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WHAT DOES GLOBALIZATION DO TO RELIGION?

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Globalization is undoubtedly one of the most pressing realities with which religious believers must deal in the contemporary world. In this paper I want to explore the consequences that different understandings of globalization have for religious reflection on the topic. Different descriptions of globalization lead to different diagnoses of its problems and opportunities, and thus to very different prescriptions for how to respond.

I will focus here on the cultural effects of globalization rather than its economic and ethical aspects. What does globalization do to local cultures? What does it do to communities? What sorts of social forms does it encourage and discourage? This will take us into areas that many religious thinkers are not used to associating with globalization, but that sociological and anthropological literature on the topic has long addressed. I will consider two complimentary descriptions of the cultural impact of globalization: homogenization and heterogenization. Homogenization is better known. This views globalization as eroding local cultures and replacing them, either with some version of Western culture, or a global consumerist “hyper culture”. Heterogenization works in the other direction. From this perspective the very historical,

economic, and technological forces that make globalization possible also encourage people to think of themselves as members of distinct cultures and enable people to join together in ever purer, and often smaller cultural units.

Both of these dynamisms pose profound challenges to contemporary religious communities. The challenges of homogenization are well recognized. The erosion of local cultures impoverishes individuals and communities, reducing them to consumers bereft of traditional wisdom. Heterogenization, on the other hand, involves the increasing purification and differentiation of communities. Rather than syncretism, it threatens sectarianism; that the intimacy brought about by globalization will bring not communion, but polarization and strife. This can undermine the desire of many religions to be sources of social harmony. The heterogenizing effects of globalization foster a cultural ecology where communities close in on themselves, becoming ever-purer enclaves of the similar and thus less able to deal with difference, making religion more likely to function as a source of polarization and division both in global geopolitics and in local communities.

Globalization as Homogenization

When globalization is considered in cultural terms, homogenization is generally the most ready to hand concept. We reflexively think of globalization as the spreading of a single, global culture imposed on others – whether we imagine it as the continuation of European colonialism or as the corporate reduction of the global diversity of cultures into one bland, homogenized mixture. A quick review of titles reveals this default interpretation: Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld*, George Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society*, Serge Latouche's *The Westernization of the World.* In addition to these titles, discussions of globalization and culture abound with terms that express homogenization such as "coca-colonization", "Americanization", and

"global hyperculture". In a world where analytic terms are regularly derided as academic jargon, even the most overwrought terms "McDisneyization" – are readily accessible and embraced as evocative analytics of the global cultural terrain.[1] Globalization is imagined as the heir of European colonialism, continuing its assault on the indigenous cultures of the rest of the world. But in contrast to previous epochs, rather than a planned programme of cultural disempowerment and political control administered by colonial governors, today's cultural imperialism is the side effect of global corporate consumer marketing and the global reach of the new communications technologies. A global consumer market spreads American culture through goods, practices, and marketing. *Dallas* and *American Idol* are the new ideologies, Britney Spears and Michael Jordan (far-flung sightings of his T-shirts are a regular feature in discussions of globalization) are its new ambassadors. Dinkas and Yanomami forego their cultural heritages in the face of an irresistible corporate-powered tide of American popular culture. In the words of Tamar Leibes and Elihu Katz, "[H]egemony is prepackaged in Los Angeles, shipped out to the global village, and unwrapped in innocent minds."[2]

Such arguments confirm Jonathan Friedman's argument that the 1960's concept of "cultural imperialism" became one of the first terms to inform the critical reception of globalization. Thus its portrayal as

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[1] See John Tomlinson's discussion of these themes in Globalization and Culture (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 71-105. George Ritzer and Allan Liska, "'McDisneyization' and 'Post-tourism'", in *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, eds. Chris Rojek and John Urry (London: Routledge, 1997), 96-109. For "coca-colonization" see Matthew Fraser, *Weapons of Mass Distraction: Soft Power and American Empire* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2005).

[2] Tamar Leibes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross Cultural Readings of Dallas* (London: Oxford, 1993), xi cited in Tomlinson, *Globalization*, 84.

"the increasing hegemony of particular central cultures, the diffusion of American values, consumer goods and lifestyles".[3]

Similar analyses are found in the writings of Christian theologians. Michael Amalados speaks of the dominant form of globalization as the spread of

> *a particular culture or country or ideology or economic system. Such globalization aims at the subordination, if not disappearance, of the other cultures, ideologies, etc. In the contemporary world, a consumer culture sustained by a liberal capitalist economic system is seeking to dominate the world, supported by the media power, political strength and armed might of the Euro-American peoples. The other peoples of the world and their cultures are marginalized. When they are not strong their separate identities tend even to disappear. Thus globalization becomes monochrome.*[4]

Nigerian theologian Teresa Okure speaks of globalization as "the destruction of the cultures of those places to which the globalized culture spreads, since the local culture may not have the resources or will power to resist".[5] Okure also speculates on what the impact of modern cultural dynamisms such as individualization and consumerism has done to western cultural traditions – a topic to which we will return.

Treatments flow from diagnoses. When globalization is conceived in terms of homogenization, strategies of defence, closure, protection, and purification seem fitting responses. Responses in the Two-Thirds world naturally involve strengthening local cultures against the forces that

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[3] Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage, 1994), 195 cited in Tomlinson, *Globalization*, 79.

[4] Michel Amaladoss, "The Utopia of the Human Family: Among the Religions of Humanity", in *Globalization and its Victims*, eds. Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred (SCM Press, 2001), 81. See as well Tissa Balasuriya's discussion of the "homogenization of culture" in the entry "Globalization" in the *Dictionary of Third World Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 92.

[5] Teresa Okure, "Africa: Globalization and the loss of Cultural Identity", in *Globalization and its Victims*, 67.

erode them by developing new means of socializing the young into cultural traditions, finding ways to hand on traditions in the changed setting caused by urbanization, migration, and global media. In Catholic theology, responses in the two-thirds world focus on issues of inculturation, both in order to undo the destructive legacies of colonialism to indigenous cultures and to ground robust, contemporary, local forms of Christianity. The former may seek to purge Christianity of its unnecessary European elements, the latter to cultivate and strengthen culturally particular ways of being.

Okure's question about the fate of indigenous Western cultures in the face of the same forces that drive globalization helpfully links these responses in the Two Thirds world with religious movements in Europe and North America where similar concerns about cultural erosion and the preservation of particularity are widely evident. Christian academic theology in Europe and especially the United States, is now several decades into a sustained reaction to liberal, critical, and pluralist tendencies in academic theology by aesthetic, narrative, "post-liberal", and "radical orthodox" theologies. These emphasize the particularities of Christian vision, story, and tradition over against secular enlightenment reason, other modern master narratives, critical perspectives, and overly accommodating practices of interreligious dialogue and popular religious syncretism. These theological movements coincide (but are not necessarily connected with) a range of clerical and popular church movements that are conservative or restorationist.

To this list we could add curious set fellow travellers – various forms of identity-based and subaltern theologies. The rise of North American Black and Latina/Latino theologies, the proliferations of varieties of feminism, etc. all point to a concern to give voice to and preserve particular religious/cultural heritages and experiences. Beyond their clear differences on the normative level, these movements have a striking underlying similarity. Across geography, culture, and

ideological orientation we witness the same concern for preserving fragile cultural particularities. There is much that is valuable in these approaches. The cultural imperialism of Western colonialism did enormous violence to other cultures. The destruction it wrought continues long after political independence was won. Although contemporary globalized capitalism works through different processes toward different ends, it spreads a global "hyperculture" that furthers the destructive impact of western colonialism upon local cultures, North and South, East and West.[6]

But such approaches alone are an insufficient response to globalization's cultural effects because they are grounded in an analysis that does not attend to the full range of globalization's impact upon culture.

Globalization as Heterogenization

Globalization's impact is complex and perhaps even contradictory. In addition to being a force of cultural homogenization, globalization is also a force of cultural differentiation. In Schreiter's words, globalization produces a cultural context marked by both "hybridity" and "hyperdifferentiation".[7] One aspect of this is well known in popular and academic literature: the notion of "glocalization".[8] No matter how grand the aims of global capitalism, it must always contend with the local cultures that receive its products – be they physical or cultural commodities. Arjun Appadurai provides evidence for this in opposition to facile descriptions of globalization as "Americanization". He points to

[6] "Hyperculture" designates "an overarching cultural proposal that is itself not a complete culture". Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Orbis Books, 1997), 10. Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 84-105.
[7] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 25.
[8] Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity", in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Roberston (London: Sage, 1995), 25-44.

Philippine enthusiasm for the American singer Kenny Rogers and the global reach of Coca Cola as examples. What look to be perfect examples of the dominance of American culture, upon second glance are found to be more complex. Both are "indigenized" in their reception and use. Rogers may enjoy much more popularity abroad than he does at home. Coke is mixed with indigenous ingredients to yield a drink that has much more to do with local national identity than neo-colonial cultural inferiority – the *Cuba Libre*. [9] Perhaps even more to the point, the global circulation of violent Hollywood film inspires not only respect for the American empire, but also contributes to the imaginative resources of myriad militant groups that fight against it.[10]

But globalization does not encourage cultural particularity and heterogenization only because of the remnant ability of local cultures to function as market niches for Western capitalism. Glocalization is part of a reality that goes far beyond the mere reception of goods. As developments in transportation, communications technologies, and economic structures compress time and space, all parts of the globe are brought into potential relationship with the others. Localities are lifted from their stable local relations and brought into a broader, more volatile, set of relationships. As a result, they are forced to become reflexively particular; to think of themselves as one among many. They are expected to be particular cultures as part of a broader global ecumene. Robertson finds here a dynamic even more basic than fundamentalist reactions against the unwelcome encroachments of the broader world. Before they react, local cultures have already been constructed as species within a broader genus and in relationship to other cultures.[11]

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[9] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 29. See as well the discussion of "creolization" in Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 84.
[10] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 141.
[11] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Sage, 1992), 27, 97, 175.

Appadurai offers another account of how globalization feeds the rise of smaller and purer cultural identities. He builds upon Benedict Anderson's argument that the emergence of the nation-state depended on print media such as newspapers and novels that could sustain a geographically broad national cultural identity, or "imagined community". Without this, the modern nation-state's project of subsuming regional identities into a larger geographical unit would not have been possible.[12]

The cost of media has dropped so drastically, that smaller and smaller audiences are required for media outlets to be successful. Indeed, free internet weblog–"blog"–sites have now reduced the cost to zero (excluding internet access fees – the majority of the world still lives on the other side of the digital divide). Such changes are about much more than the emergence of websites for alternative music or amateur political commentary. Changes in media have long accompanied profound cultural transformations. The printing press was an essential technological support for the Christian Reformation and Counter-Reformation – it enabled the production of Bibles cheap enough to be widely read, and the production of other propaganda, spiritual images, and pamphlets. Appadurai argues that the new media and communications technologies are making possible smaller and smaller political/cultural movements – a new scale of communities. They are products of imagination "imagined worlds" as much as Anderson's nation-state, but ones that exist on a much smaller scale and are not tied to geographical locales.

So, far from reducing culture everywhere to one global homogenized mixture – whether bland or lurid, globalization seems to be exacerbating difference, separating us into ever purer enclaves of the similar, with less ability to communicate across our differences. But what of the

[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

concerns that render the homogenization analysis so attractive? Does globalization pose no threat to local cultures? It certainly does. But its threat is a bit more complex than simple homogenization. In order to understand this threat we will have to consider another dynamic brought about by globalization: deterritorialization.

Globalization as Deterritorialization

The advances in communication technologies just discussed do much more than make smaller scale communities possible. They introduce choice into the fabric of everyday culture. The stability of cultures has long depended upon a certain communicative inertia. Local cultures were the easiest to access; they were handed on through family and community socialization and practice. Others were available, but with greater difficulty. One could travel, read books, or seek other media. But all of these required more effort and expense. Now, the internet, satellite television, and a global pop culture market make extra-territorial cultures available with little more (and in many cases, arguably less) expense than local cultures. It is not uncommon for people to spend a significant portion (perhaps the majority) of their day watching television, participating in some online activity, or listening to music. Thus globalization unleashes a massive deterritorializing freedom into the everyday experience of culture. We are freed from the spatial constraints that once limited our cultural resources to the local.

Anna Lownhaupt Tsing's analysis of the transformation of Kalimantan into a frontier for capitalist resource extraction serves as an illuminative metaphor for these cultural transformations. The cultural and environmental degradation of southern Borneo did not happen simply because wealthy corporations offered cash for the destruction of peoples' homelands. The erosion of traditional land use practices results from a complex interplay of changes in social relationships, political power, and physical infrastructure.

Tsing offers a particularly compelling account of the importance of logging roads in this process. These cut through settled territories, isolating one part of a community from another. At the same time they open territories to an influx of migrants. These make new claims on land and engage in so-called "wild" logging and mining with little or no concern for its human and environmental costs. These very concrete changes to the transportation infrastructure overwhelm local cultures. Traditional stable communities are replaced by the mining camps, which work according to very different rules. These mix "migrants and local residents in an anti-local regionality in which commitment to the landscape is as useless as the gravel residue left over after gold has been picked out and taken away".[13] As a result, locals often enough end up joining in the frenzy of liquidation lest they be left with no land and no profit.

The analysis is profoundly helpful because of its concreteness. The destruction is not wrought by some hypostasized, all-powerful global capitalism, nor by the spread of an abstract Western ideology. Rather, a particular set of destructive global connections is unleashed in a location because it was opened up physically to the broader world by simple, narrow, rutted mud roads. These openings of the settled cultural ecology to the outside world overwhelm it. Complex knowledge, practices, and relationships that have developed over centuries (if not millennia) are wiped away and reduced to the simplest of practices – extraction of resources for profit by small, volatile, ad hoc communal alliances.

All of this provides an apt metaphor for the cultural effects of globalization. Thanks to the new communication and information technologies, and advances in transportation on both the local and the global level, we all have cultural "logging roads" coming right into our midst. The "roads" in this case are the new communications channels

[13] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 68.

that bring the diversity of world cultures to our television screens, ear buds, reading chair, or computer terminal. We are no longer bound to the culture in the place we happen to live. This brings liberations on a truly epochal scale, freeing people from the often violent and frequently stifling strictures of local communities. But like logging roads, they fragment local communities and erode the complex wisdom of long standing traditions, replacing them with simpler and less capacious cultural practices.

The first effect we notice is that culture becomes much more volatile. New media spaces, conveying an enormously broad range of cultural material, greatly accelerate cultural change. Although "relatively stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, etc." remain, "the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion". This does much more than erode the temporal stability of culture. It fundamentally changes the nature of ethnicity and culture by allowing it to float free of geographical territory. "[B]ecause of the interplay of commerce, media, national policies, and consumer fantasies, ethnicity, once a genie contained in the bottle of some sort of locality (however large), has now become a global force, forever slipping through the cracks between states and borders."[14]

The situation could easily be tallied with conventional accounts of the postmodern unmooring of signifiers. But there is something very different here from the dynamics described by Lyotard or Jameson.[15] It is not that elements of culture float free from organizing master narratives or traditions. Nostalgia is a powerful organizing force in contemporary politics. Fundamentalism and neo-traditional forms of religion are major forces on the global scene, and apparently

[14] *Modernity at Large*, 33-34, 41.
[15] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

postmodernity has done little to decrease the power of ethnic and nationalistic narratives. The unmooring at work here is not the postmodern erosion of meanings and narrative. It involves a disconnect not between elements of traditions, but between culture and geographical space.

The cultural needs of expatriate migrants provide a model for this new form of deterritorialized culture. Their needs are different from those living in geographic communities and thus, culture functions differently for them. Expatriates need strong, clear identities to ground their lives in foreign territory. The complexities of daily life in territorial cultures–e.g., getting along with settled differences on the ground – are only confusing distractions for them. Abstract purity is what is needed. This is substituted for the lost connection of the cultural tradition to a native social territory. Thus, diaspora Hindus support fundamentalist and nationalist movements at home, changing the religious and political climate in India. They have no need for getting along with the Muslim or Christian neighbours with whom their relatives back home must cohabitate. Immigrants need an identity sustaining essence to help them negotiate the anomie of a life in a foreign land.

Deterritorialization focuses culture and religiosity on identity. Practices such as *halal* dietary restrictions, which are taken-for-granted elements of culture in traditionally Muslim societies, are foregrounded in diaspora. In Pakistan, *halal* is woven into the texture of daily life, in the United States it stands out as a marker for a distinct identity.[16] The same effects are clear in the Catholic milieu. Ash Wednesday ashes, once a sign that the penitential season of Lent had begun, now mark wearers as individual Catholics in a pluralistic setting. A communal symbol of shared penitence has been reconfigured as a sign of identity.

[16] Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Umma*h (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 33-34.

In both cases, the complex interplay of a religious tradition and a shared form of life is reduced to a narrow marker of identity.

Olivier Roy describes Islamic neo-fundamentalism and other forms of contemporary "conservative" religion in similar terms. Neo-fundamentalists find in globalization the opportunity to imagine and create a "pure Islam" shorn of the contamination of particular cultures. Such communities are "not the product of a given culture or civilization, but the will of individuals who experience a process of individualization through deculturation and who, explicitly and voluntarily, decide to join a new community based solely on the explicit tenets of religion".[17]

These new forms of fundamentalist religious belief display the weaknesses that result from the reduction of religion to identity. Believers are sundered from the complexities of historical traditions. They are sundered from the traditional religious authorities that steward its complex wisdom, and from the complex systems of hermeneutics, jurisprudence, and ethical decision making that connect the beliefs and symbols of religious traditions up with a territorial, practiced form of life.

This conflict of tasks – between traditional, territorial religion and fundamentalist, identity-based religion was brought home in an exchange I witnessed on Georgetown's campus between the leader of a conservative catholic pressure group and a senior catholic bioethicist. The activist had previously attacked the professor in the media, charging that he did not adhere to Pope John Paul's teaching on artificial hydration and nutrition. This was a deeply ironic charge against the bioethicist, who is a member of the Pontifical Academy of Life and important ethical adviser to the Vatican. He responded using the complex professional hermeneutics of his field – a style of language quite different from the activist's heated press-release discourse. The exchange illustrates that the complexities and nuances that mark a lived

[17] Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 30.

tradition of moral reflection do not translate easily into the rhetorical needs of identity projection. Attempts to plumb the significance of inclusion of the clause "in principle" in the all important passage in John Paul's allocution, which are so essential for a practicing ethics in a Catholic health care setting, appear at best as overly rigorous hair splitting, and at worst, as casuist sophistry for those whose primary task is establishing a clear identity.[18] The two were simply speaking different languages yoked to fundamentally different tasks. Identity is not correlative with a deep commitment to the complexities of tradition; indeed it is a task often at odds with embracing the fullness of a tradition.

In popular, political, and academic language, identity is often equated with the life of a culture. We wish to preserve fragile ethnic identities; we worry about the lack of identity among marginalized cultures, etc. But, identity is a profoundly limited enactment of a cultural or religious tradition. It is but one practice among a broad range of practices that constitute a living form of life. When religions are reduced to sources of identity, their central convictions and practices often become less relevant, because they are so widely agreed upon. Rather, their controversial or counter-cultural teachings become the focus of believer's identities. In the United States, it is relatively difficult to have an argument in Christian circles about the doctrine of Trinity or the Incarnation – the central dogmas of the faith. Communities split however, around emotionally charged issues such as the ordination of women, homosexual marriage and abortion. Whatever the relative importance of each, none are even remotely central doctrines of Christianity. The task of identity projection favours elements of culture that have the most power to mark difference, to project an identity in contrast to other cultures. "[S]entiments, whose greatest force is in their

[18] John Paul II, "Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State: Scientific Advances and Ethical Dilemmas", March 20, 2004.

ability to ignite intimacy into a political state and turn locality into a staging ground for identity."[19]

I fear the story of the activist and the senior ethicist is more than a mere illustration. This conflict between the complexities of traditional religion and the black or white, in or out, approach of fundamentalism, may sketch one of the fundamental conflicts of religion in a globalized age. When religious traditions float free of their traditional territories, and identity becomes the fundamental religious task, simplistic, fundamentalist forms of religion have the advantage. More than that, elements within religious traditions that emphasis difference, boundary drawing, and suspicion – of the world, other religious groups, or ordinary believers – also have the advantage. In the Christian theological world, this may explain what seems to be a broad shift from theologies rooted in the analogical vision of Thomas Aquinas, to the more dialectical approach of Augustine. Thomistic thought dominated Catholic theology in the second half of the 20th century. It offered a grammar of similarity in difference that guided Christian cooperation with other religions.[20] It provided a vision of God's grace abroad in the world that enabled Christians to imagine discipleship as cooperation with others in God's work in history. Such a theological vision depended on identity being grounded in stable communities rather than in distinctive beliefs. Because their identity was beyond question, they could engage the world in ways that blurred the boundaries of the Church and the world. Augustinian theologies, on the other hand, emphasize the tension between grace and sin, and are suspicious of the inherent fallenness of all human undertakings. Thus, they foster suspicion of entanglements with the projects of the "Earthly City" and other religions. Since the world is fallen, one does not look for grace there. God's activity tends to be restricted to the boundaries of the

[19] *Modernity at Large*, 41.
[20] David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

Church. This theological orientation is more at home in the globalized milieu, as it stresses the distinctively Christian character of every undertaking. Cooperation with others and in secular projects always runs the risk of corrupting the Christian faith with an alien or pagan ontology or narrative.

I wonder if similar dynamics are at work in the context of Indonesian Islam. Its traditional forms seem similar to the Thomistic tradition from Catholicism. It could confidently trust that Islam was able to leaven older religious forms because it believed that ultimately, God, not human doctrine was the guarantor of faithfulness. Because of this sense of faith, it did not have to reduce every religious belief, ritual, or action to an expression of identity. Reform movements are nothing new, and Indonesia has its own indigenous debates and tensions about orthodoxy and orthopraxis. But now these debates are globalized. Traditional forms of Islam grounded in centuries of tradition, doctrine, and practice must now compete in a global marketplace of Islam, in a market that focuses on identity. In this context, movements that equate faithfulness with cultural identity such as fundamentalist and Arabizing forms of Islam will have an advantage.

Roy's analysis of the lack of reception of reformist Muslim voices, speaks to the effects of deterritorialized, identity based religiosity in all traditions. "The issue is not about writers but about readers. Why are reformers so little read? Do literacy or censorship or wealth explain this paradox? Censorship exists in most Middle Eastern countries, but not in the West, where Muslims have at least the same level of literacy as the people who avidly read Martin Luther in the 16th century. The reason for the lack of readership is simple: the new theologians wish to challenge the conservative theology with interpretations of their own (*kalam-e no* in Iran). Whatever their academic background, they consider themselves scholars, modern *ulama* or philosophers, and wish to propound their academic theological learning. They therefore do not

appeal to born-again Muslims, who prefer gurus to teachers, consider that too much intellectualism spoils the faith, and seek a ready-made and easily accessible set of norms and values that might order their daily lives and define a practical and visible identity. Liberal thinkers do not meet the demands of the religious market."[21]

This insight poses a challenge to widely shared assumptions regarding what religious elites bring to the table of the contemporary cultural and political scene. The religious market is not interested in complexity. Thus our detailed knowledge of the nuances of tradition, awareness of the checks and balances of the tradition, the way it deals with perennial misunderstandings, do not find an easy reception. Roy challenges easy assumptions that the genial, cosmopolitan elements of religious traditions can easily be applied to the present moment. For example, Anthony Appiah appeals to the cosmopolitan elements of religious traditions and to the learned figures who espouse them, as the hope for countering the parochial and violent uses to which religions are put.[22] But when identity is the fundamental religious and cultural practice, cosmopolitan traditions are viewed with suspicion. They are met with resistance, not with gratitude. Bearers of the religious complexity and cosmopolitan aspects of religious traditions cannot rely on the "traditional" character of such insights. If they are received, they will be received as a painful challenge to what people assume religion should be about.

When community floats free of stable places, there is less need to engage recognized authorities or to engage in the rhetorical work of dialogue and argument with those who disagree. An identity focused, deterritorialized cultural ecology supports such pressure group,

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[21] *Globalized Islam*, 30-1.

[22] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006), 147. He argues this point more explicitly in a forthcoming essay "What's special about religious disputes?" in *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics*, ed. Thomas Banchoff (Oxford, 2008).

community formations. Such a situation fosters a sectarian impulse. When communities are no longer burdened by the inertia of spatial proximity they become ever more homogenous, held together only by what they believe in common – negotiated not with a global ecumene of believers, but within the bounds of small local communities or focused movements. This fragments communities and undermines religions' abilities to serve as a source of communion among difference.

This deterritorialized form of religiosity sets up a situation almost identical to the conditions Scott Appleby describes for the emergence of ethno-nationalist religious extremism. This form of religiously motivated violence emerges in situations where there are high levels of religious commitment and low levels of religious literacy. Weak religions lack leadership trained in the complexities of their tradition that have authority with everyday believers. In such situations, religious commitment is easily channelled into violence through manipulation by political demagogues or by mass response to trauma.[23] "Identity" is not only too narrow a social function to support the richness of religious belief and practice, it also risks fuelling conflict by depriving practitioners of the elements of their traditions with which they can resist religiously fuelled conflict. This is, I think, the most profound problem with fundamentalist forms of religious belief.

Globalization inflects the reduction to identity with anxiety and violence in another way. It renders the diaspora experience of the migrant nearly universal. Constant awareness of other cultures, whether they are directly present or not, makes even majority cultures feel like minorities. All cultures now taste the anxieties of powerlessness and marginalization that were once the province of smaller minorities.

[23] This is not to say that religious traditions are themselves free of teachings that legitimate extremism and violence. Clearly most great traditions have elements that have fed extremism in their histories. But precisely because of that, they also hand on cautions and means of checking their excesses. These elements of traditions are what go missing in ethno-nationalist forms of religious violence.

Indeed, this is what is what distinguishes the present moment of Globalization from those that have preceded it for millennia. It requires a great deal of historical ignorance to speak of globalization as a new reality in either the United States or Indonesia. What is new is the scope and scale of global exchange. Whereas once, cultural encounters generally took place between two cultures on a generational time-scale, now they are manifold and instantaneous. The public schools in my neighbourhood host children with more than 40 different native languages. This is not particularly exceptional in major metropolitan areas. News coverage and satellite television bring the events of the entire world into our homes. No culture is able to feel secure in its own space any longer. This is more than a product of mere awareness of others brought by migration and media. It is also a result of the economic and political forces of globalization that weaken the ability of the nation state to control economies and protect constituents. [24]

Olivier Roy notes that revivalist movements across religions employ a common rhetoric frame of being an ethical minority under threat from a broader irreligious culture. This is certainly the case in the United States, where conservative Christian use of the rhetoric of marginalization only increased with the growth of their political power and continued to be deployed, even as the political party they had allied with controlled all three branches of the US Government. These elements of how cultural identity functions in the contemporary context

[24] As Zygmunt Bauman argues, globalization strips the nation-state of two of it traditional functions – control of the domestic economic and territorial defense, leaving only one element of state sovereignty left – national identity. See *Globalization: The Human Dimensions* (New York: Columbia, 2004), 64. With the powers of the state rendered impotent, the myth of the nation must expand to assuage the anxiety of this failure. Absent the balance provided by these other tasks and powers, nationhood – identity – becomes the focus of all the anxieties caused by impotence in the others. This gives rise to what Appadurai terms "predatory identities" which lash out at minorities and difference close at hand in order to deal with the experience that all once-stable minorities now experience, being a minority on the global scene. See *Fear of Small Numbers* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

make it extremely likely that religion will be employed as a tool of conflict rather than harmony.

Conclusion

We see that the effects of globalization upon religions are much more complex than the homogenization thesis would suggest. Alongside this pressure toward uniformity and the loss of particularity other forces are at work. Religions are simultaneously fragmented into sectarian enclaves. The complex, internal diversity of traditions is in danger of being lost as these tensions between co-religionists are resolved by their separation into opposing communities of the likeminded. In the process, religious believers lose access to the complex wisdom of their traditions. Most frighteningly, they may lose access to the elements of the tradition that check its violent misuse. In addition, religions are deterritorialized, shorn from the complex practices and relationships that allow it to inform a local form of life and make religious communities places where people experience living with conflict and difference.

It is essential that these other two dynamisms be kept in mind as religious believers respond to globalization. The challenge is not simply to preserve particularity against homogenizing erosion. If that is all we do, we are simply swimming with the tide of heterogenization by abetting the fragmentation of religions to a fractious collection of identity fronts. In order to avoid this, the preservation of our particularity must be combined with a preservation of the complexity of our religious traditions and the relationships among our communities. We need to fight the reduction of culture to a projection of identity by stressing the messy relationships with others that membership in the Church or *Ummah* requires. As this analysis makes clear, this is not simply a matter of restating traditional truths to an audience predisposed to hear them. It is a battle to swim against the tide to preserve traditional forms of religious discourse in a changing cultural ecology, where

global forces and the anxieties they produce incline believers to resist complexity and communion and to expect simple identities and the camaraderie of the likeminded from their religions. If traditional religions are going to contribute to a positive outcome of the complex global intimacy fostered by contemporary globalization, their adherents will have to struggle to swim against the tide to preserve these much needed elements of complexity and communion.

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