994) respectively. In spite of sharp differences in theoretical perspectives, the two approaches share a continued orientation toward the idea of secularization, the use of the national/regional (Europe and the United States) society as the basic unit of analysis, and *yet also* an explicit contextual awareness of and reference to the rest of the world without, however, giving the notion of globalization an operative place within their theories. Thus Davie's examination of religion in contemporary Europe focuses on this region's exceptionalism in terms of how secularized it is, that by comparison most of the rest of the world is not secularized, and that religion is not thereby simply unimportant in Europe. The exceptionalism only makes sense in global context. And, in spite of their explicit rejection of the secularization thesis, Stark *et al.* analyse religious markets in mostly national/regional terms and with respect to how 'vital', namely *unsecular-ized*, each of those markets is. They also put great stress on religion's *rationality* (Stark and Finke 2000), a preoccupation that resonates much more with a modernization/secularization orientation. Yet, in seeking to construct a general theory of religion, they expressly claim validity for all religious markets around the world, not just in the West.

This transitional situation also reveals itself in the use of the distinction between religion and spirituality. From Ernst Troeltsch's late nineteenth-century discussion of 'mysticism' (Troeltsch 1931) to Thomas Luckmann's [p. 107 ↓] 'invisible religion' of the

1960s (Luckmann 1967), a key element of the secularization thesis has hitherto been privatization, the idea that religion has become more and more the affair of individuals or voluntary associations and less and less a matter of overarching institutional authority. That discussion continues, but there has been a partial shift in emphasis corresponding to a change from privatization as dominant principle to religion/spirituality as axis of variation. On the one hand, a significant literature still operates in the context of the privatization thesis, arguing either positively that privatized spirituality is the (new) dominant trend (e.g. Roof 1999; Heelas *et al.* 2005) or negatively that such non-institutional spirituality is merely 'potential' religion (e.g. Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Bibby 2002). These perspectives generally adopt the national society as their unit of analysis, although sometimes including cross-national comparison. On the other hand, the phenomenon is receiving increasing attention as a globalized trend and alternative. Under this heading would fall Ronald Inglehart's suggestion of a 'post-materialist' religiosity, the growing presence of which he detects on the basis of 'world' values studies (Inglehart 1997). It would also include a varied literature on the New Age movement as a specifically global and not just Western development (Rothstein 2001; Carozzi 2004; Ackerman 2005; Howell 2005). Moving across the continuum, there is the attention that somewhat more institutionalized but still often quite fluid religious developments are receiving. Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is a case in point. Although it already began to attract sociological attention in the 1960s and 1970s, many of the more recent contributions focus specifically on its ability to translate itself or glocalize relatively easily around the world, as well as on its global growth (see e.g. Poewe 1994; Cox 1995; Dempster *et al.* 1999; Coleman 2000; Martin 2002; Wilkinson 2006). Somewhat related is the topic of new religious movements. In spite of their small size and often limited geographic range, their global presence, global aspirations, as well as the similarity in the kind of suspicion and opposition that they attract in countries right across the globe have been topics of growing attention in the sociological literature of the post-Cold War decades (see e.g. Hexham and Poewe 1997; Dawson 1998; Kent 1999; Barchunova 2002; Richardson 2004). This orientation is a notable addition to that which informed the sociological literature on new religious movements that dates from the 1960s to the 1980s, which generally operated mostly in the orbit of secularization assumptions, notably through the dominance of the question of conversion (see, from a great many, Lofland 1966; Judah 1974; Glock and Bellah 1976). That literature was also

overwhelmingly oriented to the national or regional society, mostly in the West, but also in Japan (see e.g. McFarland 1967; Brannen 1968; cf. Shimazono 2004).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, sociological analyses of religion that adopt an overtly global orientation are still not that common. To be sure, ever since the early 1990s, there has been a smattering of such works (e.g. Robertson and Garrett 1991; Ahmed 1994; Beyer 1994; Van der Veer 1996; Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Haynes 1998; Meyer and Geschiere 1999; Esposito and Watson 2000; Stackhouse and Paris 2000; Beyer 2001; Hopkins *et al.* 2001; Juergensmeyer 2003; Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005; Learman 2005), but their number contrasts markedly with the social scientific literature on globalization itself, which has become unmanageable in volume. There is, however, a very significant literature on religion that is highly relevant to the themes of globalization and glocalization. The bulk of these contributions have centred on two subjects: religio-political mobilization and religion in the context of transnational migration. The literature on the former grew and adopted a global dimension as of 1979 when, in light of the rise of the American New Christian Right, the term began to be transferred from its original context, first to Islam and the Iranian revolution specifically, and then to diverse religio-political movements in Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism especially (for early examples, see Haines 1979; von der Mehden 1980). In spite of the dissimilarities among the different so-called 'fundamentalisms' and protests that it was a Western [p. 108 ↓] misconception when applied outside the Protestant Christian fold, the term has persisted in social scientific discourse since the early 1980s, arguably because of its ability to name an important global continuity among otherwise highly disparate religious movements. Fundamentalism is in that sense a quintessentially glocal concept.

A somewhat similar analysis applies to the relation between religion and transnational migration. A critical part of the web of communications and flows that has helped to make today's globalized reality so apparent is the movement of people under various guises ranging from tourists to migrants. The importance of the latter category is that it represents the more or less permanent moving of people from one part of the world to another, but in such a way that links between the 'old' country and the 'new' are in most cases maintained, thereby contributing to the density and permanence of global social connections. Religion consistently plays an important role in such migration as resources for immigrant adaptation to new local environments and as one of the social

forms that flows from one part of the world to another along the communicative links thus established. Migration is in turn a prime conduit for the globalization of the religions themselves. In light of the intensification of both migration and transnational linkages, it is not surprising that the social scientific literature which focuses on them becomes, in effect, globalization literature with respect to religion. A brief look at some examples will serve to concretize this point.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, American sociologists began to pay concerted attention to the religious expression of that country's post-1960s migrants. Here the work directed by Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner was ground breaking and was notably carried out only in the mid-1990s. Already the title of the major publication emerging from this research, *Gatherings in Diaspora*, pointed explicitly to the linkages of migrant religious forms in the United States with the wider world (Warner and Wittner 1998). What is also characteristic of this volume and of the growing literature that has emerged in its wake is the emphasis on the plurality of these forms in the United States, on their roots in various parts of the world, as well as on the commonalities that they display in response to the particularly American context. In that light, the narrative it tells is no longer overwhelmingly a Christian story with a Jewish minor thread. Other non-Christian religions are the focus along with a new intra-Christian variety. Most importantly in the present context, the transnational dimension is receiving sustained attention, attesting to the explicitly global aspect of this new religious plurality (see e.g. Levitt 1998; Prebish and Tanaka 1998; Lawson 1999; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002; Haddad and Smith 2002; Guest 2003; Vásquez and Marquardt 2003; Carnes and Yang 2004; Levitt 2004).

Similar but also different developments have occurred among scholars in other regions. These include countries such as Canada and Australia (Coward *et al.* 2000), but notably and in greater volume, Europe. As with the American literature, recent global migrants to this latter region have raised the double question of how these will challenge the ways that religions take form and importance in European countries, and how their implantation in this region will generate new forms of the recently arrived religions. On both sides, what is at issue is the plural glocalization of religion (see e.g. Burghart 1987; Dessai 1993; Baumann 2000). Somewhat in contrast to the United States, however, the majority of the attention falls on one particular religion, namely Islam. To some extent this is because a majority of migrants in many countries are Muslims, to some degree because Muslims seem to challenge the highly privatized and unobtrusive

way that religion has functioned in this region during much of the twentieth century. In consequence, the burgeoning literature on Islam and Muslims in Europe tends very much to operate on the assumption of implicit comparison: Can Islam adapt? Can Europeans maintain their seemingly established ways and demand that Islam conform? (see, from among many, Khosrokhavar 1997; Vertovec and Rogers 1998; Nielsen 1999; Roy 1999; Rath 2001; Jonker 2002). The axes of variation of publicly influential to privatized and of traditional/conservative to modern/liberal are both at play and overlap with the issue of the [p. 109 ↓] plurality of religions themselves and of their global presence.

Two other global regions from which highly relevant literature has been emerging are Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. Two prime religious vehicles in these cases are Christianity and New World African religions. With respect to the former, although the transnational Roman Catholic Church is certainly still of importance (cf. Lanternari 1998; Casanova 2001), it is Pentecostal and Evangelical Christianity that is receiving the bulk of the attention, arguably because of its transnational presence and recent growth, the ease with which its proponents move around the world from various home bases, and its diverse glocalization in so many regions (e.g. Meyer and Geschiere 1999; Adogame 2000; van Dijk 2001; Alvarsson and Segato 2003). New World African religions like Voudon, Candomblé, or Santería are quite different in their characteristic features, yet they share with Christianity, and with Pentecostalism in particular, a long transnational history in which Africans and their inherited religious expressions play a significant role. The trans-Atlantic connection has been a prime path across which both originally African and European religious impulses travelled eventually to engender new, pluralized, and glocalized religions that are today still in the process of formation (Clarke 1998; Motta 1998). The transnationalism has provided the conditions for reconstructing 'old' world religions in plural fashion; and also, according to some observers, for constructing a new world religion altogether (Frigerio 2004). Therefore, just as the transplantation of other religions along the paths of global migration is resulting in their pluralized and glocalized reconstruction in regions where they had little presence before, so is an older migration spawning new religions that are in turn producing glocalized versions on several continents.

Theorizing Pluralized Religion in a Global Society

In light of the increasing sociological attention paid to religion in the context of globalization, the lack of explicit theorizing on the relation between the two terms is perhaps a bit puzzling. As noted, the amount of literature *relevant* to the question is on the rise, but for the most part globalization in these works remains the name for an aspect of the social environment to which religion responds in various ways, not as something that, like capitalism or the sovereign state, is a constitutive dimension of globalization. Partial exceptions are the efforts that emphasize the transnational face of religion and the literature on religio-political movements. But even here, the global context is provided by something other than religion to which religion responds. At best religion thickens global flows. The contributions of Roland Robertson move into the gap to an extent in that he stresses the thematization of globality as an integral facet of the global condition; and that this task is an inherently 'religious' one (Robertson and Chirico 1985; Robertson 2001). Such thematization also allows multiple possibilities, thereby implicitly admitting at least some of the axes of pluralization presented here. In this way, he shows how globalization as a historical development is as religious as it is from other angles economic, political, or broadly speaking socio-cultural. Robertson's efforts are therefore important; but they are at best a beginning. In the following paragraphs, I sketch a theoretical approach that seeks to explain how religion and the plu-ralization of religion have been a key dimension of the historical process of globalization itself.

It is no accident that the bulk of globalization analyses describe the process primarily in economic, political, and sometimes in technological terms. The justification for this emphasis lies in the fact that the historical construction of today's global society centred on the development and expansion of an initially European-based capitalist economy and of initially European imperial power, both of which have since been appropriated with differential success by virtually every other part of the world. The theoretical key to understanding how religion might fit into this picture and also be constitutive of it is to focus on how the sorts of transformations in the economic and [p. 110 ↓] political

realms that brought about this expansion and appropriation also happened in the area of religion. This, in turn, requires a conceptualization under which economic, political, religious, and other social modalities can be subsumed and compared. On one level, the sociological notion of institution might serve this purpose. For greater clarity and more detailed comparability, however, I suggest the concept of *societal system* as developed in the work of Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann 1995).

Here cannot be the place for a thorough presentation of the details of this approach (see Beyer 2006, [Ch. 1](#)), but the argument about globalization on its basis can be summarized like this: from about the late medieval period in Western Europe, there began to develop roughly simultaneously distinct and yet interdependent social systems, each specializing in different functional areas, including a capitalist economic system, a political system of sovereign states, an empirically based scientific system, and a religious system manifesting itself as a plurality of religions. Each of these systems gradually built up its differentiated structures on the basis of its own rationality; each enhanced its peculiar mode of power. And it was on the combined basis of these institutional systems that the Europeans succeeded in spreading their influence around the world by the beginning of the twentieth century. As an integral part of this process, non-Western regions of the world have appropriated these systemic power modalities, invariably particularizing them to local circumstances and thereby glocalizing them. These systems have thus become the dominant social structures of contemporary global society. Yet they are by no means all that constitutes that society. The societal systems specialize and are therefore selective in what they include. They do not subsume everything that might otherwise appear as economic production/consumption, political regulation, knowledge, or religion. This combination of characteristics opens the way for understanding the pluralization of religion under conditions of globalization, but in such a way as to subsume the older notions of secularization, privatization, and differentiation that dominated sociological discussion under the rubric of modernization.

A brief historical narrative can outline the development of a religious system in the modern phases of globalization. In Western European society of the high and late Middle Ages, religion already had a well-developed and differentiated presence in the form of the Roman Christian Church. This specialized but also multi-functional institution provided some of the conditions that allowed the rise of other systems, notably the economic, political and scientific. The gradual differentiation of these

other systems provided a context for the clearer differentiation of the religious one, a development that manifested itself institutionally through the Protestant and Catholic Reformations and conceptually in the emergence of a new and pluralized understanding of religion itself. Beginning in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, Europeans began to conceive religion no longer primarily as a general and singular sort of activity that could express itself through various practices of piety and devotion, but as a differentiated domain of divine/human relations that manifested itself mainly through a set of distinct and systematic religions to which a given person could 'belong' or not. In spite of a continued search for unity in the religious domain, Europeans came to see these religions increasingly as irreducibly distinct. They included initially, under newly minted words, Christianity, Judaism, Mahometanism (i.e. Islam), and Paganism. Given that these semantic and institutional developments happened in the context of European global expansion, however, by the nineteenth century Europeans included an increasing set of additional religions that, armed with their new understanding, they 'discovered' in other parts of the world, including Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism. The response of people in these other regions varied. In the case of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, for instance, there was widespread collaboration in the re-imagining and reconstruction of these religio-cultural traditions as one of the religions and thus in the glocalization of this initially Western model of what a religion was. In the case of the [p. 111 ↓] Chinese and Confucianism, there was more or less unanimous refusal. All cases, however, included widespread contestation around the central questions of what belongs to these religions, which religions belong, which variations of these religions are authentic, and in general what are the boundaries of the religious domain itself. Moreover, the development of this religious system is an aspect of the modern process of globalization itself. The religions do not just respond to a globalizing context; they emerge as a part of that process just like the global capitalist economy or the global system of sovereign states. In light of this complex and selective historical development, the pluralized fate of religion along the axes of variation becomes clear.

First, the thesis of a differentiated and globalized religious system along these lines offers an explanation as to why, in spite of significant contestation and ambiguity, there seems to be such widespread global agreement on the existence and legitimacy of a delimited if regionally varied set of religions, and on the fact that these religions are

unities in spite of wide-ranging 'internal' variation. Correspondingly, contemporary sociology understands religious 'pluralism' primarily in terms of these religions and their different subdivisions and not, for instance, in terms of individual variation in belief and practice.² Religion is not just variable; the religions are plural, both internally and in relation to each other.

Second, in light of the selective and somewhat arbitrary modern (re)construction of religions, the possibility of variation across the boundaries between institutionalized and non-institutionalized religiosity becomes evident. Not everything conceivably religious falls within the authoritative boundaries of the religions; and the elements of these religions could be recombined in a wide variety of ways. Thus, what falls under labels like spirituality or those forms that could be new religions hovers at the boundaries of the recognized religions or outside them altogether. Without the existence of the institutionalized religions, such contrasting variation could gain no observational purchase. We could not recognize them as religions, as spirituality, or as another contrasting category such as, for instance, culture. In that light, we should expect constant debate and observation concerning how institutionalized religions are faring in a particular region, whether non-institutional religiosity is more prevalent, whether and how new religions are forming and becoming accepted, and so forth. The possibility exists that, in a given region, institutional religions will weaken to the point of irrelevance or, by contrast, will strengthen so as to push non-institutional forms underground. Yet there is nothing in the theory of the religious system that would predict one trend or another, only continued variation along this axis. Since the historical construction of this religious system only makes sense in the context of other analogous systems developing at the same time, the question of the relations between the religious system and these other systems will be an important consideration. This condition points to the salience of the three other axes of variation outlined above.

Third, therefore, the co-existence of these systems introduces the question of whether the social purposes that the religious system serves cannot be fulfilled by one or more of the other systems. For instance, can a sense of the ultimate meaning of life not be provided through the scientific system with its ever-expanding form of knowledge? Can an ultimate sense of belonging and moral rightness not be had through the state as the vehicle of the nation? Can loving acceptance not be found in the intense relationships

of the family? Can understanding and socialization not be delivered effectively through academic education? Can cosmic vision not be provided by science or art? Can participation in mass media performances or through sport not supply people with a sense of ritual regularity and incorporation? The idea is not that these alternatives will inevitably replace religion in these functions, but rather that these possibilities are a constant, acting as another source of religious variation over time and in different places.

More critically in this regard, the relation of religion to other systems points to the question of the relative power of these systems. Although the relation of the systems is not [p. 112 ↓] hierarchical in any structural sense, they do vary in terms of their prominence. With few exceptions, the global capitalist economy, the system of territorial states and the scientific system are most often far more invasive and unavoidable in the lives of the world's populations than is the authoritative influence of the institutionalized religions. Yet, to the degree that religion constructs itself as one of the dominant systems in global society, that power relation need not be constant and certainly religion should not be expected to disappear. Rather, simply out of that structural relation, one should expect a fluctuation between relative powerlessness of the religious system, manifested for instance in the widespread privatization of religion, and the relative resurgence of religion so as to exert meaningful public influence at least in various regions (cf. Beyer 1994).

Finally, the differentiation of a religious system poses the question of the relation of that system to the society as a whole, including its other dominant societal subsystems and the respective other religions. The axis from 'conservative' to 'liberal' religion enters at this point. The central issue in this regard is the extent to which the religions, through their adherents, will accept the relativization implied in the concentration of religious concern in a particular societal subsystem among others, and one that is moreover internally differentiated into formally equal religions. Given the universal and encompassing visions that what we recognize as religions typically offer, this is an important issue because it concerns the core logic of that system, its claim to render access to the transcendent conditions that make the immanent possible. If religion asserts such a foundational role for all aspects of social and personal life, then how will it respond to limitation and even contradiction of that claim? As noted above, the answers will vary along a continuum from rejection to unproblematic accommodation.

On the conservative end one finds responses that claim unique validity for their religion or variant thereof. They reject key features of the modern world deemed representative of the limiting situation, and they valorize of traditions evocative of past societies which ostensibly allowed true religion its proper role. By contrast, on the liberal side, positive orientations to the differentiated situation tolerate and even celebrate religious and other forms of plurality, laud the 'freedom' and 'inclusion' that it promises (and criticize the failure to live up to these ideals), and accept the relatively autonomous functioning of other institutional societal systems. Such a stance is not, however, identical with the acceptance of religious privatization or the radical secularization of society: a sectarian conservative orientation can also abandon the wider public world to its secularity, and liberal religious positions are often also publicly assertive (cf. Casanova 1994).

Conclusions: Future Directions for the Sociological Observation of Religion in Global Context

The theoretical perspective outlined in the last section is but one attempt to gain some greater purchase on the role of religion in the construction of contemporary global society. Its main advantages are that it demonstrates how one can see globalization and religion as intimately linked while at the same time showing that this linkage necessarily implies various forms of glocalised religious pluralization. That said, the field of the sociological understanding of religion in global context is still rather sparsely occupied, probably because we still find ourselves in a transition between a previously dominant secularization/modernization and an as yet only practically recognized pluralization/globalization perspective. So much of the more recent sociological literature on religion operates with an explicit or implicit awareness of the now unavoidably global and religiously plural context, but the often implicit theoretical assumptions that inform this work are frequently still those of the secularization thesis. A main symptom in this regard is that the perceived inadequacy of the latter leads only to the hypothesis that the 'real' situation is just the negation of secularization, for instance, the 'resacralization' of [p. 113 ↓] society or that nothing has fundamentally changed since the fifteenth century ce. Just as the post-modern has thus far defined

itself primarily as the negation of the core assumptions of the modern, so have post-secularization positions not really gone much beyond observing that the 'king is dead' or that the 'emperor has no clothes'.

Replacing the *leitmotif* of secularization/modernization positively with that of pluralization/globalization then carries certain implications for the directions that the sociological observation of religion will likely continue to take. The first and most obvious of these directions is that the sheer variety of glocal forms that religion takes will persist as a prime focus of research. Simply documenting that variety is already a significant and ongoing task. Just as important is the issue of the co-existence of these religious forms and variations within the single social space of global society and indeed within a great many localities of that society. The 'problem of religious pluralism' is symptomatic of the basic situation of religion under globalized conditions. Pluralization of religion is not just descriptive, it is also potentially and actually problematic just like secularization was under the assumptions of modernization. Sociological research will therefore have to continue to concern itself with the possible ways that this pluralization is managed, and the consequences of different strategies in this regard. In this regard, although the pluralization thesis concerning religion undermines the possibility of any easy prognosis, the issue of transformations in the religious field and the discerning of religious trends nonetheless remains. If we can no longer convince ourselves that there exists a master trend, then we are still left with the question of the likely outcomes in different regions of global society.

Finally, it must be stressed again that a re-orientation of the sociological observation of religion in the context of globalization and glocalization does not mean the irrelevance of previously dominant concepts, above all secularization, privatization, and differentiation. Pluralization of religion was an important issue under the aegis of the secularization/modernization orientation, but it was subsumed under those concepts as a symptomatic or contributing factor. Analogously, the older concepts remain important but now subsumed under the dominant motif of pluralization as descriptors along axes of variation. For in the final analysis, the shift from one *leitmotif* to another is more a matter of looking with different eyes at longstanding developments than it is a claim that something radically new has happened only since the new terms rose to prominence. We have lived in an era of globalization and pluralization for quite some time now.

The construction and valorization of these partially neologistic ideas only signals a reassessment of what we deem to be most worthy of our attention.

Notes

1. See e.g. Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Beyer 2006 as two, in their details, radically different examples. Beckford's (2003) much more extensive analysis of secularization, pluralism, globalization and religious movements overlaps in important ways with what I am outlining here. There are, however, also important differences. They are signalled in the choice of the word *pluralization*, a deliberate distancing from *and* echoing of the generally more evaluative *pluralism*; and in the close link I am suggesting between pluralization and globalization, subordinating secularization and movements to these two primary terms. I take Beckford's emphasis on social constructionism as a given.

2. Cf, for example (Bellah *et al.* 1985), who, in seeking to describe just this sort of variation 'across religious boundaries', coin the now well-known term, 'Sheilaism', thereby giving it a name *as if it were another religion*, in effect seeking to model this phenomenon on the taken-for-granted religions.

Peter Beyer

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