

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Religion and Globalisation – General Overview
With Special Focus on the Thought of Roland Robertson
and the Roman Catholic Church’s Theological Response to
the Process of Globalisation

by

Dan Gheorghe Serb

Student No. SRBDAN001

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the
Degree of Master of Social Science

Department of Religious Studies
University of Cape Town
2005

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

SIGNATURE:

Signed by candidate

DATE: 8 February 2005

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
1. Religion as a Sociological Phenomenon	3
Religion Defined	4
Sociology of Religion	8
Religion Today	10
Opportunities in Postmodernism	11
2. Interlude: The Process of Globalization – Brief Overview	14
3. Perspectives on Religion and Globalization	23
Conceptual Preliminaries on Secularity and Secularism	25
Consumerism and Religion	30
Brief History of the Consumer Culture	32
Moral Relativization and the Relativization of Tradition	40
Relativism – Definition and Brief Overview	41
Relativization and Globalization	44
Religious Fundamentalism vs. Religious Fanaticism	47
Religious Tolerance	48
Understanding Religious Fanaticism	50
Fundamentalism and the Future of Religion	55
4. The Thought of Roland Robertson on Matters Concerning Religion and Globalization	58
Relativization and Fundamentalism	63
Secularization and Religion	66
Summary	73

5. The Roman Catholic Church's Theological Response to the Process of Globalization	74
Marian Apparitions – An Example of Globalized Catholicism	77
Vatican II	79
John Paul II, Vatican II, and Globalization	81
Recent Catholic Documents on the Church's Theological Response to Globalization	84
Conclusion	87
References	91

University of Cape Town

Abstract

“Two strong features of contemporary sociology are the rapidly growing interest in globalization, on the one hand, and an increasing tendency to discuss values, morals and ethics, on the other” (Robertson, 1997: 69). Derived from such interest, the main objective of this paper is to discuss the often obscure role religion plays in today’s society against the backdrop of the globalization discourse, thus marrying the twofold sociological quest mentioned above.

According to Jan Aart Scholte, “globalization has considerably redrawn the contours of the world political economy” (Scholte, 2000: 173). I suggest that the same can be said of religion. Even though some argue that globalization is “neither good nor bad; [i]t is and will be what people make of it” (Dewane, 2002: 2), it undoubtedly affects the role, form, and influence of religion.

In the first section of this paper I briefly define and discuss religion as a sociological and cultural component of our everyday life. In the second I give a brief overview of the process of globalization as understood by various social analysts. The third part comprises of a study focusing on the place of religion within the continually growing and ever-changing process of globalization. One of the crucial pointers of the analysis is whether religion is assigned a place or whether it is coerced in devising one for itself.

The fourth subdivision of this study deals with the thought of Roland Robertson on matters concerning religion and globalization, while the fifth presents a case study, namely the Roman Catholic Church's theological and strategic response to the process of globalization.

University of Cape Town

1. Religion as a Sociological Phenomenon

The *Second Humanist Manifesto*, signed by hundreds of prominent philosophers, scientists, and intellectuals of every description, declares that the twenty-first century should be the humanist century, the dawn of a new age. A century that will tap the creativity of each human being so that human progress and the values central to it will blossom. It will be a time in which we begin with humans, not God; nature, not deity. In it moral values will derive their source from human experience, thus making ethics autonomous and situational. It also stresses the fact that virtue comes from the individual whereby answers on the issue of right and wrong are sought in light of what each individual determines them to be according to their own beliefs and experiences (Porter, 1988).

Such an ideological prediction calls into question the traditional claims of religion, primarily on matters of ontology, truth and justice, seemingly dethroning it from its place of centrality within most world-societies. This poses a universal dilemma as various religions or religious philosophies are part of every human culture. From Christianity and Judaism in the West to the Far East philosophies of Taoism and Hinduism, many, if not most, claim to be the sole path to Heaven, Enlightenment, Nirvana, or wherever the particular ultimate destiny. Thus the questions: Which one is right? Are any of them wrong? Are all of them wrong? Or, are all of them right, relative to the individual? What, if anything, ties them together? What makes them unique? And what tears them apart?

From ancestral ties and territorialism to common market economies and ideological adversaries, these questions are older than humankind itself. It is an historical fact that

religion plays a significant role in the inter-relationships between diverse groups of peoples. In many cases it is the proponent of absolutes on matters of human existence and destiny. However, millions of people have died as a result of not being able to resolve the tension between conflicting “absolutes”. This is not unique to religion as the Cold War demonstrated how political ideologies could have a similar impact. Baltic and Central African genocides have demonstrated the lingering problems of ethnicity and territorialism. From the standpoint of any one ethnic group, they are in the right and the others must be wrong. Considering all this, what role does religion play in the 21st Century, an era defined by individualism and pluralism, and dominated by the culture of consumerism?

Religion Defined

The etymology of the term ‘religion’ is uncertain considering that much of its history prior to the sixteenth century is unessential to today’s usage. It is generally accepted that it stems from the root **leig* (Latin) meaning “to bind” rather than from roots meaning “to reread” or “to be careful” (Smith, 1998: 269). Throughout history it has been attributed numerous connotations and has been repeatedly redefined. A significant stage in this process began with the raising of questions pertaining to the plurality of ‘religion’ (religions) and the view of ‘religion’ as a subordinate cultural taxon during the sixteenth century through to the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century ‘religion’ became compartmentalized as “anthropological approaches focused on increasing the number of ‘natural’ religious categories, especially for ‘primitive’ peoples” (Smith, 1998: 277). During the same period, the terms “world” and “universal religions” were introduced as an attempt to resolve the dilemma of religion-

classification by recognizing both history and geography. As for the term 'religious', I find William A Christian's reformulation useful – "Someone is religious if in his universe there is something to which (in principle) all other things are subordinated. Being religious means having an interest of this kind" (quoted by Smith, 1998: 281).

As the *sociology of religion* is central to this study, it is pertinent to continue by defining the term 'religion' sociologically. This, however, seems problematic as it has been often argued to be a fruitless exercise. Max Weber, cited by Roland Robertson in his book "The Sociological Interpretation of Religion" (Robertson, 1970)¹, supports this idea: "To define 'religion', to say what it *is*, is not possible at the start of a presentation.... Definition can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study. The essence of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social behaviour. The external courses of religious behaviour are so diverse that an understanding of this behaviour can only be achieved from the viewpoint of the subjective experiences, ideas, and purposes of the individual concerned – in short, from the viewpoint of the religious behaviour's 'meaning'" (1970: 34).

Robertson argues that the seeming impossibility in defining religion lies in the fact that there needs to be a criterion of identification for any such analysis to be possible. He goes on to propose that Weber's dilemma concerning his inquiry into religion was misguided as his subject of analysis was what Parsons calls 'the grounds of meaning' and not religion itself.

¹ As I am interested in Roland Robertson's work on religion and globalization, I chose this book to assess his understanding of the term 'religion' vis-à-vis other analysts' views.

This could be the reason why Weber never arrived at a conclusive definition of religion as a sociological phenomenon.

Durkheim, on the other hand, attempted to formulate an all-encompassing definition of religion, believing it to be “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (1970: 37). Robertson’s concern is that such an approach could be even more problematic as it ‘lets it’ “many phenomena which are almost impossible to analyze in terms that are applicable to conventionally understood religion” (1970: 37). He also raises the issue of what can be considered sacred and to what degree.

Robertson goes on to suggest that sociologically religion can be defined either as a *functional* component of societal life, or as a *substantive* one. First, the functional approach – “A functional definition is one which uses as the criteria for identifying and classifying a phenomenon the functions which that phenomenon performs” (1970: 38). Such an approach serves the purpose of broadening the sphere of definition as any sociological phenomenon that serves or fulfils religious functions – such as worship, to mention just one – can be categorized as religious (e. g. Communism).

The work of Parsons and Bellah, closely linked to the functional approach, “specifies religion as the ‘highest’ and most general ‘level’ of culture” (1970: 40). Thus, considering that the sphere of religious beliefs and values are typically identified to be the most general level of cultural system, “all societies manifest religious beliefs and values” (1970: 40). Luckmann,

also a proponent of the functional approach, concurs with this postulate. "For Luckmann everything human is religious, religion being the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature through the construction of objective, morally binding and all-embracing universes of meaning" (1970: 41).

According to Robertson, the idea of religiosity and even the category 'religion' have arisen in "socio-cultural contexts where Judeo-Christian tradition has predominated" (1970: 43). To be religious is something more familiar in Christianity than let's say Buddhism. This reality is explained in terms of the interrelationship between everyday life and the world to come. Religion is thus a 'discipline' that is meant to promote an image of the world as it ought to be.

To various sociologists, this interrelationship means different things. For example, to Weber Christianity is a self-destroying system. In his opinion, Protestantism's eventual and still imminent fall will be brought about by its own emphasis on individualism and social involvement. Contrary to this opinion, Parsons speaks of the Christianization of society. By this he means that Christian culture has become institutionalized to the point of becoming imbued in the everyday societal life. From a sociologist's point of view, this is a case of 'social grounding'.

Once Robertson has established that 'religion' is a societal category, he goes on to define it. His definition rests upon the substantive, cultural content of religious phenomena and is twofold. First, "*religious culture is that set of beliefs and symbols (and values derived directly therefrom) pertaining to a distinction between an empirical and a super-empirical, transcendent reality; the affairs of the*

empirical being subordinated in significance to the non-empirical. Second, we define religious action simply as: action shaped by an acknowledgement of the empirical/ super-empirical distinction” (1970: 47).

Sociology of Religion

“Much of what appears under the rubric ‘sociology of religion’ is best described as sociotheology” (Robertson, 1978: 225). The term itself denotes a relative newness regarding the study of religion as a sociological phenomenon. This newness is marked by the more obvious interrelation between theological ideas and social-scientific ideas. This has not always been the case.

In the first half of the nineteenth century when sociology began to develop as a science, analysts such as Comte and Marx regarded religious ideas to be rivals of the scientific sociological thought. This lasted until close to the end of the century when sociologists like Simmel, Durkeim, and Weber “‘validated’ religion, and the religious matrix came to be regarded as the core or center of sociocultural systems” (Robertson, 1978: 228).

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a new change of focus, namely on issues pertaining to power, coercion, exchange, class, and so on. More recently, “sociologists have become increasingly drawn into debates about the quality of the societies in which they live and work” (Robertson, 1978: 229). If for a long time in the study of religion it has been assumed that religious belief and/or experience is phenomenally fundamental, in other words a taken-for-granted feature of the culture of much of sociology, lately some have argued that there is a degree of variability concerning the religious phenomenon, while

others have even argued that it is increasingly plausible that 'something' could take the place of religion (e. g. secularization).

This 'continual questioning' has brought about a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the current state of the sociology of religion. The main objection is that the spectrum of analysis is limited as it is focused primarily on the phenomenon of religion or religiosity. One of the shifts of methodology marked the attempt to intertwine the study of religion with the sociology of knowledge. Other developments include "anthropological work in the field of cognitive anthropology, and ethnoscience" (Robertson, 1978: 235).

Another remarkable shift has been the increasing interest in so-called *practical religion*. Often, the subject of analysis has been religious belief systems or cosmic maps and very little emphasis has been put on the 'religion of everyday life'. This marks a new direction in the sociology of religion, for "such a program would raise profoundly the relationship between social-scientific beliefs and the modes of cognition of the 'real world'.... It would demand a systematic comparison of the ways in which social scientists think and the ways in which 'ordinary mortals' think.... Moreover, the worries which some sociologists have expressed about sociology being insufficiently transcending ought to be significantly attenuated by such a program of analysis" (Robertson, 1978: 239). This is the very premise from which I begin my study – the attempt to make sense of the role of religion in today's society as rearranged by the forces – be it economic, political, or social – affecting the everyday life of society at large.

Religion Today

Religion today is very much characterized by Weber's metaphor of religion "striding into the market place of worldly affairs and slamming the monastery door behind it" (Featherstone, 1991: 134). According to other social writers such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, this is more than a prediction – it has become the norm. Nowadays, "man is free to choose and decide on his own what to do with his time, his home, his body, and his gods" (1991: 134).

The tendency, in the modern Western societies preponderantly, is to view religion as another 'emotional refreshment' available on the pluralistic market of 'societal consumables' where each individual is free to choose and mix his/her spiritual package, which does not necessarily need to be religious. Even though traditionally the consumer culture has been presented as being "destructive for religion in terms of its emphasis on hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure here and now, the cultivation of expressive lifestyles, the development of narcissistic and egoistic personality types" (1991: 137), religion seems to have accommodated itself to this reality.

In spite of the fact that religion, especially in its traditional forms, does not seem to play a central role in the society at large, the religiosity of the individual creates a market for various forms and products of spirituality. This leads to the adoption of a greater sensitivity to cultural diversity and disorder, as uniformity in belief cannot be imposed anymore; the individual will determine what is true for him/her and the rest will just have to live with that!

It also necessitates a broader understanding of terminology whereby the sacred is not restricted to core existential matters, but rather inclusive of social processes and practices that generate sacred symbols. The various and often diverse forms of such religious pluralism find even greater opportunities of expression against the backdrop of postmodernism.

Opportunities in Postmodernism

Daniel Bell tells us that “the real problem of modernity [was] the problem of belief” (quoted by Featherstone, 1991: 141). Postmodernism seems to have brought about a new opportunity of re-creation and reaffirmation of religion. How? By definition, postmodernity is both a philosophical response to modernity and a new expression of culture. As a direct result of the devastation of World War II, the Holocaust and the widespread development of weapons of mass destruction, intellectuals in Europe began to question the validity of modernity's dream of economic and technological progress and the assumptions underlying modernity. Postmodernists have deconstructed everything from the meta-narrative of progress to the claim that we can objectively understand human society.

While postmodernity has increased a tendency toward moral relativism it has also opened the door to mystery, spirituality and even the supernatural. Moreover, postmodern culture tends to be more subjective, relational, experiential, spiritual, relativistic and more open to the new and innovative. By virtue of rejecting any particular system, center, or worldview, the only true expression of postmodernity is *relativism*. But relativism, as I will discuss later in the paper, means that every individual has a right to his or her own view.

Thus, postmodernism creates opportunities for religion to regain what it lost to modernism. Too often religion capitulated to the threat from modernism instead of resisting it. The modern worldview had more influence than the worldview of traditional grand narratives, and thus religion surrendered to it. Diogenes Allen, in his book *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction*, speaks of a 'new openness for faith'. He reminds us that Christianity, for example, has been on the defensive intellectually during modernism. During that period many have declared that the post-Christian age has dawned, "on the basis of physics, biology, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology" (Allen, 1989: 2).

We are now in an age when philosophy and science, once used to attack religious belief, find themselves under siege. As Allen notes: "No longer can Christianity be put on the defensive, as it has been for the last three hundred years or so, because of the narrow view of reason and the reliance on classical science that are characteristic of the modern mentality" (Allen, 1989: 2). Even though religion has been 'on the offensive' in many parts of the world, such as the African continent and South America, it has now new opportunities to re-evaluate its viability and relevance and to reinvent itself in places like Western Europe, where organized religion has been on the decline.

It has been argued thus far that even though it is difficult to define religion, it can be *classified* as a societal category (Robertson). Within the spectrum of sociological analysis, the sociology of religion has lately experienced a paradigm shift from theorizing about religion to the study of practical, every-day religion. At this level of interaction – the quotidian, religion becomes diversified thus re-charting religiosity, or the question of being religious. Nonetheless, religious pluralism seems to find new opportunities in postmodernism. Many social analysts

suggest that the process of globalization contributes even more to the redefining and reinvention of religion. But what is globalization?

University of Cape Town

increases in international trade, financial flows, and the activities of multinational corporations [which have] integrated more and more economies into the global economic system” (quoted by Scholl, 2001: 41), while James Mittelman sees it to be “a process that centralizes power and wealth, but also decentralizes activities and fragments identities” (2001: 41).

Some social analysts such as Franz Hinkelmmert (2001) see globalization as a threat. This as the capacity for co-existence is perhaps fading faster from the ranks of the included than it is from those of the excluded. So far, this appears to be the latest global threat, which may in the end prove to be the worst, since it renders human beings incapable of dealing with the others. Hence the situation requires a shared human responsibility for the globe.

He also perceives globalization primarily as a strategy for capital accumulation. “The exploitation of this globalization of information, calculation, and means of transport is the very stuff of our lives today, but on top of this we are experiencing the globalism of a strategy of worldwide capital accumulation, now called the politics of globalization” (2001: 27).

Arjun Appadurai goes even further to speak of globalization as a process whereby a double apartheid is evolving. “The first form of this apartheid is the growing divorce between the academic debates around globalization and those that characterize vernacular discourses about the global, worldwide, that are typically concerned with how to plausibly protect cultural autonomy and economic survival in some local, national, or regional sphere in the era of ‘reform’ and ‘openness’. The second form of apartheid is that the poor and their

advocates find themselves as far from the anxieties of their own national discourses about globalization as they do from the intricacies of the debates in global fora and policy discourses surrounding trade, labor, environment, disease, and warfare” (Appadurai, 2000: 7).

His argument is that those critical voices who speak for the poor, the vulnerable, the dispossessed, and the marginalized in the international fora in which global policies are made lack the means to produce a systematic grasp of the complexities of globalization. Thus, a new architecture for producing and sharing knowledge about globalization could provide the foundations of a pedagogy that closes this gap and help to democratize the flow of knowledge about globalization itself.

Oloka-Onyango and Deepika Udagama concur with Appadurai that the process of globalization seems to accentuate social and economic marginalization. In a report presented to the United Nations’ Sub-committee on Human Rights (2000), the two analysts focus on the institutional framework that has been developed to pursue the essential goals of globalization as well as questions pertaining to equality and non-discrimination, with a particular focus on the effects of globalization on the situation of women.

Both Oloka-Onyango and Deepika believe that globalization is no passing or ephemeral cloud. To them, the phenomenon is capable of any number of conflicting and sometimes even contradictory interpretations, particularly of a qualitative or value-laden nature. At the core of most discussions of the issue is the extraordinary explosion of both technology and information, in ways that have considerably reduced the twin concepts of time and space. In

particular, information and communications technology (ICT) has emerged as perhaps the most dominant force in the global system of production. Thus, “globalization has caused global conditions of inequality and discrimination to worsen by encouraging and even facilitating uneven distribution and accessibility” (2000: 6).

They also point out that there are two facets of globalization. “As Paul Streeten has pointed out, there is a globalization that can come ‘from above’ in the form of multinational firms, international capital flows and world markets” (2000: 9). The other form of globalization can come ‘from below’ (such as the environmental, women’s and anti-nuclear movements, or in the human rights struggles).

Often, the global is equated with “capital, space, history and the power to transform” while the local is equated with “place, labour, tradition and, not infrequently, women, indigenous people, peasants and others who are ‘still attached to place’” (2000: 10). The implication is that the latter are marginal to the discourses on globalization, and that their knowledge and practices are unhelpful in the construction of a truly global contemporary world. Their final argument is that technology and economic development must be put to the service of humankind as a whole. In particular, such developments should not marginalize, discriminate or systemically deny access to the majority of the world’s populace.

Arturo Escobar (2001) proposes that place-based struggles might be seen as multi-scale, network-oriented subaltern strategies of ‘localization’. His concern lies with the issue of the elimination of borders within the context of globalization. He argues that “place has

dropped out of sight in the 'globalization craze' of recent years, and this erasure of place has profound consequences for our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy" (2001: 140). His attempt to "re-place place into its place" relies chiefly on two recent sets of work: poststructuralist feminist geography and political economy, on the one hand; and a relatively small, but growing, number of works in anthropology that already begin to outline an anthropology of place, on the other.

Place, according to Escobar, is, amongst other things, "the location of a multiplicity of forms of cultural politics, that is, of the cultural-becoming-political, as it has become evident with rainforest and other ecological social movements" (2001: 142). The terrain of social movements, particularly some ecological and ethnic movements, offers a fertile ground for thinking about the issue of place within the context of globalization and the politics of place in general.

Globalization seems to threaten the issue of place in analytical study. The transnational flows of people, media, and commodities characteristic of global capitalism mean that culture and place become increasingly deterritorialized. Hence, deterritorialization and "non-places" become paradigmatic figures of our times. This raises, amongst others, the issue of belonging, which is closely related to that of place.

However, not everything that emerges from globalization can be said to conform to the so-called capitalist script. In fact, globalization and development might propitiate a variety of economic development paths. Within this context, local groups, far from being passive receivers of transnational conditions, can actively shape the process of constructing

identities, social relations, and economic practice. This, however, leaves unresolved the relation between place and location, as well as the question of boundaries.

In Escobar's view, social movements and many progressive NGOs and scholars are finding it increasingly necessary to posit a defense of place and place-based practices against the economic and cultural avalanche of recent decades. Anthropology, political geography and political ecology can contribute to re-state the critique of current hegemonies as a question of the utopian imagination. Escobar's urge is that the social and human sciences join in this endeavor.

Even though the debate concerning globalization is quite broad, there are two main *interpretations* of the process, namely the idea that the world is becoming more uniform and standardized due to technological, commercial and cultural synchronization from the West, and the view whereby globalization is vitally related to modernity. Jan Nederveen Pieterse argues that the above two interpretations constitute narrow assessments of the process and he views globalization "as a process of hybridization which gives rise to a global *mélange*" (Pieterse, 1995: 45). He also sees globalization as a process which "unfolds in multiple realms of existence simultaneously", and explains *globalism* as "the policy of furthering or managing (a particular mode of) globalization" (1995: 45,46).

Since about 1980, globalization has become one of the most debated concepts in social sciences. Nonetheless, "the matters addressed nowadays under the heading of globalization had been considered for a very long time by theologians, philosophers, historians and social scientists without using that specific term" (Robertson & White, 2003: 1). Both Robertson

and White agree with Pieterse that the process is multidimensional. They also place special emphasis on the *directionality* and *form* of globalization. “As far as directionality is concerned, globalization has to do with the movement of the world as a whole in the direction of unicity – meaning oneness of the world as a single, sociocultural place” (2003: 4). The *form* of the process raises the issue of *how* the world has become increasingly characterized by both *extensive connectivity* and *extensive global consciousness*.

The current world circumstances are defined by terms such as *world society* (John Meyer, Peter Heintze, John Burton, Ulrich Beck, Niklas Luhmann, Jan Aart Scholte, Martin Shaw), *world-system* (Immanuel Wallerstein), *global ecumene* (Ulf Hannerz), *global system* (Leslie Sklair, Anthony Giddens, Barrie Axford), *global society* (various authors), *the-world-as-a-single-place* (Roland Robertson), *network society* (Manuel Castells), *global arena* (Jonathan Friedman), and *global field* (Robertson), thus denoting the fact that present realities are being consolidated or even consummated by globalization.

In order to better understand the process of globalization, it will also be useful to look at what globalization is not. First of all, globalization may be distinguished from imperialism as it is less coherent and it is not a culturally directed process. Furthermore, imperialism contains the idea (at least) of a purposeful project, namely “the *intended* spread of a social system from one center of power across the globe” (Tomlinson, 1991: 121). The idea of globalization, by contrast, “suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas which happens in a far less purposeful way. It happens as the result of economic and cultural practices which do not, of themselves, aim at global integration, but which nonetheless produce it” (1991: 121).

In Tomlinson's view, the effects of globalization weaken the cultural coherence of individual nation-states including the 'imperialist powers' of the past. John Urry goes even further as to assert that the process of globalization is a symptom of the 'end of organized capitalism'.

He says, "There has been a 'globalization' of economic, social and political relationships which have undermined the coherence, wholeness and unity of individual societies. Such developments include the growth of multinational corporations whose annual turnover dwarfs the national income of many individual nation states...the growth of means of mass communication which can simultaneously link 20-30 per cent of the world's population in a shared cultural experience; the possibility of technological disasters that know no national boundaries..." (quoted by Tomlinson, 1991: 121,122).

All this seems to indicate that the process of globalization does not just lack intent but it could be perceived as a disorganized process leading to world disorder rather than global unification. Either way, I concur with Frederic Jameson who ascribes the general cultural insecurities of globalization to the "incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects" (quoted by Tomlinson, 1991: 123).

Not everyone agrees with such a standpoint. To some, "as the world moves toward a condition of unicity, the temptations and the opportunities for world domination by an empire (cf. Hardt and Negri 2000), ideology, religion or alliance of nation-states becomes more likely. The events immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States of America are a clear indicative of such possibilities. Even though it is

generally argued that globalization does not equal Americanization, the American policy of 'full spectrum dominance' announced in 2002 in connection with the 'war against terrorism' has clearly designated the USA as a 'hyper-power' capable of manipulating the process of globalization to its advantage. By means of a strategic employment of the notion 'terrorism' as a justification of military deployment and engagement, the US could very easily lead the rest of the world to a "fundamental restructuring of global circumstance" (Robertson and White, 2003: 5).

Later on in this study new concepts and ideas pertaining to the complexity and paradoxes of globalization will be unraveled as I focus on Roland Robertson's work regarding the theme of globalization. This is a topic of actuality as, even though it extends back through thousands of years, the process of globalization may be seen as a "relatively recent characteristic of the world as a whole" (2003: 8).

3. Perspectives on Religion and Globalisation

According to James Kurth, “[t]here are three paradigms or perspectives from which one may view the role of religion in the globalization process: (1) the modernist, (2) the post-modernist, and (3) the pre-modernist” (Kurth, 1999: 2). The *modernist* perspective predicts the marginalization and even disappearance of religion in the near future. The *post-modernist* view, for Kurth, rejects the Enlightenment, modernist values of rationalism, empiricism, and science. The core value of post-modernism is expressive individualism, thus it can include spiritual experiences. Nonetheless, these experiences should be without religious constraints.

The *pre-modernist* perspective is an *alternative* perspective, “one which is modern in its occurrence but which is pre-modern in its sensibility” (Kurth, 1999: 2). Kurth suggests that this view is best represented and articulated by the Roman Catholic Church which is the focus of later analysis in this essay.

To better understand the complexity of placing religion within this paradigm, it is useful to mention Frank J Lechner’s perspective, which analyses some of the tensions and conflicts presented by the process of globalization. To him these are best reflected by what he calls the various “paradoxes of globalization” (Lechner, 1991: 275).

Firstly, globalization is universalization. In other words, “the components of Western social order have become universal; Western modes of thought have become universal; Western universalism has become universal” (1991: 275,276). Nonetheless, globalization is also

particularization. "The need to be different has been universalized; the meaning of universalism has been particularized" (1991: 275). On the backdrop of universalization, the need of constructing a collective identity has become universal. Thus, "particularism has become universalized, [and] universalism particularized. This is the paradox of universalization" (1991: 275).

Secondly, "in the process of globalization societies have become institutionalized as global facts" (1991: 275). He calls this "the paradox of societalization" whereby life within a society has become a challenge for traditional religion, as society itself is viewed as sacred and thus idolized through institutionalism. The third paradox is that of secularization. The new global order is often perceived as a secular order. However, "precisely because global order is an institutionalized normative order it is plausible that there emerges some search for an 'ultimate' foundation" (1991: 275).

Fourth, in Lechner's view, globalization produces a relativistic and pluralistic world order. Even though proponents such as Smart (as referred to in Lechner, 1991) see a possible resolution for this dilemma by the adoption of what he calls 'soft non-relativism' which would lead to a form of 'open' society defined by 'global tolerance and critical exchanges', Lechner believes that pluralism itself could also lead to a more coherent and satisfying monism.

Lastly, Lechner speaks of the paradox of sociology itself. To him, the attempt of the discipline of sociology to give a general and universally valid account of global order is compromised to the extent that sociology is a 'localized' enterprise thus remaining "tied to

the assumptions of a particular civilization” (1991: 276). Considering Lechner’s analysis, the tonic of the sociological study of religion within the process of globalization narrative becomes even more complex and in need of resolution.

José Casanova (2001) suggests that religion be studied within the context of cultural systems. Thus, one of the most remarkable effects of globalization on religion, as a cultural system, is de-territorialization. “By de-territorialization [he] mean[s] the disembeddedness of cultural phenomena from their ‘natural’ territories.” Furthermore, “globalization is beginning to loosen up the straight jacket of the sovereign state, its boundaries are becoming ever more porous” (2001: 419). However, he does not suggest the possibility of a future global government, or a global religion for that matter, as a result of the process of de-territorialization. Within this context, he argues that globalization could be seen as a threat “to dissolve the intrinsic link between sacred time, sacred space and sacred people common to all world religions, and with it the seemingly essential bonds between histories, peoples and territories which have defined all civilizations” (2001: 421).

Conceptual Preliminaries on Secularity and Secularism

According to some contemporary analysts, religion is being threatened by the predominance of the secular in today’s culture. This view purports that the primary locus of meaning is the here and now, and the ‘good’ is defined by consumer values, namely, those which contribute to the immediate comfort, entertainment, or satisfaction of ourselves or of our groups (which often function as an extension of ourselves). The sacred is thus largely absent and there is little effective sense of a transcendent, ultimate, eternal reality. Moreover, most

people do not as a rule structure their lives around an awareness of the reality and presence of God, or a god. This is what it is referred to as the 'secularity' and 'secularisation' of our culture.

For most people in the economically developed world, religious practices and values seem to be more an aspect of the social environment than the actual, functional centre of people's personal existence. Popular religion, as it is exhibited in the contemporary 'megachurches' and on Sunday-morning television, is too often (though certainly not always) a comfortable social practice rather than a radical commitment to a set of moral ideals and an 'ultimate' truth. Little if any of the "valuing most comprehensibly and intensively" defines genuine religion (Ferre, 1967: 24). What we have mostly is apparently a paradoxically and essentially secular kind of religion.

Although many people attend religious services, their motivations are often not truly religious. They want their children to know that God is part of their cultural heritage ("This is a Christian nation"), and they want them to receive the moral and ethical education that churches provide ("It helps to keep the kids off drugs"). Thus, going to church, and even making modest contributions to its support, is part of the contemporary lifestyle of most Western societies.

Experiential *secularity* becomes ideological *secularism* when people explicitly define knowledge and reality in terms of that which can be objectively verified (that is, 'facts') or which is subjectively experienced (feelings). In this view, nothing is, or can be, sacred: there is no possibility of a transcendent point of reference, no ultimate reality beyond the natural

A second factor contributing to secularity, although not necessarily to secularism, is the emergence of **consumer society**. When the so-called 'standard of living', which is in fact a standard of consumption, rises to a level at which most people can acquire goods beyond those needed for physical, mental, and spiritual health, they tend to define themselves in terms of the nature and amount of their possessions: to have more is to be more – more important, more virtuous, more secure. And since it is a general human tendency to enhance oneself, there is an equally general tendency to increase the possessions that define oneself. Hence the middle-class sense of entitlement and ownership: 'It's mine. I worked hard for it, I'm entitled to it, and I'm going to spend it any way I want to. Nobody's going to take it away from me.'

If it is affluence that makes consumerism possible, it is the media of mass communication that makes it inevitable. The commercial media – in particular newspapers and magazines, radio and television, advertising boards and, more recently, the Internet – are essentially advertising media. They exist because they generate advertising revenue. And the sole purpose of advertising is to motivate increased consumer spending.

A third factor in the development of contemporary secularity within the ideological and sociological environment of globalism is the phenomenon of **relativization of tradition**. It is generally recognized that there is a point of singularity, a point of reference from which all else is seen as relative. To many, until recently, that point was the deity. The tendency currently is to re-chart the coordinates of human existence and reality so that humanity becomes the point of reference. That point is where you are sitting (or standing, kneeling, lying down). The proponents of this shifting process tell us that *we* are the center of the

universe. Thus reality and the world are seen from the individual standpoint. From where you are, and from where I am. Without each of us relativity exists nowhere. To me this is accurate to the extent that this is what 'observer created reality' really means. It means that our true reality is relative, and yet that same reality only exists because we do.

A hundred years ago, a philosophical concept known as existentialism was coming into being. Existentialism's time has come and gone, and with the new millennium, a whole new way of viewing the world has arrived. That view is relativism. With increasing globalisation, a world economy and 'the new world order', relativism seems to be a necessary tool to understanding ourselves, each other, and the world we live in. First proposed by Albert Einstein as a theory of physics, it has become a part of everyday life.

We all live in a world of continuous change where one needs to constantly adapt to new realities every day. Given the rapid advancement of communications technology as well as the apparent cultural and social interconnectedness, the question of the individual's identity is one that also needs to be addressed. Change often causes unsettledness and confusion. On one hand, transnationalism blurs the ideals and pride of national identity. On the other, the relativization of tradition causes both individual and communal turmoil regarding social, cultural, and religious identity. This results in the occurrence of the dilemma of how to negotiate the slippery terrain of constant need to adapt to pluralism and change without conflicting with the individual's need of belonging and identity.

secular (Kurth, 1999). Diversity and the market culture are challenging the authority and immediate relevance of religion in the new global world. Nevertheless, religious organizations which are able to adapt to and work within these new coordinates experience growth and affluence of means and followers.

T J Gorringer, in his book *The Education of Desire*, agrees with Steven Miles that consumer capitalism “has been *the* religion of the late twentieth century” (Gorringer, 2001: 84). He goes on to substantiate this statement: “Consumer capitalism possesses all the classical attributes of deity: omnipresence – saleswomen for Avon cosmetics target tribes in the Amazon; omniscience – we, and all our individual preferences, are logged on to its databases, which know to the scruple how much tea we drink and how much cheese we eat per week; and omnipotence, for ‘can do’ is its watchword. And in its ambitions and dreams it is infinite: it knows no limits. As a *system*, it is predicated on infinite growth, and when parts of the system – say firms, or shops – cease to expand, they die” (Gorringer, 2001: 84).

Gorringer seems to imply that traditional religion, including Christianity, is under threat. The threat does not concern the sacred as much as worship. Consumption is not a new reality of human existence. From the beginnings, people had to consume in order to survive. Exchange of goods and later on financial transactions for goods had been practised throughout the history of humanity. The danger of modern consumerism is illustrated by the fact that consumption dominates people’s interests to the point where their priorities have been readjusted and their identities amalgamated. Thus, church, and religion in general, are less relevant to the immediate needs of humanity. To put it more simply, the now and the here take precedence over the kingdom to come.

Brief History of the Consumer Culture

“The early patterning of consumption within a distinctively capitalist economic structure began to emerge in England . . . in the second half of the seventeenth century” (Bocock, 1993: 11). The ‘free market’ concept, as an early capitalist form of production, was first developed in commercial agriculture in Britain. British Puritanism, though, discouraged spending money on clothes, or on eating elaborate and expensive meals. Thus, during that historical period, countries with less Protestant, puritanical cultural values such as France, Italy, and Spain practiced a more liberal culture of consumerism.

The first few decades of the eighteen-century saw the “development of ‘a consumer culture’” (1993: 14). What sped up the process was the fact that more people became aware of and were able to purchase goods. This development was facilitated by the inception of advertising in the middle of the century in provincial newspapers and periodicals. Through this means consumers were exposed to a variety of goods for the household and for body decoration. Industrial capitalism, the culture of mass production (also called ‘Fordism’), the conception of city malls, contributed to the evolving of the culture of mass consumption that became of central importance to modern capitalism in both the United States of America and Western Europe. Thus, by the 1950s we can speak of the culture of consumerism being well established.

From very early on it became evident that consumerism is “far more than economic activity: it is also about dreams and consolations, communication and confrontation, image and identity” (Nava, 1992: 167). In the post-industrial society, the *shift of identities* had been experienced at both collective and personal levels. “Culturally, there has been a

fragmentation of working class into a plural popular culture and the consequent decline in traditional collective solidarities. On a personal level, the shift has been away from identities based on social class position towards identities based on lifestyle and mode of consumption” (Lunt and Livingstone, 1992: 19). Thus, within the mass consumption environment, people’s identities are “produced by the experience of participation in the cultural forum of late capitalism – the shopping mall” (Lunt and Livingstone, 1992: 22).

One significant consequence of the growth of consumerism was the commercialization of leisure. The increase in the consumption of food, spending on housing, interest in fashion, music, entrainment, and holidays reflects the reality that the process is one of reciprocity – growth facilitates new areas of consumption which in turn increases the capacity to consume. At the heart of this ever evolving process is what Campbell calls the “mystery surrounding the behaviour of consumers in modern industrial societies” (Campbell, 1987: 37). To him, the consumer “is characterized by an insatiability which arises out of a basic inexhaustibility of wants themselves, which forever arise, phoenix-like, from the ashes of their predecessors” (1987: 37). He also suggests that this mystery could be understood in the light of the inventiveness characteristic to our modern society.

For Bocoock the ‘mystery’ is not a mystery at all. Consumption is based “increasingly upon desires, not simply on needs” (Bocoock, 1993: 3). According to the French authors Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, people had had to become ‘desiring machines’ to fit the products which capitalist industries produced. People would only buy goods if they desired them (1993: 83). Even though Bocoock regards this view somehow exaggerated, he does argue that consumption in the modern world depends more and more upon creating wants

and satisfying desires rather than satisfying mere “needs which have been seen as rooted in human biology” (1993: 90). Consumerism encourages the culture of desire and through the means of advertising even creates and elicits wants (1993: 93).

As mentioned earlier on in this study, the tendency in Western societies is for religion to become a “private leisure-time pursuit purchased in the market like any other lifestyle” (Featherstone, 1991: 134). This development is a challenge that needs to be addressed within the larger context of human interactions rather than from a solely religious premise. In other words, in the present context, religion must adapt to two new environmental realities: privatization and pluralism. The religious monopolies of the past are gone and unlikely to ever return under the conditions of advanced capitalism. This means that “the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed. It must be ‘sold’ to a clientele that is no longer constrained to ‘buy’” (Dawson, 1998: 584).

Dawson goes further to say that “religious institutions have become marketing agencies and the religious traditions consumer commodities. To compete in the new religious market place religions must rationalize their efforts, resulting in their increased homogenization. Religious organizations become increasingly bureaucratic and hence evermore similar in form and function. The products of religion fall prey to the processes of standardization and marginal differentiation. With the consumer in the driver’s seat each organization tries to fashion a product that similarly meets the same consumer preferences” (1998: 584).

To avoid such a situation he proposes Berger's only alternatives: "[Religions] can either accommodate themselves to the situation, play the pluralistic game of religious free enterprise, and come to terms as best they can with the plausibility problem by modifying their product in accordance with consumer demands. Or they can refuse to accommodate themselves, entrench themselves behind whatever socio-religious structures they can maintain or construct, and continue to profess the old objectivities as much as possible as if nothing had happened" (1998: 589).

Since the 1960s, many sociologists have been arguing that religion in contemporary Western world has become increasingly privatized. Analysts such as Parsons, Berger, Luckmann, and Bellah have suggested that secularization means that "traditional religion was now primarily the concern of the individual and had therefore lost much of its 'public' relevance" (Beyer, 1990: 373). Niklas Luhmann believes, though, that this presents not only problems but also new opportunities and potential for religion to reinvent itself in today's global society. Beyer concurs that "*the globalization of society, while structurally favouring privatization in religion, also provides a fertile ground for the renewal of public influence of religion*" (1990: 373).

While privatization refers to the rise of pluralistic religion amongst individuals, Beyer argues that this is indicative of various structures within modern society, structures which could be manipulated to promote publicly influential religion. For this to happen, the individual needs to be convinced that religion offers an indispensable service in today's society. It also needs to be stressed that globalization significantly alters the means of religion's public influence thus the need for new ways to attain public influence. Beyer also suggests that it would be unrealistic to attempt to gain public influence at the level of global society as a whole; in his

opinion, this can be done at sub-societal level by means of political mobilization, for example, in response to the globalization of society.

Beyer promotes the Luhmannian view whereby there is a close correlation between the role of religious leadership and publicly influential religion. This means that the privatization of religion would “translate into a combination of privatized decision-making in matters of religion *plus* a relative decline in the public influence of the public representatives of the religious system, the professional or leader” (1990: 377).

Beyer goes on to analyze other ‘musts’ for religion to attain public relevance and recognition. For example, religion needs to surpass its immediate purpose, namely the support and enhancement of the particular religious faith and its adherents; it also needs to impose itself as a service provider capable to encompass even those outside the strictly religious realm. Furthermore, the religious institutions themselves need to be strengthened to the point where they offer a service perceived as necessary for everyone thus playing an equal role to other social service providers such as the economic and scientific sectors.

The main challenge seems to be the identification of such a service. Certain answers, such as ‘ultimate meaning’ (Bellah) and ‘compensators for unavailable rewards’ (Stark and Bainbridge) have been provided, but the question of whether these can be accepted as essential by the individual remains problematic. Beyer suggests that this dilemma could be better addressed by looking into the aspect of religion’s *function* and *performance*. Even though a problematic concept itself (“the *functional* problem of religion in the modern world is actually a *performance* problem”), Beyer suggests that the possible solution vis-à-vis the

private religious choices or entering the political and public arena” (1990: 390). The latter direction represents possibilities for public influential religion through either an ecumenical approach or a political movement concerned with championing cultural distinctiveness via the reappropriation of traditional religious categories

While Beyer and other social analysts focus mainly on the alternatives religion has amidst the forces of the market, Zygmunt Bauman pertinently advocates the individual’s need to make personal choices on this matter (Bauman, 2000). He acknowledges the intrinsic fear and danger of being both individually and locally depersonalized through assimilation by the global market, while also recognizing the need to search for and acquire an identity conducive to successful living within the global context. His argument is that one needs to find one’s place in the global environment.

This search relocates from the initial local sphere into the global. The permutation is truthful to the fact that one’s identity is a social product and, by implication, globally determined. Thus the question: ‘Are we truly in control of our destinies, or are we predetermined products of the global market?’ Bauman seems to argue that even though we are, to a certain degree, at the mercy of global influences and variables, we can still choose which identity to adopt.

His view is that there has been a change of language and intent on the matter – people seem less concerned with the question, ‘Who am I?’, and more preoccupied with determining where they are going. Both individuals and societies are being overwhelmed by the plethora

of globally manufactured and marketed means and opportunities. This being the case, the dilemma of identity becomes a dilemma of belonging and *identification*.

Anne Showstack Sassoon embraces the reality of human freedom in determining the *how's* of change within the process of globalization and consumption assimilation (Sassoon 2000). (Douglas Kellner calls it 'globalization from below' (Kellner, 2002)). Sassoon constructs her arguments around Gramsci's ideological stance vis-à-vis unavoidable change. Acknowledging that the principle of preservation makes change difficult, Sassoon raises the subject of one's attitude when confronted with new realities.

Change means abandoning the comfort zone and endeavouring into the unknown. It is often a risky escapade, and thus the reticence to unquestionably embrace change. The reality is that the process of globalisation is bigger than any of us, hence the justifiable, almost impulsive, propensity to resist it. Its inevitable and seemingly irreversible nature could easily throw one into the troubled waters of indecision and abandonment.

Sassoon takes a position of intentional involvement and clearly outlines the very few options one could adopt in strategically managing change. She argues against a defeatist stance where the 'local' and the individual subserviently capitulate, as they see no alternative to imposed globalization. She also dissociates ideologically from pessimistic opposition, which she qualifies as 'inadequate and bound to be defeated'. The only politically and socially responsible option is that of a passive but optimistic intervention. (Sassoon calls it 'passive revolution').

Moral Relativization and the Relativization of Tradition

Roy Cotton suggests that the example of the Texas Instruments Corporation, which has established an ethics department primarily guided by the principles of the *individual model*, is meant to illustrate the success of the intentional involvement approach (Sassoon) on ethical matters (Cotton, 2003). The theme of the department is “Know What’s Right & Do What’s Right”. Their emphasis is on training individuals within the corporation to know the principles involved in each unique ethical dilemma and motivating the individuals to make good ethical decisions. The company maintains various avenues of support to assist individuals within the corporation in making difficult decisions. Carl Skoogland, vice-president of the Ethics Department at Texas Instruments says, “In any relationship an unquestionable commitment to ethics is a silent partner in all our dealings” (Cotton, 2003: 3).

Their seven-point ethics test is oriented toward individual initiative and reads as follows:

1. Is the action legal?
2. Does it comply with our values?
3. If you do it, will you feel bad?
4. How will it look in the newspapers?
5. If you know it is wrong, don't do it!
6. If you're not sure, ask.
7. Keep asking until you get an answer.

Cotton, in his article “Politically Correct Ethics” believes that “although critics might say these types of simple maxims lack in specific guidance, when combined with an overall

educational program they help individuals think through issues and make the right decisions themselves, multiplying the base of ethical agents within the corporation” (Cotton, 2003: 5).

I cite this example to illustrate the apparent preoccupation of various organizations and institutions, some completely dissociated from religion, with matters concerning the perceptible threat of relativism and relativization of ethical and moral ‘fundamentals’ or ‘absolutes’. The object of this section of the paper is to contextually and ideologically place the process of relativization, especially vis-à-vis religion, and its impact on identity formation and religious expression.

Relativism – Definition and Brief Overview

The theory of relativity “is based on the evident fact that our understanding of reality and truth is necessarily imperfect, so that there is a vast difference between what we know and absolute Truth” (Guy, 1999: 59). Walter Stance describes the relativist to be “one who denies that there is any single objective standard of morals” (Foot, 1982: 62). He also attributes the relativist two beliefs meant to resolve the tension of making moral choices, namely, “firstly that the very same action that is right in one country or at one period may be wrong in another and secondly that if a man thinks something right it is right for him” (Foot, 1982: 63).

Relativism is not a new idea. Protagoras famously asserted that “Man is the measure of all things: of what is, that it is, and of what is not, that it is not”. Plato interpreted this to mean: “Everything is for me as it appears to me, and is for you as it appears to you” (Kirk, 1999:

What do we understand by moral relativism? Moral right and wrong are *always* relative to a choice of a moral framework. Thus, “what is morally right in relation to one moral framework can be morally wrong in relation to a different moral framework” (Harman, 1996: 64). Therefore, “moral relativism claims that there is no such thing as objectively absolute good, absolute right, or absolute justice” (1996: 64).

Moral relativism does recognize that there are values which can be seen as common to nearly all societies. The anthropologist George Silberbauer makes such a claim even though further on he limits it by adding, “there are sometimes strong contrasts in the ways in which [these values] are expressed in precepts, principles and evaluations of behaviour” (Silberbauer, 1993: 12). This moral diversity, as it is often referred to, is not a disproof of absolutism altogether. “Differences in custom are themselves differences in circumstance that can affect what is right or wrong without entailing moral relativism” (Harman, 1996: 74).

This perspective on absolutes is considerably divergent from the perspective of moral absolutism which holds that there is a single true morality. Often such claims shape an individual’s or a group’s religious and/or moral identity. Moral relativism, by contrast, claims that “there is no single true morality. There are many different moral frameworks, none of which is more correct than the others” (1996: 78). Thus, moral right and wrong are relative matters. “A given act can be right with respect to one system of moral coordinates and wrong with respect to another system of moral coordinates. And nothing is absolutely right or wrong, apart from any system of moral coordinates” (1996: 78).

Once again, the issue of identity is predominantly subject to *individual choice* and *preference of adherence*. Moreover, the implications and reasoning of moral relativism are claimed to be respect and tolerance. Thus, “one should not interfere with the ends of others unless one can justify the interference to be acceptable to them were they fully rational and informed of all relevant circumstances. To do otherwise is to fail to treat them with the respect due to rational beings” (Wong, 1984: 51).

S D Gaede, in his book *When Tolerance Is No Virtue*, sees this to be a lack rather than a virtue. In his opinion, “we find [relativism] appealing for both the philosophical and sociological reasons: we have lost both the *grounds* for believing in truth and the *communities* necessary to cultivate and transmit truth from one generation to the next. Consequently, relativism has more plausibility for us – it makes more intuitive sense – than even the mildest forms of dogmatism” (Gaede, 1993: 46,47).

Relativization and Globalisation

“Relativization is one of the core aspects of globalisation over the long haul” (Robertson, 1992: 130). Due to specific components of the process of globalisation such as technological advancement, migration, and pluralism, the various group encounters have lead to the alterity of diverse traditions and, consequently, an apparent instability regarding normative religious truth and morality. The truth is that the question of preservation, on one hand, or relativization, on the other hand, of one’s tradition, including religious tradition, has been posed from the very early beginnings of human interaction. The issue of co-existence and integration or adaptation needs to be addressed as it constitutes “*the central*

thematic” to the process of globalisation, primarily accentuated by today’s increasing connectivity (Robertson, 2003).

Roland Robertson attempts to somehow define the complex concept of relativization of tradition by saying that “[i]t is the consciousness that one’s own tradition, or one’s taken-for-granted way of life, is but one among a number of competing patterns of belief and value that intensifies the condition of reflexivity. *In fact, it is precisely this circumstance that produces the very idea of tradition*” (Robertson, 2003: 75).

As soon as we speak of a global community or a ‘community of communities’, the question of the relativization of communal traditions and acquired identities takes central stage (Robertson, 2003). Therefore, the matter of identity can be better understood within the context of current ideas such as detraditionalization (as promoted by Beck, 1992) and individualization.

By implication, the context of globalization leaves one with the clear understanding that absolutes are being challenged. Religion needs to be considered in the larger context of collective and individual identity when analyzing its reactionary forms towards globalization. The options seem to be limited, though, as “religion can develop either an ecumenical/cosmopolitan or a fundamentalist orientation” (Turner, 2001: 131). Some consider this differentiation to be not just limited but limiting. The question is raised whether one individual/group could be tolerant and accepting without being ecumenically engulfed, and still conservative within its own boundaries while challenging and reconstructing tradition without being labeled ‘fundamentalist’.

Fundamentalism, to Turner, seems to have primarily negative connotations. It is seen as intent to impose uniformity, and to ensure the dominance of religion in all spheres of human interactions. It does this by holding absolute universal claims. Globalization, (and previously modernity) questions these claims and presents the public to examine and interpret the claims themselves and the ideological and doctrinal foundations of these claims, namely the grand narratives.

Protestant ethic, for example, presented a uniform view of truth and authority. Its claims became problematic when the Text was critically and historically evaluated and analyzed. The result was a new understanding of truth and its evolving character. Doctrinal changes were thus dictated by new understandings within the grand narrative, the Bible, and not necessarily by “perspectivism . . . and scepticism towards grand narratives” (Turner, 2001: 139). Further questions are raised on the issue of fundamentalism, namely whether it is possible for Christianity, Islam, or any other religion conditioned by a/some grand narrative/s to be anything but fundamentalist, (as described by Turner), as a response to globalization? Is it possible that ecumenism, as an alternative, means more than dialogue, tolerance, and mutual respect and acceptance, namely, religious symbiosis and doctrinal compromise?

Could it be that, in a world crippled by so many societal wrongs and disappointed by the inconsistencies and injustices practiced by the propagators of absolute justice, equality, and salvation in the name of God or Allah, for instance, people are now becoming more and

more comfortable with the idea of relativism? What is tradition? What is orthodoxy? What teachings are not historically specific? Who determines which are and which are not?

Religious conflict could occasionally lead to a desperate seeking for religious tolerance, thus introducing the theory of skepticism as an ideological alternative. According to this theory one can believe, but not necessarily believe in something or somebody concrete. Compassion and acceptance is thus made possible, as the need for compromise and ideological interchange is minimal, or even absent.

The cosmopolitan virtue of ironic distance suggested by Turner (2001) thrives on this perspective. It encompasses a sceptical attitude towards grand narratives that is open for further inspection and correction. It also acknowledges the ability to only acquire a temporary picture of our society. One could argue that its 'thin' character of friendships and alliances may lead to social intercourse bound to become superficial and artificial while all members of society find it hard to belong and identify with others, where all are but 'strangers in the Simmelian City'.

Religious Fundamentalism vs. Religious Fanaticism

It might seem unnecessary to pay much attention to the study of religious fundamentalism when considering some of the characteristics of globalization that, as mentioned previously, seem to assert that religion might not play a central social role in the immediate future. However, Lechner believes that fundamentalism is presently fashionable, and that, by virtue of its public character, it could "point to a different future for religion from what many scholars had assumed" (Lechner, 1993: 19).

Often the mistake is made however, of confusing *religious fundamentalism* with *religious fanaticism*. As a result, I find it necessary to clarify what religious fanaticism is. In the world today, one of the greatest threats is considered to be terrorism, which is the use of indiscriminate force against innocent people in order to send a message or to coerce particular choices by a government or society at large. Terrorism is sometimes used by people fighting for freedom when no other method is seen as effective, as well as when the oppressor has overwhelming resources. Moreover, most kinds of terrorism are driven by fanaticism, either political or religious.

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US by Islamic extremists were a devastating example of religious violence. But religious violence is nothing new. Every major religion has a long history of violence. For centuries, religious terrorism, religious warfare, and religious persecution have been staples of life throughout the world. The history of religion is so fraught with bloodshed as to seemingly invite the conclusion that the impulse to violence is inherent in religion itself.

Religious Tolerance

The above mentioned statement calls one's attention to the issue of religious tolerance as, even though one of humanity's most treasured liberties, in times of crisis could very easily be compromised. Religious liberty is a civil right granted by governmental laws. For example, in the USA, the Bill of Rights forbids the government to establish any one religion above all others. Nonetheless, the idea of religious tolerance as we understand it is relatively new.

Throughout human history, it was usually taken for granted that people of the same village or city would worship the same god or gods. Travelers from strange places might worship their own gods privately, but they had to be respectful of the public religion of the place where they sojourned.

In history, the Romans created the most religiously tolerant society up to their own time, by allowing all their provinces to continue to worship their ancient gods, as long as they added to their rituals the public worship of the emperor-as-god. That way, there would be a shared public religion throughout the empire – one which nobody actually believed in, but which would unify the people and make it seem as though they were one nation. This worked well enough with most conquered lands (Cairns, 1981). It was only the Jews and, later, the Christians who sometimes refused to fit in. And since the rejection of the public religion was viewed as treason, not just heresy, these noncompliant, intolerant religious “fanatics” either rebelled and had to be re-conquered, or were persecuted. Some argue that when Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, that was the end of religious tolerance of any kind (1981).

Religious tolerance was not rediscovered in the West (since Roman times) until after the bloody Thirty Years War ravaged Europe and the Inquisition made religious intolerance seem worse to decent people than the "treason" of rejecting the state religion. The ensuing religious wars that engulfed Europe in the seventeenth century – known generally as the Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648), a series of wars fought by various nations for various reasons, including a struggle between Catholics and Protestants and between various

Protestants, especially Lutherans and Calvinists – following the religious reformations introduced by Luther and Calvin and others, resulted in a reaction against intense religious exclusivism (1981).

These bitter and destructive conflicts – carried out without a resolution – gave rise, particularly on the part of neutral observers and non-participants, to an intellectual and moral revulsion against religious exclusivism and fanaticism. The humanistic side of the Renaissance combined with Enlightenment ideas of the role of reason and led to notions of tolerance as a value, a value greater than religious fervor for some people. The central question of this point of view could be expressed as 'How can we live together without all this destruction that comes about if people assert the truth and exclusivity of their religions and carry this into the political and public arena?'

Understanding Religious Fanaticism

It is generally accepted that much of the violence that is done in the name of religion is really the product of religious fanaticism – an excess of religious passion. All the major religions teach some form of ethical universalism – the doctrine that we have duties to all persons. Though the grounds for this ethic are different in each religion, the content of the ethic is remarkably similar: universal love and compassion. In each case, the grounds for this ethic lie very close to the heart of the religion. Ethical universalism in *Judaism* is based on the commandments of God, which include the commandment to treat the stranger as one born among you, and to love him as yourself (usually accompanied with "because you were

strangers in the land of Egypt"). This is the most repeated commandment in the Torah – thirty-six times in one form or another (e.g., *Leviticus 19:32*).

In *Christianity*, ethical universalism grows out of the Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which teaches love for all mankind (*Matt. 5-6*). Jesus exemplified the universality of this ethic in his treatment of Samaritans, Jews, Romans, prostitutes, tax collectors and thieves. *Islamic* ethical universalism flows from the very concept of God, whose most basic features are mercy and compassion, which are said to envelop everything in the universe (*Koran 7.156*). Thus a Muslim who worships Allah has to display compassion by all his actions (*7.178*).

In *Hinduism*, ethical universalism is based on the principle of the identity of the individual soul and the world-soul (and hence of all souls), requiring compassion (*dayadhvam*) not only for all persons but also for all living beings (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*). In *Buddhism*, as in Hinduism, ethical universalism extends to all conscious life, but is based, not on a metaphysical principle, but on a path to enlightenment whose main theme includes compassion (*karuna*) and loving kindness (*metta*) for all beings (*Metta Sutta*).

What, then, is religious fanaticism? The simplest definition could be summed up as following: religious fanaticism is excessive religious zeal. What does this mean? Winston Churchill defined the fanatic as “one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject” (News summaries, July 5, 1954). By extension, the religious fanatic holds his religion – as he interprets it – as true beyond question. Unlike Kierkegaard's knight of faith, whose religious life is kept alive by a continual struggle with doubt, the fanatic is incapable of doubt. (Some would argue that struggling with doubt is the very cause for fierce defence of

belief). He embraces his religious beliefs not merely with conviction, but with a passion so powerful that it blinds him to any possible grounds for doubt.

Like a man who is blindly in love with a woman, the fanatic is unable to see any flaws in the object of his affection. For this reason, it is useless to argue with him, for he is sure from the beginning that any argument against his beliefs must have something wrong with it. Any argument against his beliefs will carry no weight with him, because the fanatic does not really *weigh* arguments for and against his beliefs. He is sure in advance that any arguments against his view will be weightless. Hence he is incapable of really deciding, on the basis of reasons, whether to continue to hold onto his beliefs or to give them up. He is, in this sense, beyond the reach of rationality. Because the fanatic is *overwhelmed by passion*, he is no longer in rational control of his beliefs. His beliefs control *him*. Religious fanaticism is thus a kind of religious *shallowness*, because the fanatic never embraces the ethical teachings that lie at the centre of his religion.

Where is religious fanaticism more likely to occur? Some analysts suggest that religions known as religions of the book are prone to exclusivism and triumphalism. Such religions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, and others – have sacred books or scriptures that contain what are supposed to be the central revelations, divine commandments, historical records, basic doctrines and precepts, or other things underlying the religion. These scriptures are thus usually taken by adherents of those religions to constitute the basic or fundamental authority for the religion, or at least one of its basic authorities.

Being a religion of the book has both benefits and shortcomings. One benefit is that the scripture text is unchanging; it provides a touchstone or standard that is invariant over time, so whatever comes can be critiqued by reference to this unchanging criterion. A significant shortcoming is that the unchanging scripture tends to prevent acceptance of anything new or different into the religion unless it can be shown to meet the standard of conformity to the received scripture. Moreover, because they have scriptures that do not change over time and those scriptures seem to command exclusivism and triumphalism, religions of the book have an especially difficult problem if they also take religious tolerance and ecumenism to be important values.

Considering that religious fanaticism has become a topic of ideological contention it is necessary to ask the question of whether we could envisage a world void of such a danger. Lloyd Eby argues that such a reality is possible: "There are at least three ways of attempting to get out of the iron box that pits religious exclusivism and triumphalism against tolerance of religious differences: downgrade the authority or authenticity or interpretation of the scriptures or the received tradition; circumscribe or privatize religion in some way; or appeal to a new or different revelation" (Eby, 1998: 33). He goes on to suggest that the "only true way out of this problem would seem to be the coming of a new revelation or religion of sufficient generality, scope, power, and authority that all previous religions and points of view could find their consummation and apotheosis in it. If there is indeed one God who is Lord of all peoples, views, religions, and ideologies, then this may be possible" (1998: 33).

Even though this idea seems somehow possible I find it less probable. In my view, within the new circumstances created by the process of globalization, it could be at least as conceivable for any religion to find a way of emerging as a dominant and relevant social force. This could also be facilitated and even precipitated by various global circumstances. For example, the role of the Roman Catholic Church has usually been downplayed in recent times in terms of influence and relevance. Its reemergence as a significant social player as well as its adaptation to the new global circumstances will be dealt with in another section of this paper. However, at this point I would like to support my above mentioned stance by referring to a relatively recent political instance, namely the Cuban missile crisis, when the Roman Catholic Church served as a global religious mentor and mediator.

The centrality of the papacy in the new global system was even recognized by the Soviets when Nikita Khrushchev welcomed John XXIII's mediation during that time. "When the superpowers and the entire world saw themselves at the brink of nuclear war, a higher principle of mediation had to be found. Once it could no longer be taken for granted, the survival of the species had to become a conscious and concerted effort of all of humanity. The security of humanity and of the planet had to have precedent over national and state security. Thereafter, the Vatican's Ostpolitik and the United States policy of détente took parallel tracks" (José Casanova, 1997: 132).

Fundamentalism and the Future of Religion

Defining fundamentalism is as problematic as defining religion itself. Lechner (1993) suggests that the simplest way of understanding fundamentalism is to limit its meaning to what 'people themselves' mean by it. In the American context, for example, "fundamentalists are theologically conservative 'Bible believers', who among other things, consider Scripture inerrant and literary true" (Lechner, 1993: 21). Other possible definitions are either concerned with the renewed use of religious symbols for the so-called 'conservative' political purposes, or with social action, namely, the reintegration of "a social order under the canopy of one all-encompassing sacred tradition" (1993: 21).

It is generally agreed that fundamentalism has lately come to the forefront of the public arena. As a form of religiosity, it seeks to bring about a moral cleansing of societies, preponderantly due to its reactive character. This is because "fundamentalist movements form in reaction to, and in defense against, the process and consequences of secularization and modernization which have penetrated the larger religious communities" (Almond, 2003: 93). However, fundamentalism is selective in this respect, as "it is not merely defensive of the tradition but selects and reshapes particular aspects of the tradition, especially those that clearly distinguish the fundamentalists from the mainstream" (2003: 94).

Concerning its effectiveness, it is critical to mention that fundamentalism is "basically conditioned by the nature of the political regime and the ethnonational composition of the society" (2003: 218). For example, "in democratic regimes the emergence of fundamentalist

movements from their enclaves is relatively unhindered by the political setting, [while] where religious fundamentalism is able to tap the power of strong ethnic and/or nationalist commitments, it may produce nativist, preemptive ideologies and movements of a very violent sort” (2003: 218). It also seems to successfully engage in times when there is a sense of crisis and uncertainty. Thus, “in periods of rapid social change, [fundamentalist] movements become widespread and influential” (Lechner, 1993: 22).

Almond et al. suggest that, “in this globalized milieu strong religion, preoccupied historically with defending the boundaries and walls of the enclave, is suddenly vulnerable to penetration by the invisible enemy” (Almond, 2003: 228). On the other hand, though, it may very well exploit the new opportunities found in the process of globalization and, as a participant in the global arena of social change, may portray very specific and unique images of the earlier referred to anticipated world order.

This proves that the development of religion is less predictable and more diverse than some analysts have anticipated. It also implies that the reality of the globalization process cannot be minimized neither marginalized. Vis-à-vis this societal phenomenon, religion finds itself under more and more pressure to construct viable responses. I therefore suggest that the greatest challenge presented by the process of globalization is the need of religious identity reconstruction. This is due to the inherent secularization of contemporary society (predominantly within the Western culture), and the necessity to understand realities relevant to human functioning within present-day spatialities and temporalities. In the case of identity formation, the reconstruction process is more than a matter of aesthetics – it is a

matter of substance. It does not just change the conceptual 'furniture' around; it actually 'moves in' to another location.

More precisely, modernism, for example, presented the issue of identity as geographically bound and predetermined. The new reality of a global historical context marked by – amongst others – economical, cultural, moral, and religious interchange and interconnection, coerces us to understand identity-related matters across physical boundaries. Even though we can no longer speak of homogenous geographically bound cultures, traditions, or religions, it does not mean that the principle of distinctiveness is being totally compromised. On the contrary, I propose that amalgamation often leads to celebration and preservation of identity. It also creates room for acclimatization to new realities, and it also implies the revitalization and reinvention of various identities thus making this an enriching and lively social and cultural phenomenon.

Religion has been transformed. At first secularization was perceived as the greatest threat. Later on in our analysis it became clear that, within the process of globalization, two of the most transforming forces at work are consumerism and relativization. Even so, religion may find new opportunities of development within the dynamics of this process, and fundamentalism is one such opportunity (Lechner). The impact of globalization on religion is more complex, though. Thus a study of Roland Robertson's work on the issue is pivotal.

4. The Thought of Roland Robertson on Matters Concerning Religion and Globalization

As mentioned earlier, the concept of globalization is used to describe and interpret contemporary social processes. It promotes both integration and polarization and it marks the recognition of increased worldwide interconnections, interchanges and movements of people, images, and commodities. Robertson's point of departure in analyzing this most complex sociological process is that its study has lacked the cultural element.² In recent years this lack has been acknowledged but still much of the discussion has focused "on what it first appeared to be an aspect of hegemony of particular central cultures, the diffusion of American values, consumer goods, and lifestyles" (Friedman, 1995: 70).

More recently, cultural sociologists have conducted studies that have encompassed cultural processes that span larger regions of the world. This has brought into the foreground the question of globality. Robertson sees this as a duality of objective and subjective processes. "Globalization refers both to the compression of the world and to the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole" (quoted in Friedman, 1995: 70).

Furthermore, Robertson argues that one of the reasons why there seems to be some ambiguity in understanding the process of globalization is the tendency to use the term of 'globalization' instead of the term of 'globality'. To him this distinction is imperative as it enables us to understand that globality is more than simply a consequence of modernity.

² Considering that I have used numerous views of Roland Robertson in this paper already, this present section deals with the main points outlined by him on the issue of globalization and religion.

“The idea of modernity usually suggests a general homogenization of institutions and basic experiences in a temporal, historic mode... [Thus] globality is the general condition which has *facilitated* the diffusion of ‘general modernity’” (1995: 72).

To Robertson, the notion of compression refers to the diminishing of the distance between parts, to some kind of sociological implosion of the world. Technological speed-up and time-space compression concerning people, symbols, and money are being identified as key contributors to the process of globalization. These factors, however, are not merely the result of scientific development or technological evolution; they are primarily accelerated by the process of capital accumulation.

In Robertson’s analysis, the core character of globalization is the very consciousness of the global whereby the individual becomes aware, conscious of the fact that we all are participants in the global arena. This does not mean that we are all becoming identical. Robertson argues for two interpenetrating processes: the universalization of particularism, and the particularization of universalism. As an example, Robertson speaks of the proliferation of similar nation-states in the twentieth century as a result of the crystallization of global political culture.

In much of his recent analysis of the process of globalization Robertson refers to the issue of the *form* of globalization. He alludes to the fact that for centuries the ‘shape’ of the world has been centered on four major points of reference, namely (1) nation-states, (2) international relations, (3) individual selves, and (4) humankind. These are *the* four components of

the *global field* (Robertson, 2003). Even so, Robertson does not see globalization as a distinctively macro process.

Another important contribution to understanding the process of globalization is the notion of *glocalization*. The definition given is found in *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words* where the noun 'glocalization' is defined as being 'formed by telescoping *global* and *local* to make a blend'. Robertson introduces this term in the attempt to better explain what causes the process of globalization. Much confusion has been caused by the significance of the global/local distinction and thus glocalization draws definite attention to *spatiality*. "While globalization *per se* refers to the *temporal* process, glocalization injects a spatial dimension in its emphasis upon the *necessarily* spatial distribution of that which is being globalized" (Robertson, 2003: 15).

In his own words, "the concept of globalization has involved the simultaneity and the interpenetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or – in more abstract vein – the universal and the particular" (Robertson, 1995: 30). Even though he acknowledges that contemporary conceptions of locality are preponderantly produced in global terms, that does not mean that all locality has been homogenized. The very idea of *global culture* is largely defined by cultural pluralism marked by the ever-increasing interconnectedness of local cultures rather than by a homogenization of all cultures. Traditional religion seems to be caught in the middle of this development whereby, accentuated by postmodernism, the grand narratives' ultimate authority, such as the Christian scriptures, have seemingly come to an end thus making room for proliferating and often competing narratives.

Robertson suggests that by acknowledging this interconnectedness one can more easily attempt to resolve the tension pertaining to the *global* versus the *local* so prevalent in the globalization discourse. The tension is also perpetuated by questions revolving around issues of identity and culture. Thus analysts such as Barber argue that “tribalism’ and ‘globalism’ have become the two axial principles of our time” (referred to by Robertson, 1995: 30).

This view, according to Robertson, takes the analysis on a tangent as it marks a definite polarization between a ‘McWorld’ of homogenizing globalization in contrast to a ‘Jihad world’ of particularizing ‘lebanonization’. Consequently, globalization is defined as the opposite of localization. Robertson argues that such a conclusion is inaccurate, as “it makes no good sense to define the global as if the global excludes the local” (1995: 34).

The idea of the world as ‘one world’ is not new. According to Johnson (as referred to by Robertson, 1995), the ‘world society’ or ‘international society in its totality’ largely crystallized in the early part of the nineteenth century. The world as a whole became more conscious of this fact due to the industrial and communicative revolution as well as the Enlightenment. The process continued as by the early part of the twentieth century “very consequential shifts took place with respect to both our sense of space and time” (1995: 36). This meant that homogenization and heterogenization went hand in hand.

In other words, Robertson sees the two seemingly opposed terms of homogenization and heterogenization as complementary and interpenetrative. Thus the idea of globalization is not necessarily in opposition with that of localization. On the contrary, globalization – or the compression of the world – involves the creation and incorporation of locality. He also

argues that, as far as the process as a whole is concerned, both *space* and *time* are equally important.

What brings balance and relevance in Robertson's analysis of globalization is his multidimensional approach and his emphasis on sociocultural processes. Within this approach, he also deals with matters of structural hybridization whereby there is a plurality of structural and organizational possibilities employed in serving similar ends. It is a generally accepted fact that, in the present phase of globalization, there is a relative weakening of nation-states. However, there is also an upsurge of ethnic identity politics and religious revival movements. This can be explained by the fact that identity patterns are becoming more complex as the tension between loyalties to the local and the desire to share in global values and lifestyles is growing. Thus Robertson asserts that globalization generates both forces of fragmentation and unification.

In the early 1990's, Robertson referred to globalization in the larger context of world order, dominated by a phase of great global uncertainty and geopolitical 'earthquakes'. Even while writing during times of major political changes in Europe which caused most sociologists to challenge previously well established and envisioned sociological trends and understandings, Robertson still viewed globalization as a socioculturally relevant process concerned with the idea of the world becoming 'united'. His concern centered on the problem of the *form* in terms of which this unicity (and not unification) was to be achieved.

The concept of the unicity of the world can be traced centuries, even millennia back in history. For example, in the second century BC, Polybius, in his *Universal History*, wrote with

reference to the Roman empire: "Formerly the things which happened in the world had no connection among themselves...But since then all events are united in a common bundle" (quoted by Robertson, 1992: 54). More recently, in 1906, Hobhouse thought that "humanity is rapidly becoming, physically speaking, a single society" (1992: 54). Robertson goes on to propose, that even though theoretically, the world as a whole could have become reality in many different ways until now. For example, "via the imperial hegemony of a single nation or a 'grand alliance' between two or more dynasties or nations; the victory of 'the universal proletariat'; the global triumph of a particular form of organized religion; the crystallization of 'the world spirit'; the yielding of nationalism to the ideal of 'free trade'; the success of the world federalist movement; the worldwide triumph of a trading company; or in yet other ways" (1992: 54).

To some, the story of globalization begins with the great reversal called 'science' whereby science outplaces religion, and which puts forward the empirical unity of the world (the universality of the atom unit); others, such as Wallerstein, find oneness in the world as a single capitalist system. Robertson, though, chooses to focus his attention on the problem of concrete sociological patterning and, even more so, the idea of developing a consciousness of the world as one.

Relativization and Fundamentalism

Another vital conceptual component in Robertson's analysis of globalization is the *process of relativization*. "The term is meant to indicate the ways in which, as globalization proceeds, challenges are increasingly presented to the stability of particular perspectives on, and collective and individual participation in, the overall process of globalization" (1992: 29).

Robertson sees the relativization of 'narratives' as a consequence of globalization. This becomes possible as, due to the compression of the world, civilizational, societal and communal narratives collide. Once again, this collision does not necessarily lead to a new homogeneity but it does account for heterogeneity.

This process has been facilitated by the increased mobility of symbols and information. In Giddens' words, globalization is "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa" (quoted by Robertson, 1992: 141). Moreover, the relativization of society presents the individual with new challenges, as it becomes a society "which has neither laws nor foundations, [and] which is no more than a complex of actions and social relations" (Touraine, quoted by Robertson, 1992: 186).

Robertson suggests that relativization is remarkably marked by the fact that various 'units' are forced to take into consideration other, often different, 'units' thus making the creation of globally stable absolutes improbable and even impossible. Therefore, under globalization all 'absolutes' are relative. This does not deny that local absolutes could find, under these new circumstances, ways to self-strengthen and revitalize, even giving birth to various forms of fundamentalism.

According to Robertson, the issue of the search for fundamentals cannot be divorced from that of fundamentalism. In actual fact, they are both aspects of the process of globalization. The search per se is caused in certain societies by various 'globally diffused ideas' concerning tradition, identity, home, indigeneity, locality, community, and so on. The various forms of

fundamentalism arise as a result of the acknowledgment that identity is being endangered. As 'identity is power' (Paglia), the idea of the right to identity and the 'struggle for recognition' is a widespread societal phenomenon.

As I mentioned earlier, globalization produces diversity. This is true even in the case of the discourse of fundamentals, including both 'totalizing fundamentalism', and 'anti-totalizing fundamentalistic' tendencies (Robertson, 1992). This is not a warring factor for Robertson as he argues that, in a sense, 'fundamentalism within limits' makes globalization work. Nonetheless, for this to be the case this should be a fundamentalism *within* globalization and not *against* globalization.

For religion, globalization marks the beginning of a new era. While historically traditional religion had been seen as the ultimate decider in personal and societal matters, it now finds itself as an institution in need to adapt and, more importantly, seek institutional 'partnerships' in the global arena. This, according to Robertson, is exactly the opposite of what happened during the process of modernization where "religion became a differentiated institution" (Robertson, 1991: 84). In this global oneness, religions are increasingly coerced to compare to and relate with one another. Robertson believes that this relativization can either produce 'seeds of conflict' or be a basis of accommodation and cooperation.

It is imperative to say that even though Robertson does pay a great deal of attention to religion in his writings on globalization, religion per se is not the focus of his study. He sees religion as a major source of identity creation in the social sphere and thus a major contributor to the development of new identities under globalization. Robertson also asserts

that religion is an important social component as “the globalization process itself raises religious and quasi-religious questions...because it is increasingly concerned with matters traditionally associated with the religious domain” (Robertson quoted by Shupe, 1991: 184). In other words, globalization sets in motion “the dynamic for a renewed religious search for ultimate meaning, values, and resacralization” (1991: 184). That is why social analysts pay so much attention to religious movements that have world-transforming or globalizing agendas.

Secularization and Religion

Earnest Gellner suggests that the world we live in is experiencing a so-called ‘second secularization’ whereby we are not necessarily experiencing the elimination of transcendent religious beliefs, but the transformation of the world we live itself. Thus “the price of cognitive advancement...has been its (the world’s) de-humanization” (quoted by Robertson, 1970: 64). Robertson, early in his writings, concurs with the idea that there are various tendencies towards secularization at the ‘cultural’ level of contemporary society.

These tendencies were illustrated by “a definite shift away from fully-fledged religiosity” (1970: 235). Within this theme, we could speak of the *retention* of religion and its traditional place in society; *neutralization*, which refers to a condition in which religious beliefs and values are being subscribed to, but on a non-religious basis; and *abandonment* of religion altogether (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 – RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, VALUES, AND SYMBOLS

(Roland Robertson, 1970)

	Retention of framework	Neutralization of framework	Abandonment of framework
Intellectual emphasis	(a) Rational religion	(c) Immanentism	(e) Positive atheism
Practical emphasis	(b) Instrumental religion	(d) Supernaturalism	(f) Areligiosity

The above table describes the various forms of secularism of religion. The differentiation between *intellectualism* and *practicalism* marks the variability of degree whereby the cognitive component of religion is employed to 'think things through'. In the case of the first, this activity is valued for its own sake while the practical emphasis trend regards it as an activity more or less unnecessary.

Within the tendency of *retaining* the traditional framework of religion, *rational religion* presents a certain degree of skepticism, which is directed at encouraging the believer to justify his/her beliefs logically, and thus religious commitment is of a rational nature. *Instrumental religion*, on the other hand, is also called inspirational. Religious commitment here is meant to inspire the believer to achieve 'great things'. "Religion is viewed as a therapy and as a tool at the individual level" (1970: 236).

Within the framework of *neutralization*, the secularization of religion has again two main components dependent on intellectualism and practicalism respectively. "Immanentist beliefs are a form of secularization, *in so far* as it claims that social life *in and of itself* manifests 'extra-special' qualities" (1970: 237). *Supernaturalism* embraces a broader scope of religious phenomena. It embraces astrology, alchemy, demonology, spirit fetishes and witchcraft, as well as numerous forms of superstition. "In sum, supernaturalism is characterized simply by a belief in the operation of extra-human and extra-physio-chemical forces" (1970: 238). It is relevant to mention that, in many of its forms, it denies a moral dimension.

Abandonment presents religion with its most radical form of secularization. James Kurth speaks of the belief, amongst some analysts, that the secularization of religion will result in the marginalization and ultimately its disappearance from social and communal life, while Peter Beyer understands secularization as the diminishing role religion would play in the public arena of society. Robertson considers this tendency in his analysis and presents the two possible trends within the abandonment component of the secularization of religion. *Positive atheism* is seen as the cultural circumstance where the constructive virtues for the human and socio-cultural condition are constructed outside of the religious. Even though it shares many of the concerns upheld by most religious beliefs, the construction of such values and ideals are upheld against the backdrop of an anti-religious stance.

This form of secularization is mostly manifested in humanist movements and organizations as well as amongst the academic intelligentsia. *Areligiosity* is a less purposeful reaction to the religious. It is characterized by a condition of disillusionment or disenchantment and lack of

concern about questions of meaning and purpose of life. Weber suggests that the industrial working class is the main bearer of this orientation of religion.

Robertson concludes his analysis by emphasizing that these are *tendencies*, not present absolute realities. In his view, the future of religion and the continuing process of its secularization is directly proportional dependent on a greater or lesser intellectualization of modern society. Even though it seems obvious that the process of secularization and the over-prevalence of non-religious aspects of modern social science and theology are modern societal realities that cannot be denied, Robertson argues that “religious phenomena are still vital topics of study in the modern world” (1970: 240). It could be that religion as a sub-discipline might disappear in the long run, but “many of the features of human societies which have usually been connected most closely with religious phenomena will remain paramountly important” (1970: 241).

Peter Berger (2001) questions the assumption that we live in a secular society. He focuses on the theory of *secularization* and its relevance and applicability within the dialogue on the sociology of religion today. He argues that the term *secularization* “has been endlessly debated, modified and occasionally repudiated. But for most purposes it could be defined quite simply as a process in which religion diminishes in importance both in society and in the consciousness of individuals” (2001: 443). It is commonly accepted that the main factors which led to the rise of the theory of secularization were modernity, “the severance of the linkage of state and church in modern democratic regimes..., and last but not least the massive modern process of migration, urbanization and mass communication” (2001: 443, 444).

Even though the theory of secularization has been, seemingly, empirically proven in the past by various studies such as the one conducted by LaBras, Berger suggests that “it is fair to say [today] that the majority of sociologists dealing with religion...no longer adhere to the question of modernity and secularization. [...] As I see the evidence, the world, with some notable exceptions..., is as religious as it has ever been, and in some places is more religious than ever” (2001: 445).

The proof of his argument is “the wide resurgence of Islam, both throughout the Muslim countries and in the Muslim Diaspora - and the less widely noted explosion of Evangelical Protestantism, especially in its Pentecostal version, over wide regions of the developing world, most dramatically in Latin America” (2001: 445). There can be seen “powerful revitalizations in all the other major religious communities” (2001: 445). Thus, to Berger, one of the most fervent proponents of the secularization theory in the 1960s and ‘70s, “most of the world [today] is bubbling with religious passions” (2001: 445).

To Berger, “an important task for the sociology of religion [is] to *map* the phenomenon of secularization - both geographically and sociologically”. Where does secularity fit on this map? Berger suggests two places: “First, there is a thin but very influential stratum of intellectuals – broadly defined, as people with Western-style higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences. They constitute a secular internationale. [...] There is also, secondly, a geographical exception to the pulsating ubiquity of religion in the contemporary world - as that in western and central Europe” (2001: 446).

How does European secularity manifest itself? It does most clearly in behavior related to the churches. “[T]here has been a dramatic decline in people’s participation in church life, in the influence of religion in public life, and in the number of people choosing religious vocations. But it also manifests itself in the declining number of people who profess traditional religious beliefs” (2001: 446). Berger argues that the reason why there is such a difference between North America and Western and Central Europe is determined by both political and educational considerations. Namely, in Europe the separation between church and state is more definite while, as far as education is concerned, in America the parents have a greater say on by whom and what their children are taught.

He goes on to deliberate the phenomenon of pluralism vis-à-vis religion. “Let me outline this in the form of two simple propositions: *Modernity pluralizes the life-worlds of individuals and consequently undermines all taken-for-granted certainties. This pluralization may or may not be secularizing, depending on other factors in a given situation*” (2001: 449).

Casanova (2001) discusses the process of secularization from a comparative stance. The analysis also debates the differences between America and Europe, namely the reality of a more secular Europe. Thus he suggests that “the supply side theory of religion needs to explain why there is no greater individual demand for religious salvation in Europe in the face of open free markets and, even more so, why religious suppliers, and there have been plenty of religious entrepreneurs who have failed lately in Western Europe, seem unable to generate or mobilize greater religious demand” (Casanova, 2001: 426).

Dawson (1998), on the other hand, suggests that secularization refers to the periodic collapse of specific and dominant religious organizations as a consequence of their becoming more worldly, more accommodating to the nonreligious aspects of their cultural contexts.

In his later work, Robertson shifts his attention from the theory of secularization to the fact that modern sociologists have seen the individual as a societal number and until recently thought “in terms of the ways in which individuals are socialized into society” (Robertson, 1978: 154). In unfolding the complexities of globalization, Robertson thus focuses his attention on matters concerning the relation between the *individual* and *society* under modern conditions. Modernization has created a rift between self and society, thus he sees life as having two poles of identity, namely ‘the realm of societal-systemic functionality’ and ‘the realm of the individual and relational...being’ (Robertson, 1985). Globalization complicates this dualism by relativizing both society and the individuated self.

Even though national societies continue to exist and even play an important role in the global system of societies, they do not play the *sole* role on the formation of personal identity anymore. This also applies to society as a whole: “Because there is no common and dominant model to which societies can conform, each society creates its own particular image of global order by promoting, even inventing, its own national image of the good society – in short, its own national identity” (Beyer, 1999: 293). This is where Robertson’s axiom of the particularization of the universal and universalization of the particular applies once again.

Summary

Robertson explains the process of globalization as some kind of sociological implosion caused by an increasing global interconnectedness defined by the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism. He focuses much of his work on the *form* of globalization adopting a multidimensional approach. He doesn't see the process as taking place at a macro scale and thus introduces the concept of glocalization. Robertson also believes that the process is not recent but what brings it to the forefront of sociological analysis is the individuals' awareness or global consciousness about the world as one place.

For him, the primary concern is the traditional conundrum of linking the individual and society. This process of globalization is, to him, in some respects intrinsically religious. Moreover, Robertson postulates that the paradox of fragmentation and unification characteristic to globalization stems primarily from two interrelated processes of relativization, the one having to do with the relativization of personal identities, the other the relativization of societies. The next chapter focuses on how one such religious identity (i. e. Roman Catholic Church) has adapted to the ever-evolving process of globalization.

5. The Roman Catholic Church's Theological Response to the Process of Globalization

Within the Christian dialogue, the question of how the universal and the particular relate to each other has been raised from the beginning of theological discourse. Regardless of which position has been adopted, the question of how to think theologically about the impact of the universal – again, the global in our discussion – remains.

Charles Dumerzler, in his article *Biblical and Theological Literacy: Foundational for the Globalization of a Holiness Church*, argues the need for the church to adapt to the new global facets of societal interaction (2003). His belief is that the nature of the church is global by the virtue of its calling to preach the gospel to 'all the nations' and its global service.

The question he raises focuses on the *ideological foundations* of such a claim of globalization. His proposition is that, for the Church of the Nazarene, which he is addressing, to be a 'global holiness denomination', the relationship between their *outreach programs* and their *theological identity* cannot be ignored. This observation is significant to this study as the Roman Catholic Church – as it shall be elaborated later in this section – has primarily founded her response to globalization on the same two major ideological premises, namely evangelism and the formulation of a theological reaction.

Dumerzler goes on to say that “[g]lobalization must be pursued in an evolving and engaging dialogue between evangelism and continuing biblical and theological education in all cultures” (2003: 3). The accurate articulation and proclamation of the theological identity of

the church needs to reach every culture and language, thus it necessitates the translation in more languages of the church's theology, hymnology, and *Manual*.

The issue of theological identity will be raised again while studying the Catholic response. One example of resisting globalization from within the ranks of Catholicism, namely the stance taken by students from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana USA, will present an interesting modality of preservation of theological identity rather than its globalization.

Interest in developing a relation between Catholic theology and globalization can be found, to varying degrees, across the spectrum of the church's interaction with the world. "The theological response of the Catholic Church to globalization has been extensive, involving a number of actors at various levels" (Dewane, 2002: 2). Pope John Paul II has repeatedly addressed the issue in a systematic manner and on numerous occasions. The Papal Magisterium, Encyclicals, Apostolic Letters, World Day of Peace Messages, General Papal Audiences, and Messages to World leaders are just some of the papal instruments in which such a theological response to globalization has been formulated.

The Roman Curia, Episcopal Conferences, women and men's Catholic communities and associations, as well as both individuals and movements, such as the 'Focolare Movement', and a large number of NGO's with Church affiliation actively participate in the Catholic theological response to globalization (Dewane, 2002). The position is generally one of adaptation and inculturation on the premises of evangelisation and dialogue. In other words, the Catholic universal is clothed in cultural and traditional indigenous forms in order to be relevant, accessible, and attractive to the local community. However, some of the reactions

from within Catholicism perceive globalization as a threat of compromise endangering the Catholic identity.

Brad Rager, in his article *Globalization and Notre Dame*, presents the ideological tension the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic university in northern Indiana, USA, is faced with vis-à-vis the process of globalization. For him, as the world is becoming “increasingly integrated, globalized, and Americanized, nations are undergoing an identity crisis” (Rager, 2003: 1). The tension mentioned earlier revolves around the question of Catholic identity preservation. Rager advocates that the Catholic tradition, history, and identity are insurmountably necessary for Notre Dame to remain Catholic.

He thus promotes a reaction of resistance towards globalization illustrating it by the University’s adamant opposition to secularism in the past and proposing a similar stance against globalization: “We have resisted the rising tide of secularism in American institutions of higher education; many of the great names in American universities were founded with religious ties that have since been dropped. Notre Dame will not be the latest victim [of globalization]” (Rager, 2003: 2).

After defining globalization as “the rise of multinational corporations, non-governmental organization, and the internet, coupled with tremendous expansions of post cold-war free trade”, Rager raises the question of how nations and institutions could retain their identity. Even though such reactions are isolated within the Catholic response to globalization, the issues raised by this ‘manifesto’ are pertinent ones. Especially Rager’s concluding remark needs careful consideration: “I believe that one of the largest problems of the twenty-first

century will be for foreign nations to balance the attractive benefits of globalization and still retain a strong sense of its own self' (Rager, 2003: 2).

Marian Apparitions – An Example of Globalized Catholicism

Before discussing the actual formulation of the Catholic theological response to globalization, let's take a look at one example of globalized Catholicism. "The renewal of Marian theology and devotion – in continuity with Catholic tradition – is another distinctive characteristic of the teaching and pastoral activity of John Paul II" (John Paul II, 1994). Thus the globalization of this phenomenon plays a very important role in the understanding of Catholic adaptation to the process of globalization itself.

Now, the example: "On the morning of 17 December 1996, a client at the Seminole Finance Corporation of Clearwater, Florida, noticed a strange phenomenon on the building's facade: large panes of reflective glass had become discolored, creating a three-story-high shape that bore a striking resemblance to images of the Virgin Mary. Iridescent shades of color formed a 'Rainbow Madonna' with a covered head slightly tilted to one side, eyes gazing downward toward the asphalt parking lot of the corporation" (Vasquez, 2000: 120).

Within hours, the parking lot was filled with people 'armed' with video cameras and rosary beads. This was the result of the story being aired by a local station during the midday news. In a matter of days, the Marian apparition of Clearwater, Florida, made national and later on international news being broadcast by CNN and featured in newspapers around the world. Pilgrims who have traveled in from as far as France and Australia soon joined local believers in their adoration. "Meanwhile, in Cincinnati, Ohio, a visionary named Rita Ring announced

that she was receiving messages from the Mary appearing in Clearwater. With the help of an international Catholic organization called the Shepherds of Christ, she began to publicize these messages” (2000: 125).

In their analysis, Vasquez and Marquardt see the event as a religious phenomenon where religion is meant to play a mediating role between the local and the global. In the example of this spiritual experience, globalization illustrates both its dividing and uniting character. The influx of Mexican transmigrants around the time of the Marian apparition, even though it had more complex causes than that single religious experience, comes to support the idea of significant transformation of the local.

The Rainbow Madonna of Clearwater became a global religious attraction also by its nature as mystical and its connectedness with the divine. Within Catholicism, the rapid circulation of symbols gives easy access to plurality thus inciting global pilgrimages and transnational migrations. Moreover, the dissipation of information and the use of a global script gives religion, in the light of this phenomenon, the status of medium of hybridity in a globalising setting. The internet makes possible “virtual pilgrimage” thus bringing the personal religious encounter into the arena of the global.

The Marian apparition of Clearwater was a very well monitored and controlled phenomenon demonstrating that the Roman Catholic church adopts the approach of ‘directed globalization’ (2000). The Shepherds of Christ movement took monopoly over the apparition. This endeavour needs to be seen within the context of the Roman Catholic church’s New Evangelisation. This New Evangelisation is a proactive measure taken by the

church to respond to the imminent global forces, and the strategy used, inculturation, enables the church to celebrate the local while penetrating the global.

Vatican II

The official stance of the Vatican on the issue of globalization is one of involvement and participation within the process of globalization from the perspective of societal change. In order to understand the inherent coordinates of this reaction one needs to revisit the historical moment of change in attitudes regarding the Catholics' dialogue with the world, namely the ideological work done during the Second Vatican Council.

For many, preponderantly Catholics, Vatican II is best known for its reforms to change the Latin Mass and to lift the Friday meat ban. More profoundly, though, "the Council attempted to reshape the place of the church in the society" (Gelm, 1994: 39). More precisely, the discussions revolved around the issue of the Church's place in a rapidly modernizing world. Significantly, "the call from the Council was for more active engagement with the world to help improve the human condition" (1994: 46).

The debates envisioned a shift away from a static worldview of the church. Eugene C Bianchi sees the process as natural as, to him, the contest between the conservatives who view religion in ahistorical terms and those who see religion as evolving through history has long existed in the church (Bianchi, 1970: 81). Nonetheless, the calling of the Council by Pope John XXIII came a surprise to many. More surprising even was the clearly defined purpose of the Council, namely to "reconcile Christianity with the modern world, to bring about an *aggiornamento*, or updating of the Church" (Gelm, 1994: 60).

The intent of the council was even more clearly defined by the next pope, Paul VI: “At the Council, the Church is looking for itself. It is trying, with great trust and with great effort, to define itself more precisely and to understand what it is. After twenty centuries of history, the Church seems to be submerged by profane civilization and to be absent from the contemporary world. It is therefore experiencing the need to be recollected and to purify and recover itself so as to be able to set off on its own path again with great energy. . .”

“While it is undertaking the task of defining itself in this way, the Church is also looking for the world and trying to come into contact with that society. . . How should that contact be established? By engaging in dialogue with the world, interpreting the needs of the society in which it is working and observing the defects, the necessities, the sufferings and the hopes and aspirations that exist in men’s hearts” (Gelm, 1994: 69).

Thus was the need to embrace and dialogue with the world been promoted. As an example of what kind of dialogue was to be sought, the Dutch bishops, in a pastoral letter issued shortly before Vatican II, recommended that “the church should seek to find out what was the nucleus of truth contained in Marxism, humanism, and existential thinking, in order to test the existing but neglected bases for a common approach to human problems” (Bull, 1966: 23). This radical shift of dialogue with world and ecumenical interchange was a major departure from the view of Pope Boniface VIII, who declared in the bull *Unam sanctam* in 1302 that “there is one catholic and apostolic Church, outside of which there is neither salvation nor remission of sins” (Butts, 1950: 56). Other significant aspects of this attempt to bridge the gap between the church and the society were the ‘encouragement of

decentralization' and the more active participation of the Catholic laity in the liturgy (Bull, 1966: 29).

John Paul II, Vatican II, and Globalization

"In our day, the combination of an extraordinarily gifted pope, John Paul II, with the mass media and globalization, have raised the office of pope to its highest level ever." (Whalon, 2003: 2). This remark of Pierre Whalon, an Anglican Bishop, is shared by many religious and social analysts. The present pope has traveled far more than any of his predecessors. His visionary initiatives have led to the unequivocal inculturation of Catholicism in parts of the world where the influence of the Church was previously minimal.

Moreover, the decisive implementation of new and innovative steps towards decentralization, as well as the remarkable number of 'sanctifications' at local level have dramatically contributed to the contouring of his authority beyond the boundaries of the Catholic church. He's also been instrumental in the facilitation and encouraging of local traditions to penetrate Catholicism at even the most intimate level, namely the liturgy. The incorporation and assimilation of African traditions within Catholicism in Africa is more than illustrative of this fact (Bate, 1999; *Pastoral Statement* of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1995).

John Paul II has never left any doubt regarding his deepest desire to see the ideals of Vatican II being perpetuated and even fulfilled during his pontificate. In his first major address after his election, the pope gave an unambiguous statement on this subject: "We consider our primary duty to be that of promoting, with prudent but encouraging action, the most exact

fulfillment of the norms and directives of the Council. Above all we must favour the development of conciliar attitudes. First one must be in harmony with the Council. One must put into effect what was stated in its documents; and what was 'implicit' should be made explicit in the light of the experiments that followed and in the light of the new and emerging circumstances (17 October 1978)" (Hastings, 1991: 112).

In his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the pope clearly outlines some of the means and objectives of the discourse of active participation in societal change. Relevant to our subject is the pontiff's interest in unity, Christian unity to be more precise, balanced by the view of the renewal of the individual (John Paul II, 1994). Thus two previously disparate concepts in Catholic theology find common ground under the new auspices of ideological interchange and on the background of a new understanding of religious freedom.

John Paul II does not, however, adopt a position which lacks a certain amount of caution on matters pertaining to inculturation and the world. In the same book, he makes mention of certain movements within the Church which, since the Council, have entered so intensely into dialogue with Marxism, for example, that "they lost to some degree their Catholic identity" (John Paul II, 1994: 151). Even though in favour of dialogue with and within the new trends of thought and development, he remains vigilant of preserving the identity of the church thus implying that the globalizing of Catholicism should not mean the losing of what is fundamentally Catholic.

In one of his more recent addresses (2001), John Paul II focuses primarily on the ethical implications of globalization. He suggests that the church should examine global

developments in the light of the principles of her social teaching. To him, the market economy is a way of adequately responding to people's economic needs while respecting their free initiative, but this has to be controlled by the community, the social body with its common good (in this context, universal common good).

In his understanding globalization is neither good nor bad. Nonetheless, he does identify a threatening dimension of it in the so-called "intrusive" logic of the market. Thus efforts need to be made to control these developments, guided by the principles of human values and common good. More precisely, globalization requires a new code of ethics which needs to be based on the principles of the value of human person and the value of human cultures.

One of the most relevant pontifical documents on the issue of globalization is the *Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families, Sons, and Daughters of the Church and All People of Good Will for the Twentieth Anniversary of "Populorum Progressio"* of 1987. In it, under the section entitled "Survey of the Contemporary World", the pope addresses societal issues within the context of globalization. Amongst his first concerns is the issue of poverty and the existing gap between North and South. "The pace of progress in the developed and developing countries in recent years has differed, and this serves to widen the distance. Thus the developing countries, especially the poorest of them, find themselves in a situation of very serious delay" (John Paul II, 1987: 3).

The pontiff, in his letter, asks for a church reaction, one of involvement which should commence with the education of the poor, both moral and academic. Furthermore, he raises the issue of unemployment and underemployment. Again, the "interdependence of

peoples” is brought into discussion on this topic coupled with that of the financial factors which lead to impoverishment and lack of opportunities for the poor. The letter is not just an overview of world situations but rather a call to a strategically congruent mobilization grounded on ethical and moral principles of progress for all. As we’ll see later, such a strategy has already been discussed within the context of world governance.

Recent Catholic Documents on the Church’s Theological Response to Globalization

One of the most recent reports on the Catholic Social Teaching entitled *Economic Globalization in Christian Perspective* (2003) highlights the steps taken by Vatican in dealing with ‘modern development’ and ‘social questions’, including globalization. The report endorses the view that Catholicism needs to be a participant within the process of world transformation and globalization is seen as the latest phase of this transformation. Below are some of the most relevant documents on the subject.

In 1986, the United States Bishops Conference published a Pastoral letter called *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U S Economy*. This letter focuses on a number of standards about how the economy should serve human dignity. In his Encyclika *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988), Pope John Paul II, in a theological reflection, precludes to the debate on economic globalization by interpreting the global situation. In the Postsynodal Apostolic Adhortatio *Ecclesia in America* (1999), Pope John Paul II returns once again to the ‘ethically ambiguous character of globalization’. His suggestion is that the ethical results of globalization can be both positive and negative.

In a recent message to the federation of Italian Catholic University Students (26 April 2002), the pope argued that globalization presents a double challenge: rejection of terrorism and violence, and affirmation of the universal rights of peoples. According to the pope, “the growing interdependence between peoples, while requiring the rejection of terrorism and violence as a way to reconstruct the essential conditions of justice and liberty, calls above all for strong moral, cultural, and economic solidarity” (EGCP, 2003: 3). These two requirements can lay the foundations for a “political organization of international society that can guarantee the rights of all people” (2003: 4)

One of the most articulated theological responses is represented in the report *On Global Governance* (2001) commissioned by the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE). “The report addresses the global situation from the perspective of ‘responsibility: responsibility of each country, responsibility of the world community, responsibility of all actors in society. At the political level it argues in favour of a new system of global governance in order to enhance the positive and to diminish the potentially negative effects of globalization” (EGCP, 2003: 4).

The report concludes with a broad definition of global governance and it calls for “the creation of a Global Governance Group (G3). Its membership is to be composed of Heads of Governments from the 24 countries that have executive directors on the boards of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Joining these as members of the G3 would be the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Director Generals of the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), International Labour Organization

(ILO) and, as proposed in the Report, the World Environment Organization (WEO)” (Dewane, 2002: 6).

This approach is very different from the Geneva based World Council of Churches (WCC) – of which the Roman Catholic Church is not a member – whose members are sceptical about engaging in dialogue with international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Their desire is to seek alternatives to economic globalization. According to Rogate Mshana, who heads the WCC, “the churches must work very hard to bring pressure to bear on the international financial institutions not just to go along with the market solution” (Mshana, 2003: 2).

To close with a thought of the Catholic understanding on the subject, Dumerzier advocates the necessity to make use of local images and symbols in order so that the message can more adequately express the church’s theological identity. In his conclusion, he strongly argues that a global denomination “needs to bring people from the margin to the center, listen to [the church’s] theology articulated in all cultures, and make intentional efforts to foster meaningful theological dialogue between holiness people around the world” (Dumerzier, 2003: 5).

Thus the Roman Catholic Church has engaged the process of globalization proactively. Vatican II opened the door to communicating with the world. Within the past few decades, under the leadership of a visionary pope – John Paul II, the church has continued its interaction with the world and has adapted to its new global realities, while still maintaining the church’s identity and influence.

Conclusion

The reality of the globalization process cannot be minimized nor marginalized. As Paul Valery put it, “Nothing will be done anymore, without the whole world meddling in”. (quoted by Robertson, 1992: 49). Vis-à-vis this societal phenomenon, religion finds itself under more and more pressure to construct viable responses. This societal predicament has been the very objective of this paper, namely exploring how religion responds to the process of globalization, and furthermore marking the various significant changes within the religious sphere. We have discovered that there are different ways of dealing with plurality and difference, namely repression, ghettoisation, assimilation, or adaptation (recently more referred to as creolization).

Another major challenge highlighted in this study is presented by the relativization process. “Insofar as [present realities] have brought us a global present without a common past [they] threaten to render all traditions and all particular past histories irrelevant.” (Arendt quoted by Robertson, 1992: 49). Nonetheless, globalization also presents the ‘opportunity’ for diversification of self through adaptation to pluralism and diversity. Even though tradition is being challenged on all fronts, individual and societal identity can be achieved through adaptation or revitalization.

Roland Robertson’s views have been central to this analysis. He speaks of an accentuated global consciousness where all became more aware of ideological, political, societal, and religious alternatives becoming increasingly accessible. This becomes possible through the migration and often almost instant mutability of means, symbols, and ideologies. Cultural

hybridisation is defined by the mixing of Asian, African, American, and European cultures thus creating a global culture better understood as a 'global melange'.

Moreover, today's contemporary society is largely defined by an accelerated globalization and cultural mixing. Pieterse, for example, suggests the following model of the globalization process which contrasts "the vocabularies and connotations of globalization-as-homogenisation [with the] globalization-as-hybridisation [concept]". (Pieterse, 1995: 62). (See Figure 3).

FIGURE 3
(Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 1995)

<i>Globalization/ homogenisation</i>	<i>Globalization/ diversification</i>
cultural imperialism	cultural planetarization
cultural dependence	cultural interdependence
cultural hegemony	cultural interpenetration
autonomy	syncretism, synthesis, hybridity
modernization	modernizations
westernization	global melange
cultural synchronization	creolization, crossover
world civilization	global ecumene

What is common to some of the various perspectives in the two columns is what Pieterse calls the 'territorial view of culture'. Nonetheless, as the process of globalization has accelerated, so has the phenomenon of cultural mixing. More precisely, "introverted cultures, which have been prominent over a long stretch of history and which overshadowed

translocal culture, are gradually receding into the background, while translocal culture made up of diverse elements is coming into the foreground” (1995: 62). Religion is also subject to such metamorphosis.

This tension of interchange and compromise needs to be resolved within the parameters of the local itself, though. The case study of the Roman Catholic Church illustrated its adaptation to the process of globalization by adopting a proactive approach rather than a defensive and repressive one, thus suggesting the possibility of identity preservation through the transformation of the particular.

Entities apparently endangered by the process of globalization do not have to succumb to assimilation but rather may actively participate in the mapping of a global world. In this vein, the Catholic Church’s theological response asserts that “global governance without sufficient subsidiary is like the seed that falls on the rocks. It is without staying power. Governance, by its very nature and meaning, implies ownership and ownership begins locally.” (Dewane, 2002).

Lastly, the process of globalization calls for a need of identity reconstruction. This can be viewed to arise out of the inherent secularization of contemporary society (predominantly within the Western culture), religious pluralism, relativity, consumerism, and the necessity to understand realities relevant to human functioning within present-day spatialities and temporalities. In the case of identity formation, the reconstruction process is more than a matter of aesthetics – it is a matter of substance. It does not just change the conceptual ‘furniture’ around; it actually ‘moves in’ to another location.

More precisely, modernism, for example, presented the issue of identity as geographically bound and predetermined. The new reality of a global historical context marked by – amongst others – economical, cultural, moral, and religious interchange and interconnection, coerces us to understand identity-related matters across physical boundaries. I suggest that even though we can no longer speak of a homogenous geographically bound cultures, traditions, or religions, it does not mean that the principle of distinctiveness is being totally compromised. On the contrary, I believe that amalgamation often leads to celebration and preservation of identity. It also creates room for acclimatization to new realities, and it implies the revitalization and reinvention of various identities thus making this a dynamic, enriching, and lively sociocultural phenomenon.

References

- Adler, Mortimer J. 1990. *Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth, an Essay in the Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Macmillan.
- Allen, Diogenes. 1989. *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Almond, Gabriel A; Appleby, Scott R; Sivan, Emmanuel. 2003. *Strong Religion. The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Anderson, Walter Truett. 1990. *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 2000. "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination". *Public Culture*. 12(1): 1-19.
- Bate, Stuart C. 1999. *Inculturation of the Christian Mission to Heal in the South African Context*. London: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2001. "Identity in the globalising world." *Social Anthropology* 9, no. 2: 121-29.
- Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society*. London: Sage.
- Benhabib, Seyla. 1995. "Cultural Complexity, Moral Interdependence and the Global Dialogical Community." In *Women, Culture and Development*, Martha C Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (eds.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 235-255.
- Berger, Peter L. 2001. "Reflections on the Sociology of Religion Today." *Sociology of Religion*. 62 (4): 443-454.

- Beyer, Peter F. 1990. "Privatization and the Public Influence of Religion in Global Society." In *Theory, Culture & Society* 7(2-3): 373-395.
- Beyer, Peter F. 2000. *Religion and Globalization*. London: Sage.
- Beyer, Peter F. 1999. "Secularization from the Perspective of Globalization: A Response to Dobbelaere". *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (Fall): 289-301.
- Bianchi, Eugene C. 1970. "John XXIII, Vatican II, and American Catholicism". *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 387, (January): 30-40.
- Bocock, Robert. 1993. *Key Ideas. Consumption*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bull, George. 1966. *Vatican Politics at the Second Vatican Council, 1962-5*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Butts, R Freeman. 1950. *The American Tradition in Religion and Education*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Cairns, E Earle. 1981. *Christianity through the Centuries*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Corporation.
- Campbell, Colin. 1987. *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Casanova, José. 1997. "Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a 'Universal' Church". In *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, S H Rudolph and J Piscatori (eds.). Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 121-143.
- Casanova, José. 2001. "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization." *Sociology of Religion*. 62 (4): 415-441.
- Chadwick, Owen. 1979. *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Cambridge University Press.

- Clark, David K. 1993. "Narrative Theology and Apologetics". *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, no. 4 (December): 501-22.
- Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity. Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Cotton, Ray. 2003. "Politically Correct Ethics". www.leaderu.com. 1 June 2003.
- Dawson, Lorne L. 1998. "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization: A Theoretical Prolegomenon." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 4: 580-95.
- Dewane, Frank J. 2002. "Theological Response to Globalisation and the Role of the Church". www.vdiest.nl. 8 May 2003.
- Dumerzier, Charles. "Biblical and Theological Literacy: Foundational for the Globalization of a Holiness Church". www.nerlc.com. 8 May 2003.
- Eby, Lloyd, 1998. "Religion Fervour versus Religious Tolerance." *Modern Thought*. (11):12-34.
- "Economic Globalization in Christian Perspective. A brief glance at Catholic Social Teaching". www.stichtingoikos.nl. 8 May 2003.
- Ellis, John M. 1989. *Against Deconstructionism*. Princeton, N. J.: University Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2001. Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization." *Political Geography*. 20: 139-174.
- Featherstone, Mike. 1991. "Consumer Culture, Postmodernism, and Global Disorder." In *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order. Vol. IV*, Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.). New York: Paragon House Publishers, pp. 133-59.
- Ferre, Frederick. 1967. *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Scribner's.

- Foot, Philippa. 1982. "Moral Relativism." In *Relativism Cognitive and Moral*, Michael Krausz and Jack W Meiland (eds.). London: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 152-66.
- Friedman, Jonathan. 1995. "Global System, Globalization and the Parameters of Modernity". In *Global Modernities*. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.). London: Sage, pp. 69-90.
- Gaede, S D. 1993. *When Tolerance Is No Virtue: Political Correctness, Multiculturalism & the Future of Truth & Justice*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press.
- Gelm, Richard J. 1994. *Politics and Religious Authority. American Catholics Since the Second Vatican Council*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Gorringe, T. J. 2001. *The Education of Desire*. London: SCM Press.
- Hadden, Jeffrey K. 1991. "The Globalization of American Televangelism". In *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order. Vol. IV*, Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.). New York: Paragon House Publishers, pp. 221-244.
- Hamelink, Cees J. (1999). "The Elusive Concept of Globalization." In *Global Dialogue* 1(1):1-9.
- Harman, Gilbert & Judith Jarvis Thomson. 1996. *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hastings, Adrian. 1991. *Modern Catholicism. Vatican II and After*. London: SPCK.
- Hinkelammert, Franz. 2001. "Disguise and Justify Current Wrongs" in *Globalization and Its Victims*, by Sobrino, Jon & Wilfred, Felix. London: SCM Press, 25-34.
- John Paul II. 1987. "Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families, Sons, and Daughters of the Church and All People of Good Will for the Twentieth Anniversary of 'Populorum Progressio'"
- John Paul II. 1994. *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. London: Jonathan Cape.

- John Paul II. 2001. "Towards a Common Ethical Code for Humankind. Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 2001". In *Search of Universal Values*: 11-14.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2002. "Theorizing Globalization". *Sociological Theory* 20:3 (November): 285-304.
- Kirk, Robert. 1999. *Relativism and Reality: A contemporary introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kurth, James. 1999. "Religion and Globalization". www.fpri.org. 8 May 2003.
- Lechner, Frank J. 1991. "Religion, Law and Global Order." In *Religion and Global Order*, Roland Robertson and William R Garrett (eds.). New York: Paragon House, pp. 263-280.
- Lechner, Frank J. 1993. "Global Fundamentalism." In *A Future for Religion? New Paradigms for Social Analysis*, William H Swatos, Jr (ed.). London: Sage, pp. 19-36.
- Lehmann, David. 2001. "Charisma and Possession in Africa and Brazil". *Theory, Culture, & Society* 18, no. 5: 45-74.
- Lunt, Peter K. & Sonia M. Livingstone. 1992. *Mass Consumption and Personal Identity*. Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Marshall, David. 2000. *God's Good News*. Grantham: The Stanborough Press Ltd.
- Meyer, Brigit. 1999. "Commodities and the Power of Prayer: Pentecostalist Attitudes Towards Consumption in Contemporary Ghana." In *Globalization and Identity. Dialectics of Flow and Closure*, Brigit Meyer and Peter Geschiere (eds.), 151-76. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Mshana, Rogate. 2003. "How Globalization Is Challenging the Churches". www.wfn.org. 8 May 2003.

- Nava, Mica. 1992. *Changing Cultures. Feminism, Youth and Consumerism*. London, Newbury Park, New Delhi: Sage.
- Oloka-Onyango, J and Deepika Udagama. 2000. "Globalization and Its Impact on the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights." *UN Press Release*. E/CN.4/Sub.2/13.
- Osborne, Grant R. 1991. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen, 1995. "Globalization as Hybridization". In *Global Modernities*. Roland Robertson, Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds.). London: Sage, pp. 45-68.
- Porter, Burton F. 1988. *Reason for Living: A Basic Ethics*. New York: McMillan Pub. Co.
- Rager, Brad. "Globalization and Notre Dame". www.nd.edu. 8 May 2003.
- Ritzer, George. 2002. *McDonaldization: The Reader*. Pine Forge Press.
- Robertson, Roland. 1970. *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Robertson, Roland. 1978. *Meaning and Change. Explorations in the Cultural Sociology of Modern Societies*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Robertson, Roland. 1983. "Interpreting Globality". In *World Realities and International Studies Today*. Glenside, PA: Pennsylvania Council on International Education, pp. 7-20.
- Robertson, Roland. 1991. *Religion and Global Order*. New York: Paragon House Publishers.
- Robertson, Roland. 1992. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.
- Robertson, Roland. 1993. "Globalization and Sociological Theory". In *Knowledge and Passion: Essays in Honour of John Rex*. Herminio Martins (ed.). London: I. B. Tauris, pp. 174-196.
- Robertson, Roland. 1994. "Globalization or Glocalization?" In *The Journal of International Communication*. 1(1):33-52.
- Robertson, Roland. 1994. "Religion and the Global Field." In *Social Compass* 4(1):121-135.

- Robertson, Roland and Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds.). 1995. *Global Modernities*. London: Sage.
- Robertson, Roland. 1997. "Values and Globalization. Communitarianism and Globality." In *Cultural Pluralism, Identity, and Globalization*, Luiz F Soares (ed.), pp. 73-97.
- Robertson, Roland and White, Kathleen E (eds.). 2003. *Globalization – Critical Concepts in Sociology (Vol. I)*. London: Routledge.
- Robertson, Roland. 2003. "Values and Globalization. Communitarianism and Globality". In *Globalization – Critical Concepts in Sociology (Vol. II)*. Robertson, Roland and White, Kathleen E (eds.). London: Routledge, pp. 69-84.
- Sagan, Carl. 1994. *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. New York: Ballentine.
- Sassoon, Anne Showstack. 2000. "Globalization, Hegemony and Passive Revolution." *Public Culture* 12, no. 1: 215-32.
- Schaefer, Francis. 1982. *The Complete Works of Francis Schaefer: A Christian Worldview*. Vol. 1. Westchester, Ill.: Crossway.
- Schlabach, Gerald W. 2002. "Globalization and 'Catholicity from Below'". www.bridgefolk.net. 8 May 2003.
- Scholl, Chris. 2001. "The Many Splendored Creature, Globalization: Impact on States, Cultures, and the Individual." *International Politics*. 38: 593-600.
- Scholte, Jan Aart. 2000. "Global Civil Society." In *The Political Economy of Globalization*, Ngaire Woods (ed.). Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 173-201.
- Shupe, Anson. 1991. "Globalization versus Religion Nativism. Japan's Soka Gakkai in the World Arena." In *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order. Vol. IV*, Roland

- 199.
- Silberbauer, G. 1993. "Ethics in small-scale societies." In *A Companion to Ethics*, Peter Singer, (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. "Religion, Religions, Religious". *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stevenson, Nick. 1997. "Globalization, National Cultures and Cultural Citizenship." In *The Sociological Quarterly*, 38(1):41-66.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. 1992. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Tlhagale, Buti. 1995. "Pastoral Statement on Inculturation". www.sacbc.org.za/inculturation.htm. 8 February 2005.
- Tomlinson, John. 1991. *Cultural Imperialism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2001. "Cosmopolitan Virtue: On Religion in a Global Age". *European Journal of Social Theory* 4(2): 131-52.
- Vasquez, Manuel A & Marie F Marquardt (2000) "Globalizing the Rainbow Madonna. Old Time Religion in the Present Age". In *Theory, Culture & Society*. London: Sage. Vol. 17(4): 119-143.
- Whalon, Pierre. 2003. "What is the Difference between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism?" www.anlicansonline.org. 11 June 2003.
- Wong, David B. 1984, 1986. *Moral Relativity*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.