

Olivier Roy

Religious Revivals as a Product and Tool of Globalization

OLIVIER ROY
is Professor at the
European University
Institute, Florence and
author of *Holy Ignorance*.

The debate on the role of religions in international relations tends to revolve around the clash or dialogue alternative. Religion is seen either as a part of an ethno-national culture or as a supra national factor that could threaten existing nation-states. The same religion may be perceived under both paradigms: for instance, the Catholic church could be seen as a pillar of Irish or Polish national identity, and conversely, for some Protestant or secularist countries, as a foreign, supra-national entity, which could unduly call for citizens' loyalty against the state (for instance among US and Swiss political elites in the 19th century there was a creeping critic against the Church not to speak about the secular French Republic). As an ethno-national factor, religion could turn into a driving political force either for mobilizing large segments of the domestic population (the Christian right in the US for example) or for enlisting foreign forces in support of a given foreign policy (for instance both Israel and some Arab states try to stir up support among Jews or Muslims living abroad, while the Iranian Islamic revolution tried to enlist the support of Shi'a minorities abroad). In this perspective migrants who keep their identity and faith are seen as a possible fifth column of foreign countries (this was true for the Japanese in the US during the second world war, as well as for Muslim migrants in contemporary Europe). Many Mediterranean countries (such as Morocco and even "secular" Turkey) present themselves as legitimate mediators for organizing the religious life of second generation migrants in Europe. Conversely, the West considers to be its duty to protect (or claim to protect) Christian minorities in the Muslim world.

Religion, in terms of international relations, is connected to the minority issue here: the possible instrumentalization of a domestic minority by foreign forces. It is worth reminding the reader that toleration of religious minorities in the West is not so much connected with the spread of enlightenment as with the development of international law through treaties, starting from the 17th century. The Westphalian state was certainly not a tolerant state and was based on the concept of *cuius regio, eius religio*, which means that subjects had to share their ruler's religion; toleration of religious minorities occurred only when such minorities were protected by an international treaty following a military conquest or annexation (French Protestants from Alsace were protected by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and thus not affected by the abolition of the Edict of toleration in 1685), similarly Christian Greeks in contemporary Turkey, as well as Muslims in Northern Greece, are protected by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923),

and both minorities are in consequence seen more or less as “foreign” by the dominant public opinion. In the Ottoman empire, although the status of “protected minorities” (*dhimmis*) derived from Islamic jurisprudence, this has been slowly converted into a system of international protection since the establishment of the capitulations system in the early 16th century.

But religion may also be the base of a supranational institution and/or community. The Catholic Church and the Muslim ummah have been or are still referred to as would-be political entities (the Emperor versus the Pope in the Middle Ages, or Muslims’ nostalgia for the Caliphate): the creation of the Vatican as a sovereign state was a legacy of this confusion. To counter such a perceived agenda, states are usually eager to nationalize, territorialize and contain this supra-national movement, either through some sort of concordat or by encouraging “national” churches; it is no coincidence that the French tradition of royal gallicanism (the king being in charge of religion in his kingdom) has been revived, whatever the constitutional regime: Napoleon instituting a central body of the “Jewish Faith” and Nicolas Sarkozy, as Minister of the Interior, encouraging the creation of the French Council of the Muslim Faith. Even in liberal countries where the state has no right to interfere with religion, “foreign” religions tend to adapt to the local patterns in order to be accepted (the “Americanist” movement among US bishops took place in the 19th century, despite Vatican reservations, the Reform Judaism movement was born in the US, and nowadays many local mosques there tend to adopt the congregational model with a professional imam).

In international relations theory, religion is seen as a sort of aggravating element which strengthens other factors (nationalism, separatism, social protest, imperial expansionism) by giving them new impetus and providing better incentives to fight and die (salvation). In this perspective, converts are ignored or seen as a lunatic fringe, possibly as traitors or moles working for a foreign group. When religious groups act as disruptive actors in the public sphere, they are always credited with a “classical” political agenda where the stakes are political power and territorial control. Bin Laden is said to be driven by nostalgia for a Caliphate as a territorial entity, and evangelical preachers in Latin America and West Africa are often accused of preparing the ground for a greater US influence. If they cannot be credited with such an agenda, they are dismissed as “fanatics”, as crazy or as historical dinosaurs, expressing nostalgia for a lost culture.

To sum up, the debate on religion is framed in the clash/dialogue of civilization paradigm, which considers that religion, culture and territorial power are intrinsically associated,

The debate on religion is framed in the clash/dialogue of civilization paradigm, which considers that religion, culture and territorial power are intrinsically associated

whatever conclusions can be drawn in terms of policy implication. A recent growing trend is reinforcing this cultural perception of religion: namely the impact of the religious factor in the debate on universal values (human rights). Religious actors, with the support of some states (China, Egypt, Singapore and Saudi Arabia) tend to deny the universality of the human rights as defined by Enlightenment and the UN Charter. Tension between human rights and religious freedom pervades the debate on the right to wear a veil or burqa, on the limits of freedom of expression, on same sex marriage and women's emancipation. This debate tends to reduce the universality of human rights to a recent specificity of the Western culture. Although religions such as Islam and Catholicism tend by definition to be universalist, they do contribute in their own way to associate themselves with a given culture and to ascribe other religions to other cultures.

However, from my point of view, the so-called "return of the sacred" or the more assertive role of religion as a political and strategic factor, is not a return of traditional, culturally embedded religions; on the contrary, it marks a break with this culturalist perception of religion. Political actors, and many states, face a growing problem of handling religious issues because they are confronted with new paradigms: those religions which are successful on the "global market" are disconnected with traditional cultures and specific territories. They are both a product and a tool of globalization, and not the expression of existing political forces. Instead of providing new impetus to national and ethnic identities, they tend to bypass these identities and are thus more difficult to deal with through the traditional political and diplomatic tools of constraints and incentives.

In fact, religious dynamics have nothing to do with traditional competition between civilizations, such as Christianity and Islam. It is not Islam per se which is spreading or Christianity per se which is receding; on both sides there are specific shifts towards new forms of religiosity, at the expense of culturally-embedded traditional forms of religion. The fastest growing religious movement in the world is Christian Pentecostalism, along with Mormonism, but the former has hundreds of millions of believers. New Protestant movements have been adopted by a third of the Haitian and Brazilian populations, thus altering these countries' traditional identification with Catholicism. The spread of Islam has been linked to the growth of Muslim populations rather than to a conversion trend, however Muslim population growth is experiencing a sudden slowdown as almost all Muslim societies are currently going through a demographic transition which places them on a par with European fertility levels, or even below them. Tunisia, for instance, has a lower rate of fertility than France (roughly 1.7% compared with 1.9%); second generation Muslims in Europe tend to align themselves to their host-country's fertility rate (meaning that the "Eurabia" con-

cept of Europe having a demographic Muslim majority in around 2050 is sheer fantasy). The dynamism of Islam is no more demographic, but potentially linked with the success of salafism, a militant scripturalist and anti-culturalist brand of Islam.

We are witnessing a shift in the traditional forms of religious practice – Catholicism, Hanafi Islam, classic Protestant denominations such as Anglicanism and Methodism – towards more fundamentalist and charismatic forms of religiosity (Evangelism, Pentecostalism, Salafism, Tablighi Jamaat, neo-Sufism, Lubavich). But these movements are relatively recent. Salafism derives from Wahhabism, which was founded at the end of the 18th century. The Hasidim and Haredim were born in the 17th and 18th centuries. The various evangelisms belong to the tradition of Protestant “awakenings” which began during the 18th century, while Pentecostalism dates from the early 20th century. Similarly, the forms of Buddhism and Hinduism that recruit followers and export themselves are recent reformulations, from the late 19th to the late 20th century (Soka Gakkai, Falun Gong and Hare Krishna, as well as the political Hinduism of the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Sri Lankan theravada Buddhism). Those movements which the French call sects and the Americans cults, or more academically “NRMs” (New Religious Movements), are thriving: the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses, which also began in the 19th century, had expanded hugely worldwide by the close of the 20th century.

In this sense, religious “revival” is merely an optical illusion: it would be more appropriate to speak of transformation. Religion is both more visible and at the same time frequently in decline. Rather than a reformulation of religion, we are witnessing a return to ancestral practices abandoned during the secularist hiatus. These tendencies go hand in hand with a desire for greater visibility in the public sphere, and even an ostensible break with mainstream practices and cultures. Religion exhibits itself as such, and refuses to be reduced to one symbolic system among others.

It is the relationship between religion and the public sphere that is changing, for religious revival in the public sphere no longer takes on the form of cultural visibility but has become a display of religious “purity” or of reconstructed traditions. Religious conversions in all directions are a sign of this muddying of the link between culture and religion. But one thing is clear: in all cases it is the so-called “fundamentalist” or “charismatic” forms of religions that have seen the most spectacular growth, be it Protestant Evangelism or Muslim Salafism. There has been a similar increase in hard-line orthodoxy in the Catholic Church and Judaism, and even in Hinduism. Fundamentalism is the

Rather than a reformulation of religion, we are witnessing a return to ancestral practices abandoned during the secularist hiatus

religious form that is most suited to globalization, because it accepts its own deculturation and makes it the instrument of its claim to universality.

Thus the traditional link between a religion and a culture has been eroded: an Algerian is no longer necessarily Muslim, a Russian Orthodox or a Pole Catholic. Choices that were once unimaginable have become conceivable, if not easy. A typical example is Christian proselytism in a Muslim milieu. Why were there so few conversions to Christianity in the days of colonialism, when conversion was encouraged by the authorities? The secular French Republic supported the missionary activities of the White Fathers. It is no coincidence that the founder of the White Fathers, Cardinal Lavigerie, was also the rallying force who sought to reconcile the Catholic Church with the Republic. In Algeria, a French territory, applicants were not required to abandon the Muslim religion in itself in order to obtain French citizenship, but as conversion to Christianity involved the renunciation of personal status, it is clear that it facilitated assimilation so there was a strong incentive to convert. The results were very disappointing, however. Apart from a few families of Kabyle intellectuals (Amrouche, Regghi), the White Fathers' proselytizing activities were astonishingly ineffectual. The Catholic Church gradually abandoned its attempts to convert Muslims and settled for "witnessing" instead (e.g. the monastery of Tibehrine in Algeria); Father Christian Delorme recently went so far as to declare that they should not convert the Algerians because Islam was integral to the Algerian identity¹.

However, in February 2006, the Algerian Parliament passed a law banning religious proselytism. Why? Previously, such a law would have been pointless as instances were rare. But now, conversions to Christianity are affecting men – and especially women – in the street, without pressure from the machinery of domination. In 2008, several converts to Christianity went on trial². Explanations in terms of acculturation or of political supremacy do not hold water in this case. Nor is it because religious freedom was suddenly combined with an abundant supply of religions. On the contrary, most societies, like most governments, are hostile to missionary activities. This is primarily true of authoritarian Muslim countries, but in different circumstances many states are hostile to proselytism. In Russia and India for example, laws to curb conversions were introduced in the first decade of the twenty-first century (in 2006 in the state of Rajasthan): the Hinduists are targeting conversions of the lower castes, either to evangelism or to Buddhism in particular. In France, the Miviludes, a parliamentary mission, is explicitly monitoring all NRMs. Paradoxically, the proliferation of laws and anti-conversion campaigns demonstrates the success of the new missions.

Much has been written about conversions of Christians to Islam in recent decades. These conversions swell the ranks of fundamentalist tendencies (Salafism, Tablighi) and Sufi movements. But it is not as well known that Al Qai-

¹ *Non, l'Algérie n'est pas antichrétienne*, «Le Monde», 4 juin 2008. Several Catholic leaders protested against this position.

² Two computer scientists, Rachid Mohammed Seghir and Jamal Dahmani, were sentenced to prison; the trial of another convert, Habiba Kouider, was postponed. See *Condamnation de deux Algériens convertis au Christianisme*, in «Le Monde», 3 juillet 2008.

da is the “Islamic” organization which counts the highest number of converts (10-20% for the group’s internationalists) and is the only one which gives them responsibilities (so converts are far from being a mere backup force to dupe security checks and stymie “profiling”). Both Islam and Protestantism are making inroads among North America’s Latino immigrants³. Islam is gaining a strong foothold among Black Americans, illustrated in 2006 by the election of Keith Ellison, a convert, as the first Muslim American to Congress. As a matter of fact, it has been observed that conversions in all directions affect the same social milieu: second-generation immigrants, the destabilized working classes, “visible minorities” (defined by skin-color), and rebellious youths in search of a cause. In France, there is an 80% overlap between the map of mosques and that of new evangelist churches (Northern France, the Paris region, Alsace, the Rhône corridor and the Mediterranean rim). Attending an Evangelist or a Jehovah’s Witness service affords a glimpse of the vast range of ethnic groups involved.

Less trumpeted is the conversion of European Muslims to Christianity, namely Protestantism, of course, even if Catholic Church statistics in France show that in the early years of the

Conversions in all directions affect the same social milieu: second generation immigrants, the destabilized working classes, “visible minorities”, and rebellious youth in search of a cause

twenty-first century, around 400 Muslims ask to be baptized each year, compared with 200 in the 1990s. But, whereas the Catholic Church tends not to proselytize much, the evangelists have adopted a very aggressive conversion policy. The most famous case in France is that of the minister Said Oujibou, born in Morocco and President of the Fédération des Nord-Africains Chrétiens de France (FNACF) – the Federation of Christian North Africans in France – which claims to have 10,000 members. Mention should also be made of Azedine Bentaïba, the head of Oasis Toulouse, as well as the minister of Saint-Ouen, Amor Bouaziz (of Algerian origin). They are all evangelists, but a glimpse at the directory of the French Reform Church also shows a number of names of Muslim origin (Rachid Boubégra, minister in Lunéville in 2005).

As we have seen, clandestine Christian Churches are springing up in Morocco, Algeria and also in most Arab countries. The Algerian authorities have reacted strongly to this, with converts put on trial, priests arrested and missionaries expelled.

In the current climate, it is the question of apostasy in Islam which appears to be the issue most likely to lead to crises and tension. Many militant secularists, who are outraged at the fate of “apostates” in Islam, are the first to be suspicious of all converts in the other direction, whether their conversion is genuine or assumed. But the question of apostasy is only one aspect of this general transformation of religion in modern times. It is not just a human rights issue; con-

³ SUDARSAN RAGHAVAN, *A clash of culture, faith; Latinas balance Catholic upbringing, adoption of Islam*, in «The Washington Post», June 5, 2006.

version is central to the separation between religion and culture. There is no longer an automatic connection between culture and religion. The religious marker is free and floating. Tension will be exacerbated by the increase in conversions and switching between religions in today's world, until people come to terms with the divorce between religions and cultures. Conversions are a key to understand what is happening, but their inevitable growth will also be a sign that religions now operate outside cultures, and that the famous clash/dialogue of civilizations, which implies a permanent and reciprocal link between culture and religion, is a futile illusion.

This globalization of religion is particularly visible among radicals. People who join Al Qaeda nowadays are first of all globalized young people who identify with a virtual and imaginary Muslim ummah. Their life is often spent in a triangle: the family comes from one country, they move to a Western country (or were born there), where they become radicalized and then go to fight in a third country. In fact, neither Pakistan, Yemen nor Afghanistan is the key place for radicalization. These terrorists go there after being radicalized in the West or in a Western environment. And radicalization does not occur in a concrete political praxis with real people, but with a solitary experience of a virtual community: the ummah on the Web. The Nigerian Abdulmutallab studied in an international English school in the French-speaking country of Togo, before going to Britain. Dhiren Barot came from an African-based Hindu family and was educated in the U.K., where he converted to Islam. English is the language of recruitment and communication. These radicals do not have any permanent links with a specific country; as with their forerunners of the 1990s, they travel from one jihad to the other, use training camps where available and have never been involved in local politics in their countries of training or residence. Their anger is not the expression of the wrath of a real community, but of a virtual one. The generational dimension is obvious; most of the radicals have broken away from their families or become estranged, as illustrated by the puzzlement of many parents, like Abdulmutallab's father who informed the US embassy of his son's radicalization. Their Islam is reconstructed and not transmitted from the past. They never refer to traditions or to traditional Islam, and do not mention fatwas from established clerics. They act on an individual basis and outside the usual community bonds (family, mosques and Islamic associations). They usually remain aloof from any communal group. They are lonely travelers not involved in social or political action or even religious predication. They find socialization through personal bonding with alter egos, either in a local closed group of friends (the 9/11 pilots and the 2005 London bombers), a training camp in a remote place in Pakistan, or simply by chatting on the Web. After a usual "normal" life, they suddenly jump into violence. They are psychological losers or uproot-

ed individuals who can become imaginary heroes of a virtual ummah through their own deaths.

There is something puzzling with Al Qaeda: while many terrorists are simply dispensable, like Jose Padilla or Richard Reid, the “shoe bomber” and “one-shot” strategy deprives the organization of probably bright people who could have been more efficient in the long run. The case of the Jordanian terrorist who blew up himself for spectacular but short-term success in a C.I.A. base in Afghanistan is typical. He would have been far more useful as a mole for the Al Qaeda leadership in the long-term. Suicide terrorism is not a tactic here, it is an end in itself and part of the motivation.

This shows that Al Qaeda does not have a political strategy of establishing an Islamic state. Al Qaeda does not play a vanguard or a leading role in the conflicts of the Middle East but is mainly fighting at its periphery. It has a global enemy, the West, not the local regimes. Instead of promoting a territorial caliphate in the Middle East, Al Qaeda is committed to a global struggle against the world power – the United States – in continuation of the radical anti-imperialist struggles of the 1960s and 1970s by the likes of Che Guevara and the Baader-Meinhof gang. This was well illustrated by the wife of the Jordanian terrorist, Humam al Balawi, who blew himself up in a CIA base in Afghanistan: Defne Bayrak, a Turkish citizen, wrote a book in support of Bin Laden entitled “Osama bin Laden: Che Guevara of the East.”

Al Qaeda stresses radical but individual action and addresses a wider audience than just the Muslim community, hence the converts. Ideology plays a small role in the radicalization of the jihadist internationalist youth. They are attracted by a narrative and not an ideology: that of a global, indistinct suffering ummah. And that of the lonely avenger, the hero, who can redeem a life he is not happy with by achieving fame while escaping a world where he finds no room.

Al Qaeda is perfectly adapted to our modern global world, where acting means making headlines in the newspapers.

But, fortunately, this religious globalization movement is not to be identified only with new forms of radicalism and extremism. It has other dimensions that are somewhat ignored by journalists and politicians. The first point is that globalization entails a homogenization of religious practices, from the top as well from the bottom. Spiritual needs tend to fit into comparable forms: the individualization of faith, a quest for self-realization in this world as well as salvation in the hereafter, and the creation of a local faith community that brings support and brotherhood at a time when traditional social bonds seem to be fading. It is

Al Qaeda does not play a vanguard or a leading role in the conflicts of the Middle East, but is mainly fighting at its periphery

interesting to see how very different religions put forward the same inventory of benefits for the individual (to find peace, authenticity and truth). Islamic preachers now advertize family counselling and advise on bio-ethics, yoga is used as a spiritual technique by Jews and Christians, rap and rock groups promote different faiths, healing is a motto of Pentecostal preachers etc.

But this homogenization of religious practices is also indirectly encouraged by courts and state authorities, who need to use comparable paradigms of religions for two different and contradictory goals: one is to ensure control of the public sphere, the other is to implement freedom of religion. To ensure state control, governments encourage or push for the clericalization of religions i.e. their transformation into institutional churches. Most Muslim countries have now a “state-mufti”, a state Islamic faculty and tend to allow only certified clerics to preach. China compels all religions to enter into a national church. Most states who were former members of the USSR recognized only registered religious groups. Many countries have restricting laws or administrative practices on proselytism (from Rajasthan in India, to France, Russia and Algeria). France wants explicitly to ban “ostentatious” or “extreme” forms of religious practices (e.g. the burqa or veil). Many religious minorities react either through a process of “ghettoization” or more often abide by liberalizing their practices (e.g. using the Reform Judaism model in the USA). But this opening up is also the consequence of a shift of attitude among new generations of believers who do not understand the need for old-fashioned practices (e.g. one issue for young Western Muslims is “hallal dating”, i.e. how to meet a prospective spouse in a society where parents are no longer entitled to choose a spouse for their children, but youngsters are forbidden from meeting with the other sex).

The other dimension of what I call the “formatting” of religion to a Western paradigm of what a religion is supposed to be, is the need to ensure freedom of religion on an equal basis. For instance, many Western states have recently decided to enlist a Muslim “chaplain” for the armed forces, thus contributing to the clericalization and professionalization of the Islamic faith. Courts tend to define religious practices with a common model as “acceptable” in order to ensure or restrict freedom of religion: this thus contributes to defining “orthodox” and non orthodox practices from outside.

Is wearing a burqa a religious right, or is it outside the scope of what Islam requires from women in terms of “chastity”? Instead of being debated among believers, the issue is settled by secular institutions (courts and parliaments). This process of formatting religion contributes to its rooting in a new political landscape and thus to its deculturation. This is something which went unnoticed in the debate on minarets in Switzerland: the fact that there were only four

mosques with a minaret in the country shows that minarets were not an issue for the local Muslims, because they came precisely to make a distinction between a place of worship and a cultural importation. However, Islam is a very foreign culture for the majority of Swiss voters, hence non-existing minarets seem more a threat to them than existing mosques. This de facto integration of Islam in the West is not perceived, or to be more exact the visibility it entails is seen as a threat, and not as a sign of “gentrification” of Islam. New mosques are usually built at the request of representatives of the new Muslim middle classes emerging in the West, so if there are more mosques, it is precisely because Muslims are more integrated locally and are richer.

One consequence of all these trends is that religions increasingly look similar and compete for the same audience (e.g. the map of newly built mosques in France fits very well with that of newly built evangelical churches, with one exception: Brittany). This dual relationship involves complicated interaction between religious communities. On the one hand, every religion tends to call for political authorities to thwart the development of others (it is no secret that the Catholic church in France opposed the establishment of a state-sponsored faculty of Islamic theology in Strasbourg), while on the other hand different faith communities ally on a common values-based agenda to oppose the growing secularization of society: Catholics, Mormons, Evangelicals, Muslims and orthodox Jews join together to oppose same-sex marriages, to ban the gay parade in Jerusalem, or to defend the privileges of faith-based schools. This conservative values alliance also has an impact on the standardization of religious paradigms: some conservative Muslims have embraced the Christian crusade against abortion and evolution, which is a quite new phenomenon in Islam (none of these topics were salient issues among ulamas).

But in What Direction is the Globalization of Religions Moving?

There are in fact two conflicting views: one that this exemplifies the decrease of the role of the West in shaping the world religious landscape, and another diametrically opposite view stressing the growing role of US promoted models of protestant Christianity (including Mormonism). Interestingly enough, all the “big” religions are on the defensive, which is a paradox at a time of supposed religious revivalism. Islamic preachers are constantly warning their flock of the deleterious impact of Western culture and values. The Pope as well as Evangelical preachers denounce the “culture of death” of a Western secular culture turned pagan. Haredim in Israel refuse to recognize their secular fellow citizens as Jews, and bask in a culture of a minority within a minority. How can this sense

of being a minority under siege be reconciled with the supposed rise of religious revivalism in the world? It is probably because the new trends are operating outside the outdated perception of religion adding a spiritual touch to permanent geo-strategic factors (nationalism, cultural hegemony of the dominant powers, expansionism of new powers etc.).

The fate of Catholicism is a good example. The centre of gravity of Catholicism has moved south; should this be seen as a cultural change, a different Catholic culture (as proposed by Philip Jenkins) or on the contrary, the height of deculturation⁴? There has been a remarkable “third-worldization” of Christianity, and particularly of Catholicism, as a result not only of the demographic vitality of the South (and the plummeting birth-rate in traditionally Catholic countries like Spain and Italy), but also because those with a religious vocation are growing in number. In 1990, the Company of Jesus had 25,000 members: the leading country was the United States with 4,724 followers, but the second was India (2,997); in 1990, the Société des missions de Lyon in France numbered 190 applicants, 79 of them African, 32 Irish and 4 French. Authors such as Philip Jenkins speak of “African Christianity” and foresee a reverse acculturation of Christianity, «As Christianity moves southward, the religion will be comparatively changed by immersion in the prevailing cultures of those host countries». But the question is whether this is indeed acculturation, since the Christianity of the South has re-exported to the North an orthodoxy that does not fit there anymore. In terms of norms, the Catholicism of the South does not represent different cultural norms but on the contrary, a resistance to changes in morality that are taking place in the West (e.g. the acceptance of homosexuality). How can we explain the winning over of an Episcopal parish in a wealthy white suburb of Washington, hardly likely to dance to the sound of the tom-tom, by a Black Anglican bishop from Nigeria⁵? How should we interpret conversions carried out by the “dominated” among the “dominators”? The new religiosities are not specifically African: the use of music and emotions was already a feature of Western “awakenings”, and it is not religious folklore that attracts recruits but rather the central issue of orthodoxy and the place of religion in a person’s private life.

The Catholicism of the South does not represent different cultural norms, but on the contrary, a resistance to changes in morality that are taking place in the West

The establishment of Christian churches, or off-springs of Christianity in Africa (African Initiated Churches), has been described as a phenomenon of Africanization typi-

cal of Christianity, in other words of reverse acculturation. This was perhaps the case initially, for these churches were effectively born out of breakaways from the white missionary churches. But on the one hand the missionary church became

⁴ P. JENKINS, *The Next Christendom, The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford 2001.

⁵ A. COOPERMAN - J.L. SALMON, *Episcopal Churches’ Breakaway in Virginia Evolved over 30 Years*, in «The Washington Post», January 4, 2007.

indigenized and, on the other, “African Churches” such as the Aladura and Celestial Church of Christ became globalized and exported themselves to the West. Experts who prefer to avoid speaking of acculturation or syncretism as those terms are ethnocentric, have successively used the terms “African Independent Churches” to demonstrate their independence from the foreign missions and show their determination to be rooted in African culture, and recently “African Initiated Churches” as Africa is only a starting point and the churches in question are intended to become globalized⁶. These churches gained a foothold in Europe in the 1960s, initially recruiting from African immigrant communities, using English and French, and then spread into a sphere that was no longer that of immigration, either because they had reached the second generation or people of Caribbean origin, or because they had broken through among the “whites”. These churches are Protestant and charismatic but multid denominational; they ignore traditional religious affiliations. They define themselves as religious communities, and not as the expression of an ethnic group⁷. Today, their strategy is to recruit in non-African milieus, as the major neo-Sufi brotherhoods and the Buddhist and neo-Hinduist movements do. But they also show an interesting boomerang effect which completely clouds the hybridization and acculturation issue. This phenomenon also affects the “new religions”: the head of the Lukumi Babalu Aye in the USA, the first incorporated Santeria church (a religious movement born among Cuban black slaves), is a “white”, Ernesto Pichardo, whose bourgeois family in Cuba was converted by a black servant.

Here, the separation of cultural and religious markers is particularly striking with regard to norms. One of Rome’s traditional criticisms of the African clergy is of its laxity on the issue of sexuality: the Vatican excommunicated the Zambian Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, who married a Maria Sung, a Korean member of the Moon sect in 2001. But the “African Churches” do not claim to be more tolerant on issues of sexuality; on the contrary, today they claim to be closer to traditional Christian norms which are gradually being abandoned in the West, as evidenced by the controversy over homosexuality. It is interesting to note that nowadays there is talk of the homophobia of the “blacks” (or the Russians etc.), as if tolerance towards homosexuality was a Western virtue, whereas it is a very recent phenomenon in the West. In fact, the question of norms should not be thought of in terms of “culture”: the very rapid development of the debate on norms in contemporary Western law illustrates clearly that these norms are not specific to “Western culture”. This is illustrated by the case of Pym Fortuyn, the gay activist sociology teacher who was assassinated in the Netherlands: when he embarked on a political campaign opposing Islam, it was not in the name of defending a Christian Europe, but rather the Europe of the 1960s sexual revolution.

⁶ For an overview, see *Les Églises africaines se développent en Europe. Entretien avec Afe Adogame*, in «Relioscopex», 19 janvier, 2003; for a discussion on terminology, see A. ANDERSON, *Pluriformity And Contextuality In African Initiated Churches*, Birmingham, http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/pluriformity_and_contextuality_i.html.

⁷ *Les Églises africaines se développent en Europe. Entretien avec Afe Adogame*, cit.

The impossibility to connect the present religious movements with clearly identifiable geo-political phenomena is highly anxyogenous. It leads to a frantic quest for supposedly well-known historical paradigms (crusades, jihad, colonialism with the clash of civilizations, but also Andalucía and the Ottoman Empire for dialogue, not to mention the ghosts of Nazism and communism and the quest for an enemy). The problem is that these paradigms are not only misunderstood and taken out of their historical context, but also they are irrelevant for understanding the close connection between globalization and contemporary religious revivalisms. Religion is not necessarily politics in disguise, but it may also express a genuine adaption to the shaking of traditional ethnic and/or political identities by globalization, or an escape from this.