Globalisation and Religion:
Contradictions and Complementarities

RUDOLF C. HEREDIA
Social Science Centre
St. Xavier's College
Mumbai

I. GLOBALISATION AND ITS AMBIGUITIES

Globalisation is an idea whose time has come, at least to judge by the way the word is bandied about. But as yet there is no cogent theory for this multidimensional process, which would comprehend intelligibly the contradictions and challenges that it presents to us. In fact there is some ambiguity in spite of 'a burgeoning academic debate as to whether globalisation, as an analytical construct, delivers any added value in the search of a coherent understanding of the historical forces, which at the dawn of a new millennium, are shaping the socio-political realities of everyday social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual' (Held, et al., 1999:2).

1. *Clarifying the Concepts*

If in general the process refers to the 'widening, deepening and speeding up of world wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life' (ibid., 1999:2) we may well be on our way to a 'word society as a multiplicity without unity' (Beck, 2000:4) rather than an integrated global system. Contemporary changes driven by new technologies and movements have left us with a more interconnected yet highly uncertain world.

There are several approaches to defining globalisation by even before we start to describe it, we need to clarify some of the ambiguous terminology involved. Thus in trying then to answer the question: *What is Globalisation?* Ulrich Beck distinguishes 'globalisation' as a process from 'globalism' as an ideology, and 'globality' as the social reality we are actually living with. (ibid., 1997: 9). Similar distinctions have been

made with modernity and secularity, and indeed globalisation is not unconnected with these two social phenomena.

Generally, globalism is an ideology that privileges the world market of neoliberal capitalism. But globalisation as a multi-dimensional process also generates counter-understandings as with various resistance monuments. Thus the globalisation process does give arise to several kinds of ideologies, some more dominant than others, but all referring to the reality on the ground. The purpose of such distinctions is not just for the sake of conceptual clarity but more so 'to break up the *territorial orthodoxy of the political and the social* posed in absolute institutional categories' (ibid., 1997:9).

Now in attempting to place the globalisation process in an historical context, some would rather loosely trace its origins back 5,00 years, when 'through conquest, trade, and migration the globe began to shrink.' (Mittleman, 2000:18). However, world system theorists would place the origins with the development of capitalism in sixteenth century Western Europe, while for others the fundamental changes in the world order in the 1970s mark the origins of contemporary globalisation. Fine-tuning this further, a fourfold periodisation of the 'Historical Forms of Globalisation' (Held, et al., 1999:414) has been worked out: the pre-modern up to 1500, the early mdoern about 1500-1850, modern circa 1850-1945, and the contemporary period since.

Obviously very different understandings are implied across such vast swathes of time. Hence a further elaboration of four types of globalisation can be made depending on a number of domains or facets of social life that are interconnected in a global network. This yields a fourfold typology (ibid., 1999:21-2):

1. *thick:* 'in which the extensive reach of global networks is matched by their high intensity, high velocity and high propensity',
2. *thin:* here 'the high extensity of global networks is not matched by a similar intensity, velocity or impact',
3. *diffused:* 'global networks which combine high extensity with high intensity and high velocity but in which impact propensity is low',
4. *expansive:* 'characterized by the high extensity of global interconnectedness combined low intensity, low velocity but high propensity'.

Thus from the ancient, through the medieval and the modern to the contemporary, globalisation can be graded in a three dimensional space from thin to thick, and diffused to expansive, from instantaneous to delayed.

In sum, precisely because there are complex and controversial issues involved, more than just being a matter of conceptual clarity, we need to situate our discourse more precisely before a meaningful discussion is possible. Here we will focus more particularly on contemporary globalisation as a multi-dimensional process that is 'thick', 'expansive' and fast moving, though in some less connected areas it may still be 'thin' 'diffused' and deferred. However, without doubt it is a process driven by differing and even contradictory ideological 'globalisms' and consequently changing the social reality of our 'globality' in new and challenging ways.

2. *Describing the Syndrome*

Perhaps because of the ideological dominance of neoliberal capitalism today, the economic dimension is seen to be the cutting edge of globalisation. But this is to truncate the process and miss some of its most critical contradictions and crucial challenges. For as Giddens insists:

> globalisation is not only, or even primarily, an economic phenomenon; and it should not be equated with the emergence of a 'world system'. Globalisation is really about the transformation of space and time. I define it as action at distance, and relate its intensifying over recent years to the emergence of means of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation (Giddens, 1994:4).

The present increase in extent and impact of global inter-connectedness, its new intensity and instantaneity inevitably brings about a compression of space and time. This gives rise to 'manufactured uncertainties' or risk as 'a result of human intervention into social life and into nature' (ibid. 1994:4) which in turn has unintended and unpredictable consequences.

More in continuity with, than in contradiction to Giddens, Appadurai's approach takes media and migration 'as its two major, and connected, diacritics and explores their joint effect on the work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity' (Appadurai, 1997:3). This relationship between electronic media and migrating masses makes the core link between globalisation and modernity.

Some have called this 'the second modernity' (Beck, 2000:12), to distinguish it from 'the first modernity' associated with the Enlightenment, and theorised in the post-war period by Parsons, Shils, Lerner, Inkeles and others, giving rise to the megarhetoric of development as economic growth, high-tech, agribusiness, militarism. Rather this second

modernity 'now seems more practical and less pedagogic, more experiential and less disciplinary than in the fifties and sixties' (Appadurai, 1997:10).

In a similar vein, Giddens argues that 'the Enlightenment prescription of more knowledge, more control' (Giddens, 1994:4) is no longer viable. For modernist rationality corresponds to an earlier 'simple modernisation'. It is rather misplaced with the 'reflexive modernisation' such as precipitated by the impact of contemporary globalistion. For this is not a simple continuation but a qualitatively different and inherently ambiguous process.

By 'reflexivity' Giddens refers 'to the use of information about the condition of activity as a means of regularly reordering and redefining what that activity is' (ibid., 1994:86). At the individual level this creates a 'reflective citizenry'. Moreover, 'the growth of social reflexivity is a major factor introducing a dislocation between knowledge and control— a prime source of manufactured uncertainty' (ibid., 1997:7). Such situations precipitated by human action, have largely new and unpredictable consequences that cannot be dealt with by old remedies.

Now while the liberative potential for such reflexivity for autonomy and self-reliance is apparent, it does not automatically result in an emancipatory politics; 'equally important, however, is the fact that the growth fo social reflexivity produces forms of 'double discrimination' affecting the underprivileged. To the effects of material deprivation are added a disqualification from reflexive incorporation in the wider social order' (ibid., 1994:90) through various exclusionary mechanisms that must be more directly addressed.

Hence given the ambiguities and contradictions involved, it is apparent that 'globalisation is not a single unified phenomenon, but a single syndrome of processes and activities', and while some may consider this to be a 'pathology', 'globalisation has become normalised as a dominant set of ideals and a policy framework', albeit still 'contested as a false universal' (Mittleman, 2000:4). In fact

> globalisation is a multilevel set of processes with built-in strictures on its power and potential for it produces resistance against itself. In other words, globalization creates discontents not merely as latent and undeclared resistance, but sometimes crystallized as open counter movements (ibid., 2000:7).

For the promises of globalisation—of greater abundance and less poverty, of information access and release from old hierarchies—comes with its price of reduced political control and market penetration, of

cultural erosion and social polarisation. Hence economic dynamism and marginalisation, upward and downward political mobility, cultural implosion and explosion, etc, is all part of this zigzag process that races a head at times, and even reverses itself at others.

3. *Reviewing the Responses*

There is now a whole spectrum of interpretation and responses to these phenomena from the 'sceptics', who exaggerate the consequences for better or worse, to the 'hyperglobalisers', who doubt both, the intensity of change and the usefulness of the concept itself.

For the sceptics, on the one hand, the reality on the ground at most is a significant 'regionalisation' into major trading blocks, as evidenced by international flows of capital and trading. Thus Hirst and Thompson, focusing on the world economy as the cutting edge of these changes, are 'convinced that globalisation as conceived by the more extreme globalizers, is largely a myth, (Hirst and Thompson, 1966:2) that mystifies rather than explains many of the trends that 'have been reversed or interrupted as the international economy has evolved' (ibid., 1994:15).

Rather what we have is 'an open world market based on trading nations and regulated to a greater or lesser degree both by the public polices of nations, states and supra-national agencies' (ibid., 1994:16). This 'inter-national economy' with its financial centres must necessarily have some degree of integration, especially with regard to linkages between the OECD countries, but such 'integration' is far from being genuinely 'global' in its inclusion of the less developed ones (ibid., 1994:196).

The hyperglobalisers, on other hand, exalt this new eopoch in human history and their 'view of globalisation generally privileges an economic logic and, in its neoliberal variant, celebrates the emergence of a single global market and the principle of global competition as the harbinger of global progress' (Held et al., 1999:3).

In the new boarderless economy national governments have little regulatory power and their people are left to cope with the global division of labours. Here 'global civil society' has still to catch up with the 'global market' and as yet the structures for this are quite inadequate for any kind of effective 'global solidarity'.

Somewhere between the two ends of the spectrum, between hyperglobalisers and sceptics are the 'transformationists' for whom 'globalisation is a central driving force behind the rapid social political

and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and world orders' (ibid., 1999:7).

No society escapes its 'shake-out' as it recasts traditional patterns, creates new hierarchies, and most crucially 're-engineers the power, functions and authority of national government' (ibid.: 8). This results in 'an 'unbundling' of the relationship between sovereignty, territoriality and state power' (ibid.: 8). But rather than acquiesce in the 'end of the state', it needs to be 'reconstituted and restructured in response to the growing complicity of process of governance in a more interconnected world' (ibid.: 9). This now will pose new challenges that demand new responses.

It should be apparent from this discussion that these responses are mostly ideologically premised. For, where the hyperglobalisers celebrate the cornucopia of the global market, and the sceptics dismiss this as a myth, the transformationists perceive a more open ended and contingent process with all the concomitant contradictions and challenges. Given that this discussion on globalisation overlaps with and carries forward the discourse of the old modernity as a second or reflexive modernity we need now to focus on the key dimensions and levels of this complex process.

4. *Listing the Dimensions*

At the core of any adequate comprehension of the globalisation process is the phenomenal increase in the scope and speed of cross-border flows that results in an unprecedented connectedness and dependence that makes our world a single space. But this is far from making it a simpler place. For the very flows and interactions take place across diverse dimensions and varying levels with greater or lesser complexity and speed. However, it would be a mistake to conceive of these 'flows' as linear vectors whose impact can be anticipated and contained. Rather they are vehicles of change that bring unintended consequences and unavoidable challenges.

Appadurai distinguishes 'five dimensions of global cultural flows that can be termed (a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c) technoscapes, (d) financescape, (e) ideoscapes' (Appadurai, 1997:33). These 'scapes' are perspectives constructed out of the shifting flow of people information, technology, finance, ideas. They are building blocks of 'imagined worlds, that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the

world (Appadurai, 1997:33). He calls them 'scapes' to indicate they are constructed perspectives of a ground reality that affect our response to it, very much in the manner a landscape artist affects the way we relate to our natural surroundings.

It is precisely in these 'cultural flows', in spite of their obvious capacity for homogenisation that we can find the potential for micronarratives of the dominant order. Thus homogenisation and heterogenisation can be seen in the same relationship as globalisation and localisation. The first precipitates the second, which in turn uses the first for its own counter-hegemonic purposes, in a kind of 'cannibalising' of one by the other! (ibid., 1997:43).

5. *Resisting from Below*

It is precisely in the contestation and even the contradictions between the 'marco' and the 'micro', the 'homo' and the 'hetero', the similar and the different, the global and the local, that we come to see the obverse side of globalisation as the intrinsic, yet dysfunctional counterpart of the idealised version too often uncritically projected by a neoliberal globalism.

In this connection Giddens identifies four 'global bads' or dysfunctions that must be responded to: (Giddens, 1994:100)

1. 'capitalism' that produces economic polarisation. This needs to evolve to a 'post-scarcity economy'.
2. 'industrialism' that degrades the environment. Here we need to incorporate in a 'humanisation of nature' within a post-traditional order, rather than to try and defend nature in the traditional way.
3. 'surveillance' on the control of information that denies democratic rights. A 'dialogic democracy' not merely a representative one must counter such political control, in other words to 'democratise democracy'.
4. 'means of violence' or the control of military power that threatens large scale war. Structures for negotiated power must be put in place so that differences are not mediated by violence.

What these responses amount to is really a bottom-up proaction to a top-down imposition. Indeed, here lies the real challenge to humanising the processes of globalisation, driven as they are by an impersonal market and bureaucratic power. For

as experienced from below, the dominant form of globalization means a

historical transformation: in the economy, of livelihoods and modes of existence; in politics, a loss in the degree of control exercised locally—for some, however little to begin with—such that the locus of power gradually shifts in varying proportions above and below the territorial state; and in culture, a devaluation of a cofllectivity's achievements or perceptions of them. This structure, in turn, may engender either accommodation or resistance (Mittleman, 2000:6).

Thus multiple levels of interaction are involved from the global to the local. For 'a globalization framework interrelates multiple levels of analysis—economics, politics, society, and culture. This frame thus elucidates a coalescence of diverse transnational and domestic structures, allowing the economy, polity, society, and culture of one locale to penetrate another' (ibid., 2000:7) and vice versa.

6. *Defining the Dilemmas*

Here we can conclude this discussion with a tentative description rather than a definition of globalisation as

A process (or set of process) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions—assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact—generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (Held et al., 1999:16).

Localisation, nationalisation, regionalisation, would then be the consolidation or specification of these 'social relations and transactions' at particular levels and locales and which are therefore not unrelated each other, but often in actuality precipitate reactions in a cascading effect from one to the other.

Our effort then must be not to obfuscate the linkages by over-working the concepts, but to specify the interactions between these levels and in different spheres: economic, political, cultural, environmental, religious and ethical. So far the chief beneficiaries of the globalistion process as fostered and advocated by a neoliberal ideology of globalsim has left us with a global reality that has advantaged transnational capital and privileged a cosmopolitan elite, even as it has disposed indigenous labour and oppressed local populations.

This has resulted in deep tensions and contradictions that cannot any more be gainsaid: the disempowerment of the nation-state and the inadequacy of civil society at the global level, the lack of accountability structures in the global market place and the marginalisation of the

weaker players there, the diffusion of new identities and concerns that erode the old solidarities and traditions, the precipitation of a global environmental cirisis without any corresponding global response, the relativising of ethical and human values with the affirmation of cultural and groups rights are but some of the issues and questions we must now turn to.

We are far more sensitive today to the inherent limits of modernisation as a process not indefinitely sustainable any more. Weber saw the underlying rationalisation of such processes in the modern world as eventually ending with the 'iron cage' a syndrome that with later modernisation theorists lead to a 'largely accepted the view of the modern world as a space of shrinking religiosity (and greater scientism), less play (and increasingly regimented leisure), and inhibited spontaneity at every level' (Appadurai, 1997:6). The second, reflexive modernity with globalisation would seem to contest this. But there are new and equally inherent contradictions in this process as well and we are still to examine its internal limits and sustainability.

II. RELIGION AND ITS DILEMMAS

Here we will take up the impact of these processes of globalisation on religion. This has precipitated some critical dilemmas, which have received less attention than they would warrant. We will now attempt to address some the more crucial of these. In attempting to clarify the ambiguities of globalisation we hope to be better able to deal with the dilemmas of religion.

1. *Secular City and Global Village*

Nietschze presaged the modern world when he somewhat prematurely proclaimed the 'Death of God' in the nineteenth century. It was a message received by a few intellectual atheists but largely ignored by the common people. However, in the 1960s the death of God was once again proclaimed and celebrated in *The Secular City* (Cox, 1996) by popularist academics, not just in the intellectual centres of the world like Harvard university, it was also celebrated in the concrete jungle of our urban conglomerates, as also in the ever extending market places of the world. Religion, it was thought, was no longer worthy even of controversy. It was quietly relegated to the private practice of those too weak to cope with the new found freedom and mobility of secular society

in this modernised world. Here, in Bonhoeffer's phrase, 'man come of age' was celebrated in the secular city. The few who did not would have to grow up or drop out!

But very soon the re-emergence, or rather the resurgence of religion seemed to confound the pandits. It was not God who was dead, it was just that we had been a long time sick, and not quite noticing it either. And the religious response when at last it came, turned out to be strong medicine. The responses were of course as diverse as were the understandings of secularisation and its place in the broader process of modernisation.

Globalisation too has come to be considered as part of this process of modernisation, and sometimes an irresistible and irreversible one. We might have expected then that the process of secularisation would be even further advanced by globalisation. But just as the religious response to the secular city has been a re-affirmation of the 'sacred' in peoples lives, so too many of the new religious movements (Barker, 1991) spawned in the 'global village' have in fact been globalised with the very processes that were supposed to marginalise them! Thus the responses of these movements have not only been as vigorous and diverse as the earlier ones, their reach and grasp has been vastly extended and intensified precisely because of their new global context.

Hence if we want to understand the relation between religion and globalisation, we must see it in the context of the secularisation process as well.

2. *Secularisation and Disenchantment*

The roots of secularisation in the modern world go back to the Enlightenment, and the triumph of reason. One can indeed see the beginnings of such a rationalisation of human life in earlier societies as well. In the west one can think of the Stoics, in India we can think of Buddhism. Secularisation really is the rationalisation of religion that is a continuing process in society but peaks at different levels at different times. However, with the European Enlightenment *The Sacred Canopy* (Berger, 1967) which once gave ligitimacy to so much in human lives, is torn asunder and we are left with a 'disenchanted world'.

The process comprises three elements. It begins with the de-mythologisation of religion, and this results in the de-institutionalisation of its social expressions and consequently their privatisation.

The liberative potential of reason should never be under-estimated. However, if we do not recognise the constraints and the premises within

which it operates, the assumptions from which it derives, the prejudgments that orient and bias it, we very easily overestimate its effectiveness in addressing and resolving human problems. Reason can then become an aggressive and alienating instrument. Such rationalism is but another kind of naivete. The extreme rationalist becomes the rationalist simpleton, unaware of the sensitivity of a Pascal who knew that 'the heart has reasons of which reason knows not of'.

Max Weber saw how such a process would eventually lead to 'the iron cage', an alienation that leaves us alone and homeless in a disenchanted world. The religious response was precisely to address such an alienation and provide a haven in this heartless world.

For religion itself has not been exempted from this process of rationalisation in human society. Thus a religious experience cannot be preserved in society unless it is institutionalised in a tradition. This represents a rationalisation that both preserves as well as mediates access to the original experience. But all too often this tradition and the institutions of organised religion, can be an obstacle rather than a facilitation in accessing the original experience and intuition.

Moreover, institutional organisation, whether formal or otherwise, does indeed represent power in a society. And often the temptation to moblise such power for purposes, religious or otherwise, has proven irresistible. And yet with the politicisation of religion, the alienation from the original religious experience is complete, and the door open to a religious militancy that has little to do with religion.

For politics as the exercise of pragmatic power in our ordinary everyday social lives is the very contrary of religion which intends, some would say pretends, to be an encounter with the ultimate concerns of four lives, the ultimate mystery of our existence.

Basically, then one can think of various religious responses to a secular society. These often overlap and fade into each other. Thus reform intends an adaptation to changes in society that are regarded as irreversible. Revival implies a re-affirmation of religion often against or in spite of the changes in secular society, and such revival can be one of withdrawal or of militancy.

3. *Globalization and its Ambiguities*

Within the broad agreement about globalisation being a new and more advance stage of this process of modernisation there is the expectation that it would lead to a further secularisation of social life as well. But globalisation itself has been conceptualised from different perspectives,

and each of these would have a bearing on our understanding of the relationship between religion and globalisation (Beyer, 1994).

The most commonly accepted understanding of globalisation as an extension of the capitalist economy dominated by the multinationals of the first world has led to a commodification of practically everything, as the capitalist economy penetrates into deeper and deeper areas of our lives, and integrates them into a world system. But whereas such a perspective rightly underlines the economic dependencies and exploitations that we experience, the very 'economic monism' that is implicit in this perspective leaves little space or scope for understanding the new religious movements within such a framework. Too easily are such movements dismissed as false consciousness.

Extending such an economic perspective to include a political dimension opens the way to a further consideration of how globalisation affects culture, how it relativises particular identities and homogenises local cultures. And it is here that we begin to have a handle on understanding the new religious movements. For the homogeneity that globalisation has surely promoted has lead to a sense of loss of cultural identities, whereas religion functioning very much in the realm of such particular identities, becames a critical factor in re-affirming such lost or threatened identities.

However, too often the relationship of these new religious movements to globalisation is ambiguous. For while they often oppose globalisation as an alien imposition and a threat to their religious and cultural life, they often at the same time attempt to influence and even co-opt the very dynamics of the globalisation process to serve their particular purpose.

Thus while globalisation seems to structurally promote secularisation and the privatisation of religion; not only because globalised privatisation implies pluralism in which a hundred flowers can bloom, but it also precipitates an alienation that longs for a collective social statement of solidarity. Now group solidarity is most easily promoted by focussing attention on the external other as threat. But with the proximity and inclusiveness that globalisation brings, it becomes less feasible to extern the alien other, for now their evil empire, like the kingdom of God, is among us. Thus globalisation does not lead so much to the death of God, though it certainly does obfuscate the devil! Hence the need to particularise and concretise evil, to personalise and give a face to the great Satan, who has changed our lives in ways we do not quite understand or accept. And this becomes one of the great

motivating factors in some of the new religious movements.

Moreover, the very contradictions of the global system leads to inherent tensions that precipitate further discontent and alienation which these new religious movements gear up to redress. Thus the effects of market competition and technological advantage in a globalising world are seen to promote grreater inequalities within and between societies, greater insecurities specially for the weaker and less adaptable sectors; whereas the values that are apparently promoted and overtly advertised, are those of liberty, equality and fraternity.

4. *Religions Movements and their Anomalies*

This discussion would be more convincing if it was contextualised in the religious movements that we are more familiar with. Once again one can think of various relgious responses to a globalised society. But each is fraught with its own dilemmas.

We might begin by noticing that when a religious movement intervenes to address specific systemic problems in a society, it must necessarily follow the logic of the problematic system itself. Thus economic problems are not solved by religious faith, nor are political conflicts resolved by theological hope, neither is the medical health of a society improved by liturgical rituals. Thus the very involvement of a religious movement in global society begins to change it, precisely because the compartmentalisation and isolation of diverse areas of social life no longer obtains. With globalisation, then, the danger for a religious movement is to fall between two stools: it might end up advocating bad social policy, or suffer from poor religious inspiration.

Thus the liberal interventionist option in a pluriform world, can only be effective by focussing on a more inclusive community that is now being increasingly globalised. This inevitably tends to dilute its appeal by making it too broad base. The reactionary intervention seeks not to adapt to, but to bend global processes to its particular purposes. But then it must use, and so be open to being changed by the very dynamics of the processes it opposes.

On the other hand the conservative option while motivating specific social and cultural groups, finds that it cannot sustain such exclusivism in a globalising world, without risking a further marginalisation by the very processes from which withdrawal can offer no effective protection.

Now besides the interventionist option, which could be more liberal or reactionary, there is the separatist one, which tends to be more consevative and traditionalist. This option attempts to avoid the polluting

secular ethic of society, but cannot for long. It may succeed temporarily by limiting itself to a particular social or geographic space. But with globalisation once again such spaces are penetrated by global process. Moreover, even to defend the limited space such movements may set out for themselves, they have to interact with outside forces, and once again it is inevitable that the protagonists mutually influence and take on each other's characteristics.

Now with interventionist movements there is always the possibility and danger of co-option and loss of the religious inspiration, if the movement is too broad based; or the possibility of isolation and failure, if the movement too narrowly appeals to a particular a socio-cultural group. Similarly with separatist movements, there is the probability and risk of the individual's alienation being compounded by the group's isolation, but these cannot indefinitely resist the penetration and corruption of global forces.

In our understanding then it should not be a surprise that militancy in religious movements gets mellowed and moderated with secularism and globalisation. In our own country one can already see how militant religious revivals have inevitably compromised and moderated the extremists as they seek political power and social influence, because they must submit to the exigencies of other systems that are quite alien and contradictory to their original inspirations.

Thus the Hindutva of Hindu nationalism has precipitated a 'Crisis of Indian Nationalism' (Madan, 1997). The movement has been compelled to broad base itself by accepting reservations for lower castes, which had been long resisted, and the consequent mandalisation of Indian society, which is still so much feared. And if its official ideology has not yet changed, then certainly its pragmatic political practice has. Even targeting Muslims, that was the original dynamo of the remarkable mobilization of the Sangha Parivar, has been something they have retreated from in an effort to now win Muslim support. This is but an opportunistic concession to electoral realities. Christians now provide a softer and less risky target.

Muslim fundamentalist too after the tragedy of the Babari Masjid demolition, find themselves marginalised by the very relgious logic that they have used to moblise the community with its cries of 'Islam in danger'. Now in the aftermath the community feels betrayed by their extremist leadership that took risks, which put only their own people not themselves in danger.

In the Christian Church the reformist success of A Theology of Liberation (Gutierez, 1988) in mobilizing the masses politically has

brought it under suspicion of church leaders who fear losing control over the people thus mobilised and motivated in the movement. The response has been a conscious withdrawal of support and a delegitimisation of the movement under the injunction of not mixing religion and politics. But the fact that the injunction has been used more vigorously against the liberationist rather than the liberals or the conservatives, speaks volumes for where such an injunction is coming from and what its implicit objectives are. In the meanwhile, Christian fundamentalists of various hues, while claiming to be 'other-worldly', seek to impose their beliefs and practises much to the resentment and resistance of a 'this-worldly' audience.

5. *Global Religion and Local Relevance*

Now precisely because religion focuses on cultural particularities, it becomes an invaluable resource for mobilizing people across the divisions of class, caste, language, culture and region and thus to bridge the gap between individual alienation and group solidarity. This gives religion a critical potential to address the residual problems in a society.

It would seem to many that the moderate liberal option though less visible may in fact have a greater long-term influence on global culture. Not only is it more compatible with globalistion processes which broaden the sense of inclusion and interdependency, this culture itself is more susceptible to a reformist rather than a radical or a revivalist appeal.

But to think of the final outcome as one global civil religion, would precisely dilute the appeal and inspiration of particular religious beliefs and practives when affirming local cultures and particular peoples. The very homogenisation of a globalising world would seem to precipitate a pluralism of religious responses. This is precisely the paradox that keeps the religious enterprise alive, and hopefully the radical, liberating and empowering possibilities in a religious tradition still relevant.

For our alienation in a world that has lost its enchantment can hardly be effectively addressed at the global level. For globalisation is part of the problem of such disenchantment not part of the solution. Rushdie's 'metropolitan experience' which brings the 'mutability of character' is not addressed by more cosmopolitanism. Nor can we be forcibly reintegrated like Camus 'Outsider'. What we need is a re-enchantment of our world by a more creative and constructive localism. For this we must think locally precisely to act globally more effectively. For globalisation and localisation as the new religious movements have

demonstrated are not contradictory but complementary, whether in our secular cities or our 'global village'.

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