MULTIPLE MODERNITIES:
Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism
in a Globalizing Age

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ABSTRACT

The late twentieth century has seen far-reaching changes in the translocal
cultural regimes known as world religions. This review examines the politics
and meanings of recent changes in three such religions: Christianity, Islam,
and Hinduism. It highlights the nature of the forces reshaping religious
meanings and authority, the processes promoting conversion and standardi-
zation, and the implications of these religious refigurations for our under-
standing of late modernity itself. Though modernity is multiple and every
tradition unique, this review suggests that all contemporary religions con-
front a similar structural predicament, related to the globalization of mass so-
cieties and the porous pluralism of late modernity.

INTRODUCTION

One does not have to go back too many years to recall a time when anthropolo-
gists concerned themselves primarily with tribal, ancestral, or otherwise local-
ized religious traditions. The early editions of Lessa & Vogt's (1979) *Reader
in Comparative Religion*, for example, had only a handful of chapters on world
religions, most of which dealt with syncretized or village traditions. Though
postwar anthropologists of religion might not go as far as Radcliffe-Brown
(1952:2) in defining anthropology as the sociology of so-called primitive so-
cieties, their general preference was for the local and particularistic rather than
the world-civilizational (Bowen 1993:5, Stocking 1989).

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Early in the postwar period, however, some anthropologists began to address the nature of translocal religion. Influenced by Redfield's (1956) studies of peasant societies, anthropologists of Hinduism, Buddhism, folk Christianity, and Islam examined the interaction of localized "little traditions" with translocal "great traditions" (Marriot 1955, Singer 1972). Marxist and historical-evolutionary anthropologists examined the politics and meanings of religious movements over vast tracts of time and space (Wolf 1958, Wolf & Hansen 1972, Worsley 1968). Heir to the tradition that had pioneered the sociological concept of world religions, Weberian anthropologists—particularly those influenced by Parsons' and Shils' American reading of Weber—invoked the triad of tradition, rationality, and modernity to assert that world religions are more rationalized than traditional religions (Geertz 1960, 1973; cf Hefner 1993b, van der Veer 1994).

With the tectonic shifts in politics and culture of the 1960s, the "orthodox consensus" (Giddens 1984:xv) that underlay social theory during the early postwar period collapsed. With it went agreement on the analytic utility of the distinction between traditional and world religions. Most anthropologists rightly rejected the overextended generalizations of modernization theory. Lacking an alternative framework for the analysis of translocal religion, most also limited themselves to careful analyses of religion in local context; a few denied the intellectual validity of cross-cultural comparison at all.

All this changed in the 1980s under the influence of two shifts in the discipline: a renewal of interest in the history and genealogy of culture, and the rediscovery of the problem of power. These theoretical interests were reinforced by a third shift in anthropological practice: the turn of ever larger numbers of anthropologists toward complex societies and translocal culture. As the social reach of the state, markets, mass media, and other macrocosmic agencies grew, anthropologists' interest in translocal religions increased. The resulting expansion of spatial and temporal horizons did not revive the discipline's faith in Weberian categories. Instead it led to a heightened interest in the hybrid nature of translocal religions and the "political economies of meaning" that sustain them (Eickelman 1979, 1983; cf Cohn 1981, Comaroff 1985:6, Hefner 1987, Ortner 1984).

This review examines the new anthropology of religion from the perspective of modern change in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. The discussion highlights three central questions: first, the nature of the forces reshaping religious meanings and authority; second, the processes promoting conversion and religious standardization; and, third, the implications of these religious refigurations for our understanding of late modernity itself. These issues illustrate the high-stakes efforts of contemporary anthropologists of religion to position themselves as theorists, not merely of local life-worlds but of the "global ecumene" (Hannerz 1992; see Appadurai 1996, Barth 1992, James 1995). All

three also highlight the daunting challenges still facing this effort at disciplinary redefinition.

PUBLIC RELIGION AND THE PROBLEM OF MODERNITY

One of the most significant influences on recent research in the anthropology of religion has been the growing influence of religious institutions in public politics and culture around the world (Casanova 1994, Hefner 1998). This resurgence ranks as one of the most remarkable events in global politics and culture at the end of the twentieth century, challenging long-held assumptions about the secular nature of modernization and modernity (Dobbelaere 1981, Luckmann 1967, Wilson 1966). In policy-oriented circles outside anthropology, this resurgence has led once-optimistic proponents of modernization theory to embrace a Western-centric relativism pessimistic about the prospects for democracy and social justice in the non-Western world (Cooper 1996, Huntington 1996).

For more than a century, the vast majority of Western social theorists have been convinced that religion was a declining historical force. In mainstream social analysis, this confidence was expressed in either of two narratives on secularization. The first, a relatively robust version of the secularization thesis, characterized religion as an instrument of enchanted explanation and control whose influence declines as the light of reason illuminates what had previously been cloaked in darkness. As in Weber's (1958) account of capitalism's origins, this modernist prognosis was sometimes linked to a subsidiary thesis stating that secular disenchantment also occurs when institutions such as the state and market acquire institutional autonomy, thereby marginalizing the very religious traditions that had earlier assisted their ascent.

Less robust statements of secularization theory placed more emphasis on the pluralized nature of the modern world than on science and secular reason. Proponents of this view argued that the key to modernity is not enlightened reason but qualities of social organization peculiar to the late modern age, especially its structural differentiation, technical specialization, and pluralization of life-worlds (Luhmann 1984). Long before postmodern theorists spoke of the collapse of "totalizing narratives" (Lyotard 1992, Bauman 1993), proponents of this version of secularization theory asserted that modern pluralism is so radical that it frustrates efforts to project overarching ethical values into the public sphere. Where previously a "sacred canopy" (Berger 1967) stabilized life experience and provided shared public meanings, it was said, in modern times the canopy is rent and the collective bases of morality and identity are diminished or destroyed (Beckford 1989:74–107; Bruce 1996:29–52; Wilson 1985).

In the light of retrospective history, it is clear that both versions of classical secularization theory oversimplified modernity and its nonmodern "other." Rather than recognizing that modernity might be multiple, both accounts offered an idealized model of the West as the prototype for modernization in all societies. Furthermore, they failed to do justice to the fate of religion in the West. Anthropologists who rightly challenge the application of secular-modernization narratives to the non-Western world are sometimes less critical of these theories' portrayal of religion in the modern West. In an age in which anthropology aspires to be globally comparative, however, a more nuanced understanding of religion in the modern West is essential.

RETHINKING WESTERN RELIGION

Though conventional secularization theory is monolithic and teleological, the real-world process of secularization is hardly illusory. The transition from the agrarian worlds of the Middle Ages into the differentiated landscapes of early modern Europe did witness a decline in church authority, a pluralization of high-cultural traditions, and vigorous assaults on church doctrine and leadership. Renaissance Italy, for example, saw a dramatic upsurge of elite interest in Greco-Roman political philosophy, part of a broader assault on received Christian doctrines in European political theory (Skinner 1990, Tuck 1993). By sponsoring state churches, the Protestant Reformation at first seemed to strengthen the linkage between church and state, but it also released the genie of religious dissidence and anti-establishmentarianism. Asserting their duty to interpret scripture for themselves, Protestant nonconformists in England, Germany, and the Netherlands challenged the rights of princes and kings to decide the religion of their subjects (Martin 1978). These dissidents created precedents not just for religious nonconformists but for later advocates of democratic pluralism as well (Walzer 1965).

The decline in Christianity's public influence reached new heights, of course, in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, a subject that has been the focus of debate in recent commentaries on Western modernity (Asad 1993b, James 1995, Werbner 1996; cf Foucault 1996, Habermas 1996). Hegel observed that Catholic Europe had been spared the earlier Protestant Reformation only to awake in the eighteenth century to a far more ambitious challenge. For some historians of this era, the Enlightenment represented nothing less than the triumph of a "new paganism" over the church in the fields of politics, the arts, and public ethics (Gay 1966, cf Vovelle 1978). Though the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars inspired conservative campaigns to restore church authority, these efforts were undercut by the nationalist movements that subsequently swept Europe. By emphasizing principles of sovereignty and ethnocultural identity unacknowledged in Christian political doctrine,

modern nationalism furthered the de-Christianization of popular political discourse.

Examples like these at first lend credence to Anderson's claim that the dawn of nationalism presumed the "dusk of religious modes of thought" (Anderson 1991:11). This observation is correct in the limited sense that most European nationalisms made only perfunctory references to the organic political theories of Medieval Christendom. In Italy, Spain, and France, moreover, anticlerical nationalists directly challenged church authority. Extrapolated to the whole of Western public life, however, Anderson's observation distorts the degree to which religion continued to play a public role in much of the Western world, especially the United States. In the non-Western world, Anderson's secularist argument is even less apposite. As numerous scholars have noted (Antoun & Hegland 1987, Bowen 1993, Hefner 1995, Tambiah 1996, Tonnesson & Antlov 1996:8, van der Veer 1994), Anderson overlooks the far-reaching influence of religious ideals and networks on non-Western nationalisms.

In northwestern Europe, however, conventional measures of public religiosity since the end of the nineteenth century, and especially since the 1960s, confirm that Christianity's public influence has fallen, though at a different pace in different countries (Martin 1978). Post-1960s Europe has seen a steady decline in the numbers of Europeans entering the ministry, attending church, expressing a belief in God, and otherwise conforming to conventional indices of Christian religiosity. Though it was once believed that the Catholic nations of southern Europe might escape this trend, recent research shows that they too are now following the Western European pattern of church decline (Bruce 1996: 29–37, Hervieu-Léger 1990). Developments like these seem to confirm the arguments of Habermas and others that the structural transformation of the Western public sphere requires the privatization of religious conviction (Habermas 1991, but cf Casanova 1994).

Even in the West, however, modernity is not singular, least of all as regards religious matters. It is important to remember that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed not merely Enlightenment attacks on religious authority but new and vibrant religious movements. These included Methodism in England, Hassidism in Poland, Pietism in Germany, and in the United States, the Protestant Great Awakening (Halévy 1927, Outram 1995:34, Thompson 1963:350–400). Though their leadership had a complex class profile, most of these movements drew from the ranks not of the aristocratic guardians of the old order—many of whom no longer regarded themselves as particularly Christian—but the newly urbanized working and middle classes. In their class-base and cultural ethos, these movements anticipated the late twentieth century's movements of Islamic reform and non-Western Pentecostalism. Like these latter movements, nineteenth-century Methodism provided opportunities for leadership and social respectability otherwise unavailable to

unpedigreed urbanites. Methodism also provided emotive and individualistic forms of religious devotion. Finally, and significantly, it instilled a time sense and social self-control well-suited to the disciplinary demands of the ascendant industrial order (Comaroff 1985: 29–137, Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, Hobsbawm 1957, Thompson 1963: 350–400).

If most models of modernity fail to acknowledge the complexity of religious change in industrializing Europe, the same is true in spades for the United States. Republican America opted against establishing a state church, still the norm in Europe. This decision opened the way, not for religion's decline, but for a marketplace competition that spurred galloping sectarianism and fierce denominational rivalries. The primary beneficiaries of this tumult proved to be not the patrician elders of Episcopalianism and Presbyterianism but populist Methodists and Baptists. Like Islamists and evangelicals in the non-Western world today, these latter groups thrived because they minimized social distance between clergy and laity, allowed a heightened measure of congregational autonomy, and provided easy access to positions of authority for non-elite individuals (Wuthnow 1988:20).

Developments like these pluralized American religion, but—again contrary to conventional secularization narratives—also kept religious ideals very much in the public sphere. Looking back on the American experience, Bellah et al (1985) have suggested that the rise of industrial capitalism in the aftermath of the Civil War undermined a previously hegemonic (and essentially Protestant) "civic" religion by promoting a separation of economic organization from heretofore extensive moral controls. The result in their view was a colonization of the public sphere by the self-interested authorities of market and state (compare Habermas 1984).

Though national capitalism was certainly in ascent, other studies suggest that American religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was more heterogeneous in its influences and varied in its outcomes than this account implies. Jewish and Catholic immigration in the last half of the nineteenth century undermined Protestant hegemony, dashing the hopes of ultraconservative Christians to make Protestantism the religion of state. The efforts of Jews (secular and religious), Catholics, and dissident Baptists encouraged more, not less, religious freedom. The consequence was not the evacuation of religion from public life, but—in a pattern that resembles trends in Hindu and Muslim nations today (see below)—a potent mix of pluralization and heightened competition. At a time when religiosity among the European working classes was already in decline, American society was becoming more "churched." Between 1860 and 1900, membership in churches and temples grew from 20 to 40 percent (Wuthnow 1988:21–22). For the first time in American history, Protestant denominations also established national bureaucracies to coordinate their outreach.

Public religion in the United States at the turn of the century was not a civic religion of unperturbed consensus, therefore, but an element in a broader and agonistic debate over popular identity and morality. Between 1920 and 1950, conservative Protestants warned repeatedly of the growing power of Roman Catholicism, appealing for an end to denominational sectarianism so as to contain the perceived Catholic menace (Wuthnow 1988:78). Despite these appeals, fierce controversies raged between Protestant modernists and fundamentalists, leading some in the fundamentalist camp to call for separation from corrupted modernists (Marsden 1980, Wuthnow 1988:137). As the 1925 Scopes trial indicated, the tension was not at all confined to matters of personal piety but centered on each group's efforts to regulate activities seen as part of the public sphere.

These comparisons between the United States and Western Europe underscore that the history of religion in the modern West varies from country to country in a manner that reflects a broad balance of forces in state and society. Martin (1978) and Casanova (1994) have argued that Western Christianity continued to play a significant public role where it avoided alliances with reactionary ruling classes and opted for a marketplace pattern of denominational competition rather than state-imposed religion. As Casanova (1998) has observed, the countries in Eastern Europe where religion is today most vibrant are those, like the Ukraine, where a similar mass-based denominationalism prevails.

Secularization has occurred in vast portions of Western public life, but not as a result of a systemic teleology, as mainstream secularization theory would hold. In some Western societies, religion continues to exercise a significant influence on civil society and the public sphere (Casanova 1994, cf Smith 1995). Elsewhere, as in much of northwestern Europe, traditional denominations have experienced sharp declines in public influence. In Western countries as a whole, organized religion has done best where its primary social carriers have chosen not to attempt to reimpose an organic union of religion and state on the unsettled modern landscape, and have instead moved down-market to develop organizations closer in ethos and organization to mass society's working and middle classes. Having migrated away from the elite, these denominations expose themselves to less containable social influences, some of which can destabilize religion itself. This embedded and pluralistic understanding of religious change in the West is a sounder ground than classical secularization theory on which to compare Christian, Hindu, and Muslim modernities.

FRAGMENTATION AND OBJECTIFICATION

With their confidence that modern religion experiences privatization and decline, it is not surprising that proponents of conventional secularization theo-

ries have been baffled by the recent resurgence of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity around the world. Some have reacted to this development with the argument that it is all just a matter of time; as non-Western societies modernize, they too will experience the privatization of religion assumed to have taken place in the West. This line of argument is made, for example, by the German-trained sociologist Tibi, who states that, as Muslim societies modernize, they will follow the path of privatization experienced by Western Christianity. Having once aspired to organize all of society, a modernized Islam must inevitably be "domiciled within the sphere of interiority" (Tibi 1990:139).

Other commentators on the Muslim world take issue with this prognosis even while accepting elements of secularization theory. Agreeing that modernization brings secularization, Gellner has nonetheless argued that Islam has shown a unique ability to survive this secularist juggernaut. This Muslim exceptionalism, Gellner argues, has to do with Islam's ability to take advantage of the mobilizational opportunities of the modern nation-state. In the West, Gellner observes (in an argument that recalls Anderson's), nationalist movements furthered the secularization of political discourse by placing an idealized ethnic culture, rather than Christendom, at the center of the idea of the nation. By contrast, Gellner argues, Muslims have been able to invoke their great tradition of religious scholar jurists (*ulama*) and law (*shariah*) as symbols of nationhood. The national renaissance in Muslim nations has thus been able to promote purified religion as an alternative to the idealized folkways so central to European nationalisms. "Thus in Islam, and only in Islam, purification/modernization on the one hand, and the re-affirmation of a putative old *local* identity on the other, can be done in one and the same language and set of symbols" (Gellner 1981:5, cf Gellner 1992:5–13).

There are problems with this claim of Muslim exceptionalism. First, the model greatly oversimplifies religion's fate in the West. Second, the model ignores the continuing ability of Hindus, Buddhists, and other non-Muslims to project religious influences into the public sphere (Kapferer 1988, Keyes 1987, Tambiah 1992, 1996, Queen 1996). Finally, Gellner's account makes Islamic nationalism look too strong, overlooking the strong appeal of ethnic and secular nationalisms in the Muslim world. The exceptionalism thesis also errs in taking at face value the claims of conservative Islamists that Islam allows no separation of social spheres and thus no differentiation of political and religious authority. This unitarian view of Islam and politics has been bitterly contested by liberal Muslims who insist, with good reason, that there is a long precedent for just such a civil separation of powers in Islam (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996, Goldberg 1993, Hefner 1997a, Munson 1993, Norton 1995).

If a theologically conservative Islamic nationalism has achieved a certain influence in recent years, then, this has less to do with a disposition unique to Islam (and shared by all Muslims) than it does with a battle raging among rival

interpreters of Islam. In a manner that recalls battles between American fundamentalists and modernists earlier in this century, the Muslim world is being shaken today by competition over "the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them" (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996:5). A widely noted feature of this contest has been what Eickelman and Piscatori (p. 38) call the objectification of religious knowledge (cf Bourdieu 1989). In contrast to an age when Islamic knowledge was the monopoly of a small number of jurists, Islamic knowledge and practice today are objects of interest for growing numbers of people. Many Muslims have come to think of their religion as something complete, self-contained, and objective—a system (*minhaj*) that can be distinguished clearly from other ideologies and belief systems. This claim that Islam is a complete social order (*al-nizam al-islami*) remains a contentious issue dividing liberal and conservative Muslims (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996:159; Mitchell 1969:234–45; Moussalli 1995: 69–70, 87).

In a manner that recalls Anderson's remarks on the influence of print capitalism on European nationalism, Eickelman and Piscatori also observe that this process of objectification has been abetted by the expansion of mass higher education, the emergence of vast markets for inexpensive "Islamic books" and newspapers (Atiyeh 1995, Eickelman 1993, Gonzalez-Quijono 1994, Hefner 1997b), and the unsettled pace of urbanization in much of the Muslim world. Traditional social structures have collapsed at the same time that religious scholars have lost their monopoly of discursive power. Today populist preachers (Antoun 1989, Gaffney 1994), neotraditionalist Sufi masters (Launay 1992, Mardin 1989, Villalon 1995), and secularly educated "new Muslim intellectuals" (Meeker 1991, Roy 1993) vie with state-supported scholars to define the practice and meanings of Islam. In some countries, the resulting fragmentation of authority (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996:71) has pluralized social power and been a force for democratization (Hefner 1997a, Villalon 1995). Where the contest of carriers has coincided with civil war, economic collapse, ethnic polarization, or severe state violence, however, the struggle has often abetted the ascent of a "neofundamentalism" hostile to pluralism, women's emancipation, and proponents of an Islamic civil society (Fuller 1996, Roy 1993).

Fragmentation and objectification are not the only influences, however, reshaping public religion in the modern Muslim world. The recent spread of the woman-centered Zar possession cult (Boddy 1989, Lewis 1986) in North Africa and the Middle East indicates that there are subaltern religious experiences within or alongside Islam. Boddy (1989:35) observes that the Zar has gained ground "in virtual tandem with local Islamization" since it began its geographic expansion in the nineteenth century. The continuing diffusion of the cult shows that urbanization and migration have opened avenues for new religious forms, some of which present "an alternative view of the world in response to an elite's implicit domination of discourse" (p. 157). Unlike the hy-

brid cults Obeyesekere (1981) has explored among Sinhalese ecstatics, efforts to amplify the Zar cult into a fully public ritual form provoke serious challenge from those who insist that there can be only one practice of Islam. At one time, the "eclectic religious practice" promoted by prominent Buddhists in Sri Lanka (Spencer 1995:198) had its counterparts in the Muslim world (see Eaton 1993: 71–81, Geertz 1960, Hefner 1987, Lambek 1993), but religious politics in Muslim countries today often lead to heightened demands for a unitary profession of the faith. For ordinary Muslims who have long believed that Islam can coexist with other systems of knowledge (see Lambek 1993), these demands for a unitary Islam evoke deep ambivalence (Peletz 1997).

Even as homogenizing pressures have grown, the Muslim world has witnessed a counter-resurgence of pluralized expressions of faith. In Indonesia, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, among other nations, there is a growing interest in Islamic poetry, art, and other personalized vehicles of divine wonder. Indeed, some Muslims call openly for a civil Islam that renounces state-enforced standardization of the faith (Eickelman 1993, Hefner 1997a, Ibrahim 1993, Mardin 1995, Mottahedeh 1993, Norton 1995). This struggle between monolithic and pluralistic interpretations of Islam has its counterparts in Hinduism and Christianity. Developments in all three religions underscore that the real "clash of civilizations" in our era is not between the West and some homogeneous "other" (cf Huntington 1996) but between rival carriers of tradition within the same nations and civilizations.

MODULARIZED HINDUISM

Though Gellner implied that Islam is unique in its ability to respond to the secularist juggernaut, in recent years Hinduism has undergone an equally vibrant pubic reformation, in a manner that reflects somewhat different cultural preoccupations than those of Christianity and Islam. Historically, Hinduism lacked the centralized ecclesiastical structures of Christianity and the legal traditions and scholastic authorities of Islam. Noting the absence of such stabilizing structures, some scholars have wondered whether it is right to speak of Hinduism as a single religion at all (Hawley 1991). As van der Veer (1994:46) has observed, however, Hinduism has long possessed "a not fully integrated family of ideas and practices spread by ascetics and priestly families over an enormous region," and in premodern times it was already marked by "long-term processes of centralization and homogenization." Though the standardization of Hindu culture has reached new heights in this century, the process builds on deep historic precedents.

An interesting parallel between van der Veer's revisionist characterization of Hinduism and ideas on African society and religion is presented by Kopytoff, Ranger, and Vail. Kopytoff (1987) has shown there was an internal

frontier on the African subcontinent, across which there was vibrant cultural flow. With Vail (1989), Ranger (1986, 1993) has demonstrated that well before the coming of the Europeans, southern Africa was crisscrossed by large networks of trade and religious pilgrimage. Religious cults and symbols moved rapidly and regularly across tribal borders. These insights take exception with the arguments of Horton (1971) and others (Ikenga-Metuh 1987, Mbiti 1969) who characterize premodern African religion as localized and organic. This tendency to attribute closure to premodern societies has been the object of recent criticism in general anthropology (Barth 1992, Hannerz 1996).

In a similar fashion, Assayag (1995), Babb (1975), and van der Veer (1988, 1994), among others, have demonstrated that precolonial Hinduism was more than a collection of isolated little traditions. Shrines and pilgrimage centers were tied into a vast pilgrimage circuit extending across the South Asian continent. Pilgrimage channels doubled as trading networks (Cohn 1964, van der Veer 1994:44). Rather than the "autarkic villages" of colonial and nationalist discourses, premodern India was a networked civilization of economic and religious exchange.

Specialists of Southeast Asian Hinduism know that a similarly ecumenical movement of people, goods, and ideas underlay the diffusion of Hinduism to Southeast Asia more than 1600 years ago (Hall 1985, Robson 1981). In the less ethnically and class-stratified societies of Southeast Asia, caste was less central to Hinduism's diffusion than it was in South Asia, while the role of kings and monastic orders was correspondingly larger. As in South Asia, kings and clerics often built devotional centers alongside preexisting indigenous cults (Hefner 1985:25, Pigeaud 1963). This cosmological accommodation resembles the relationship between non-Christian cults and saint veneration in European and Latin American Catholicism (Brown 1981, Christian 1989). Over time, however, reform movements in European Christianity tended to attack these pre-Christian inheritances as heretical, especially where doctrinal disputes coincided with cleavages of class, ethnicity, and gender (Schneider 1990; see also Brandes 1990, Merrill 1988). By contrast, in South and Southeast Asia, non-Hindu cults often continued to operate even after elements of the local tradition were drawn up into a Hindu superstructure.

Ritual and cosmological standardization appears to have been more common in South Asia than in Southeast Asia, perhaps because South Asian status groups experienced more pressures to conform to transregional caste ideals (Babb 1975, van der Veer 1994:47). As Geertz (1980) and Wiener (1995) have emphasized, Hindu courts in Bali devoted considerable resources to ritual pronouncements of their own excellence, but popular Balinese Hinduism has preserved strong communitarian and egalitarian elements. Outside of specific ritual contexts, commoner Balinese show much skill at subverting the status pretensions of their high-caste counterparts (Warren 1993; see also Lansing

1991). Parish's (1996) pathbreaking ethnography of caste in Nepal shows that there is an equally deep well of ambivalence toward hierarchy among Newarese. But his study also suggests there are fewer resources there than in Bali with which to challenge caste depredations.

Certainly in the South Asian case this revisionist portrayal of a premodern, translocal Hinduism suggests that, *pace* Anderson and Gellner's modernist models, there were rich historical precedents for modern Hindu nationalism. However, the model does not imply that these precedents were sufficient to engender that movement on their own. Indian nationalisms are not simply derivative of the Western original (Chatterjee 1986), but there is no question that colonialism was central to their formation. Through their censuses and legal reforms, the British in India polarized the distinction between Muslim and Hindu (Cohn 1987, Dirks 1989, van der Veer 1994:20). Colonial policies also popularized the idea of a Hindu majority and Muslim minority, a notion that native political elites later exploited to their advantage. Western orientalists also provided histories of a Hindu Golden Age and standardized versions of religious texts (van der Veer 1994:21), both of which were later used by radical Hindu nationalists to portray Indian Muslims as foreigners.

In the postcolonial era, this process of Hindu regeneration has intensified, as has its political impact. In a manner like that described by Gombrich and Obeyesekere for Sri Lankan Buddhism (1988, but cf Holt 1991), a "Protestant" reformation has occurred in some streams of Indian Hinduism, though its impact seems less pervasive than religious nationalism itself. Recent years have seen campaigns to trim more extravagant flora in the Hindu ritual forest, instill a sense of personal responsibility among laity, and while decrying post-Vedic accretions to Hinduism, modularize ritual and belief (Jaffrelot 1996:201). Much of the effort seems modeled on reformist versions of Islam and Christianity.

A more unusual element in recent Hindu reform has been its elevation of tolerance as a distinctive feature of Hindu tradition. This interpretation also owes a good deal to Western orientalism, overlooking as it does the fact that traditional tolerance was premised on a notably illiberal inequality of divinities and traditions (van der Veer 1994:68). Hindus in modern Bali and Java place a similar emphasis on the unity of all religions and the legacy of Hindu tolerance. A vulnerable minority in a Muslim-majority nation, however, Indonesia's reformist Hindus have used the themes not to promote religious nationalism but to buttress their claims that they are the most faithful supporters of government-imposed Pancasila pluralism (Bakker 1993, Hefner 1985).

As with difference-denying movements among Muslims, some among India's Hindu nationalists have insisted on the need for a religious state based on the presumed authentic culture of the majority. Inevitably this formula imperils nonconformists within the majority religion as well as members of minority religions. In this formula, religious nationalism tends to be internally homoge-

nizing as well as externally antagonistic (van der Veer 1994:105). As with Islam, however, the clash of rival Hinduisms is still in an early phase, and it is by no means clear that Hindu nationalists will succeed in their homogenizing agenda. As in the Muslim world, the drive to make the state an instrument of religious standardization has inspired other believers to look deep into their tradition in search of sacral precedents for pluralism and civility (Hefner 1998).

THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CONVERSION

These comparisons of recent social change in Islam and Hinduism show that translocal religions confront similar predicaments, but their response varies in a way that illustrates the nature of the resources each religion brings to the encounter with modernity. This modest insight applies all the more forcefully to the Protestant conversion occurring in vast portions of Asia, Africa, and most notably, Latin America.

The social logic of this conversion varies. In one pattern, Protestantism takes hold among long-marginalized populations seeking to maintain an identity apart from the dominant culture even while appropriating the symbols and instruments of modernity. In this case, conversion reproduces the binary logic of ethnic categories even as it transforms their cultural content. Thus Karo Batak outflanked their Malay Muslim neighbors in colonial Sumatra (Kipp 1993), Akha in northern Thailand compete with their Buddhist Thai neighbors (Kammerer 1990, cf Keyes 1993), and Nuer resist state-imposed Islamization in the Sudan (Hutchinson 1996). Untouchable conversion to Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism in India has shown a similar logic (Mujahid 1989), whereby a subordinate people adopt the religion of a distant but high-status outsider to declare their independence from a closer but dominant neighbor.

The regions where Protestant conversion has been more extensive, however, are those where the organic linkage of religion and ethnicity has long since slackened and the differentiating demands of the state, capitalism, and migration have increased. The conversion of large numbers of South Koreans to Christianity in the aftermath of Japanese colonialism and civil war provides one example of this process (Clark 1986, Wells 1990). But the contemporary explosion of Pentecostalism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America also recalls an earlier history, that of Methodism in nineteenth-century Britain. As Thompson (1963) and Halévy (1927) both emphasized (though from different political perspectives), Methodism flourished not in the prosperous English heartland but among the poor and downtrodden of Wales, Scotland, and Ulster. As Martin (1990) has argued, nineteenth-century Methodists looked to their new faith as a "free space" offering opportunities more egalitarian than those available in mainstream church and society. For Martin, the genius of both Methodism

and contemporary Pentecostalism is that, though challenging elite monopolies, they do so without expressing that challenge in an explicitly political form. Historians of nineteenth-century Britain, like anthropologists of contemporary Latin America, often remark on the apolitical or conservative bent of these religious movements. But Martin insists that these popular Protestantisms are conservative only in their early phases, and for sound political reasons. They divert political enthusiasm into safe channels so as to keep their antiestablishment challenge "in religious storage to emerge over time when circumstances are propitious to activate them, or when things are safe enough for people to make open political claims" (Martin 1990:44).

Perhaps no topic in the contemporary anthropology of Christianity has been as controversial as this question of the politics of Protestant conversion. Not surprisingly, other studies highlight issues backgrounded in Martin's account. In two important works, for example, David Stoll (1982, 1990) has exposed the web of media, financial, and far-right political interests tying US evangelicals to their well-heeled counterparts in Latin America. Other studies have noted similar linkages between evangelicals and ultra-right politicians in Africa and Asia (Brouwer et al 1996, Nederveen Pieterse 1992).

At the level of the *barrio*, however, the politics of evangelical conversion often takes unexpected forms. Like Martin, Stoll recognizes that Pentecostal evangelicalism is organizationally fissiparous, intensifying sectarian tendencies long latent in popular Protestantism. In Latin America, this divisiveness is exacerbated by elements of African-American spiritualism that draw the Holy Spirit into the work of healing and social empowerment. For most new Pentecostals, this work of the Spirit is of much more interest than the political schemes of North American conservatives. Moreover, the Spirit is hard to contain. Even in the United States, evangelicals span a range of political viewpoints, as their heated debates over capitalism in the Reagan years illustrated (Gay 1991). For many Pentecostal women, the appeal of the Spirit lies not in its directives for masculinist politics but in its sanctions for monogamy, frugality, and abstinence from alcohol. In other words, Pentecostalism provides powerful ammunition against *machismo*.

In their now classical study of Western evangelism in southern Africa, the Comaroffs (1991) have offered a similar reminder on the need to attend to the full life-course of effervescent Christianity. The colonial sponsors of nineteenth-century missions hoped Protestantism would instill the labor and sexual discipline needed for Africans' passage into colonial capitalism. Some natives welcomed this Weberian Protestantism and the habits of literacy, cleanliness, and modesty it promoted. But the church fathers' message was not so easily contained nor was it even consistently conveyed. As Ranger (1993) has shown in Africa and Kipp (1990) in Sumatra, not all Protestant missionaries have been willing apostles of European modernity. Some were romantics who

hoped to use the mission to build peasant communitarianism all but destroyed by capitalism and individualism in Europe. In the African case, a first generation of orthodoxy gave rise to a second generation of independent churches, African religious movements, and freelance specialists of fertility, curing, and exorcism. A similar pattern has been seen in other parts of the newly Christian world, whenever control of the faith has slipped into the hands of people less concerned with canons than with bringing the work of the Spirit into their social and spiritual bodies (Barker 1990, Chestnut 1997).

Yet the tie of Christianity to Western modernity rarely slackens entirely. The necktie, Coca-Cola, and calico dresses appear again and again, even where, as in contemporary Sumatra, Java, or Brazil (Kipp 1993, Hefner 1993b, Chestnut 1997), the work of the faithful has long since slipped into native hands. The forces at work in these instances are stronger than missions and evangelicals alone. They are evidence of the cultural hegemony of the United States and Western Europe in global capitalism, consumption, and communications. But this erstwhile ally of a Westernized Christianity can cut the other way. Just as a blossoming consumer culture in nineteenth-century England unleashed an individualistic romanticism hostile to Christianity and capitalist discipline (Cambell 1987, Heelas 1996, Thompson 1993), today's markets and media offer self-idealizations that can undermine Christian ideals.

Converts discover that their religion has ideals and disciplines other than those they expected (Hefner 1993b, Pollock 1993). The work of the Spirit may be put to unlicensed ends, particularly where rather than rebuilding hierarchy, it encourages retreat to islands of personal piety. Even among US evangelicals notorious for their fire-and-brimstone moralism, the past generation has seen a shift away from community fellowship and moralism toward a view of religion as "a service agency for the fulfillment of its individual members" (Wuthnow 1988:55, cf Hunter 1987). Jesus as a nonjudgmental buddy has nudged God-the-Patriarchal-Father.

Other indices of this sea-change in American Protestantism are the heightened incidence of denominational switching (Wuthnow 1988:88) and religious intermarriage. On this evidence, it seems that trace elements of the subjectivized spirituality associated with nineteenth-century spiritualists and today's apostles of the New Age (Heelas 1996, Brown 1997) have seeped even into evangelical wells. In North America and elsewhere, the stabilization of identity and morality offered by proponents of the Word often proves ephemeral indeed.

CONCLUSION: PUBLIC RELIGION IN A POROUS WORLD

Contemporary refigurations of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity remind us that, contrary to conventional secularization theories, religion in modern times

has not everywhere declined as a public force, nor been domiciled within a sphere of interiority. Not a reaction against but a response to the modern world, the most successful religious refigurations thrive by drawing themselves down into mass society and away from exclusive elites, if and when the latter lose their hold on popular allegiances.

Having moved down-market in this manner, some among the refigured religions tap popular energies only to direct them toward a new leadership's ends. Some replace plural economies of meaning with a homogeneous religious currency. But these standardizations inevitably unleash contestive heterogenizations. Just as the United States saw a struggle for Protestant hearts and minds in the nineteenth century, the broader world today witnesses fierce contests over religion and its sustaining institutions. Corporatist Islamists vie with civic pluralists; conservative nationalists vilify Hindu secularists; and Latin American Pentecostals flee to islands of piety only to discover they cannot quite agree on what should be done there.

A key issue distinguishing rival camps within each tradition is their attitude toward politics and the public sphere. Though each is unique, the religions discussed here share a similar structural predicament on this point. Their refiguration is taking place in a world of nation-states, mass urbanizations, economic specialization, and as Appadurai (1996) and Hannerz (1996) have argued, communications and migrations that render social borders permeable to transcultural flows. In this situation, cultural organizations that lay claim to ultimate meanings (and, whether or not all religions do this, these ones do) face a dilemma: how to maintain a coherent world-view and steadied social engagement while acknowledging the pluralism of the modern world.

An organic and aggressive response to this predicament is to strap on the body armor, ready one's weapons, and launch a holy war for society as a whole. In today's world of bureaucratic states, this option requires a seizure of state and, from there, the imposition of an organic unity on an inorganic social body. This option, a statist one, has its enthusiasts among the three religions considered here. However, this option comes at a high cost: It antagonizes religious minorities, frustrates nonconforming members of the faith, and destroys the freedoms necessary for social pacificity and, at least for societies higher up in the global division of labor, economic dynamism. Nonetheless, as a mobilizing strategy, this option can have its appeal, and some self-promoting elites may be willing to pay its awful price.

A second strategy renounces organic totalism for separatist sectarianism. Like the Essenes of ancient Israel under Roman rule (Kee 1993), proponents of this option take comfort in the uncompromised purity of a small circle of believers. In a complex society rather than in a desolate desert retreat, however, this path brings with it regular reminders of one's marginality. Fleeing the horrors of anti-insurgency violence, some Pentecostals in Latin America in the

1970s were happy to embrace this option, offering as it did (they hoped) a safe haven from a war that would not be won. But when social peace is restored, and where commensuality is not blocked by other walls (such as race and ethnicity), not all believers will still be willing to hold themselves apart from a people otherwise their own.

There is a third option for a refigured religion. Rather than conquest or separation, it accepts the diversity of public voices and visions, acknowledging that, in some sense, this is the nature of modern things. What follows after this varies widely, but the underlying pluralist premise remains. Some religious pluralists will promote a marketplace denominationalism, whereby the hearts and minds of others are fair game. Other believers may accept denominationalism but neutralize its challenge by insisting that the essence of religion lies away from the bustle of the religious market in a wondrous world within. Still others, the civil democrats in Casanova's (1994) appealing synthesis of piety and critical theory, will insist that religion's place in the public world is more important than denominationalism alone. The alternative role is not as a religion of state but as a principled civil voice, whose ethical critique checks the hegemonic aspirations of capital, state, and uncivil society.

These are ideal types; hybrids abound. As with the three traditions discussed in this review, the option elected by the religious mainstream is determined not merely by the cultural resources specific to a religion but by the struggle for influence among its rival carriers. The fate of modern religion, we are reminded once more, is never determined by religion alone.

The predicament of modern religions is not governed by a teleological master plan; the macrocosm created by contemporary globalizations is not one of smooth Weberian affinities; modernity will not know an "end to history" any time soon (Fukuyama 1992). Though the reactions it inspires are heterogeneous, the predicament of modernity is not entirely culturally relative. The rise of mass societies, with their unruly cities, vast migrations, and invasive markets and media, renders local worlds unusually permeable to other cultural ways. Inasmuch as religious solidarities depend upon a public's continuing identification with religious ideals, the easy juxtaposition of alternative realities complicates considerably the task of keeping believers in line. We should not be surprised to see that, as with some players in the Salman Rushdie affair (Asad 1993c, Werbner 1996), religious elites often feel threatened by this too-easy promenade of contrary truths and therefore devote substantial resources to firming up cultural walls. They do so because those walls have become so porous.

Different balances will be struck in the resulting contest of religious creations. Their solutions may vary, but all religions in our age confront common challenges; their message shows the transformative impact of similar structural dilemmas. To weather the onslaught of alternative ways, religions cannot

merely invoke the canonical words of the prophets. Even as they profess their unique and unchanging truth, their actions confess they have tasted the forbidden fruit of a pervasive and porous pluralism.

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