HOLY
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When Religion and Culture Part Ways

OLIVIER ROY

Translated by ROS SCHWARTZ

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CONTENTS

v

FOREWORD

This book is not necessarily what it appears to be: the work of an expert on Islam who has moved away from his specialist field into comparatism, with all the attendant implications of amateurism.

As a matter of fact, my interest in Christianity goes back much further than my interest in Islam. In 1972, I tackled the question of relations between Christianity, universalism and culture in my Master's thesis entitled "Leibniz and China". But in this foreword, I would particularly like to mention the three "pre-book" stages, prior even to this first publication in 1972, which prepared the ground for *Holy Ignorance*.

It all began in the spring of 1965 in the town of La Rochelle. I was fifteen years old and a member of a Protestant youth group. This milieu offered me a balanced mix of all the interesting things in life. We studied the Bible in an atmosphere of great intellectual freedom; the ministers were cultured, they took us to the theatre, introduced us to books (and politics, in the case of the younger ones); we went to summer camps where sports went hand in hand with intellectual pursuits. And, above all, in those days it was one of the few places where teenage boys and girls could mix, which was much better than the secular school and its Catholic rivals. Of course, our ministers were responsible for ensuring that this fraternizing did not result in transgression. They appealed, in good Protestant tradition, not to prohibitions, but to our sense of responsibility ("Save yourself for the girl who's saving herself for you", and vice-versa for the girls). Naturally, we used all sorts of ploys, some more subtle than others, to bend the rules without questioning either the values or the explicit norms of a Protestant sub-culture in which we felt at home. For example, we

formed a folk dance group which, over the course of the year, surreptitiously switched from *kibbutz-kolkhoz* dances to the Israeli tune of *Hava Nagila*—the minister's favourite—to the Argentine tango (no, this has nothing to do with my current stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict).

In the spring of 1965, we planned a camping holiday in Brittany: cycling during the day, camping at night, Bible studies, singing, discussions—and the rest. My best friend and I had smuggled a smaller, cosier tent into the communal camping kit and planned to rendezvous therein with our girlfriends once the ministers were asleep. As we were top of the class in Bible studies, curiously they assumed we had a higher sense of morality than our fellow students—that's Protestant intellectualism for you. Then, two months before our departure, the minister announced the arrival of a new boy. He was sixteen years old, came from the town's working-class parish and had matinee-idol looks. One Thursday he entered the club where we were clustered around a ping-pong table, and zealously shouted "Christ is risen!" It was not so much the words themselves—inscribed in our membership agreement—that felt incongruous, as the way he uttered them. There were times for that, and this was not one of them: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven". But the new boy, with his radiant smile and luminous blue eyes, was not daunted by our silence: "Brothers and sisters, say with me: Hallelujah! Christ is risen!"… The holiday was off to a bad start, because a boy like that was bound to be an insomniac, like all those who are inspired. Even more worrying, there was a gleam in the minister's eyes: at last, he had found someone who truly shared his faith.

I had just encountered my first evangelical Christian. At the time, La Rochelle was home to an American military base and acted as a bridgehead for the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, evangelicals, Baptists, Pentecostalists, Adventists and the Salvation Army. The American missionaries had found the working-class districts of Laleu and the industrial port of La Palice particularly fertile ground. The Gypsy (or "Travellers" as we'd say today) Mission pitched its tent every summer. In other words, the spread of evangelicalism and "sects" was occurring right in front of me, twenty years before it became a social issue. It was, in a way, my first experience of participative sociology.

After a brief discussion, a delegation of us went to see the minister with a very simple ultimatum: "It's him or us". The minister very

wisely chose to accompany the lost sheep on his bicycle rather than walk with the only sheep that had found the path to the narrow gate. Unless he too was afraid of having his holiday ruined, which is unlikely as he was a man of the cloth. And thus I can boast of having been involved, at the age of fifteen, in Protestant culture's tradition of resistance against the evangelist offensive.

And now, forty-five years on, I am forced to conclude that it was a rearguard battle. The newcomers reconciled not so much faith and reason as faith and logic—which are much more effective. In fact, Paul the Apostle was badly translated when he spoke of *latreia logikê* (reasonable service) in the epistle to the Romans (12:1): it did indeed mean *logical service*, and not *rational* and even less *reasonable*, as the King James Bible says. If we have faith, then it must be at the centre of our lives. And knowledge and culture are of little importance if we are deaf to the call of Christ. I could put away my Greek dictionary with which I tried in vain to impress the girls during Bible studies. After the rational believer (my minister grandfather), came the existential believer (very hip among theology students in the 1950s), the pedantic believer (yours truly, at least at the time), and now it is the time of the logical believer. And of holy ignorance.

The reader may infer from the above anecdote that the purpose of this book is to settle scores with evangelicalism. Not so; I was more puzzled than resentful. Besides, the holiday went as planned: every night the ministers fell asleep very early, or pretended to (these were the good old days of the implicit; nowadays we utter the unsaid, but only as a manner of speaking).

Quite simply, that boy whose name eludes me continued to baffle me: that he could die thus seemed conceivable to me, but how could a person live as a Christian with such a faith? And live forever? To which I would now add another question: these days, do his children—for he must have had some—greet their friends with a loud "Christ is risen"?

The second encounter was with Marxist universalism.

It was of course the student Paris of the late 1960s, and my arrival in the first year of preparatory school for the École Normale Supérieure in a lycée where the Maoists ruled the roost (while the Trotskyists dominated the streets). In the school year of 1967–68 (the year of May 1968), preparatory class 2 of the Lycée Louis-le-Grand had François Châtelet as its philosophy teacher. A colourful character and a Hellenist, an earnest left-winger, he observed our revolutionary protests with

an ironic sympathy. He was prepared to brave the riot squad's batons to come and collect us from the police station, and had no hesitation in jeopardising his career to embark on new pedagogical experiments, all the while mouthing a few fashionable slogans in keeping with the mood of the day, like the Greeks offering libations to the local deities; but there was one thing he never compromised on: philosophical rigour.

And so, one day, when the most brilliant student in the class (not me, I should add) began his presentation on "Formal logic and the class struggle" with the following declaration: "Chairman Mao teaches us that just ideas do not come from the sky, they come from the people", Châtelet sighed, adjusted his glasses, gazed at us and interrupted the speaker: "Listen, kids, don't forget that Mao Tse Tungian thought is pre-Baconian!". It was said politely and it had a devastating effect on me at any rate (others took several years to come to the same conclusion). Mao pre-Baconian? Mao "a crappy philosopher"? But then, does that mean that the poorer and more dogmatic the thinking, the more influential it is? This explained, before its time, the success of television philosophers, following Marx's maxim that history, in repeating itself, goes from tragedy to farce. But at that time, I couldn't accept such a pessimistic conclusion.

Then I developed the habit of taking off for the East to get away from this world of imminent revolution that had become unreal. But it was only to encounter the same activists and the same discourse almost everywhere, sometimes punctuated by bursts of Kalashnikov fire— a sound that was to serve as background music to my philosophical musings.

It was between two failed revolutionary movements that I met variously, in little villages in the Afghan province of Nuristan and in the Yemeni Hadramaut, an exiled primary school teacher, an officer who wasn't sure whether he should arrest the passing backpacker or invite him in, and a student back in his parents' village for the school holidays. They and I reinvented the world, compared our strategies for taking power and discussed the revolutionary capabilities of the peasantry. The difference between us was that they really were risking their lives, and that many like them have lost theirs.

Then there was my encounter, in an old propeller-driven crate flying me from Aden to Bombay, with a Sri Lankan student telling us in advance about the bloody and suicidal 1971 uprising led by the Sinhalese Sri Lankan People's Liberation Front, or Janatha Vimukthi

Peramuna, JVP (an unsuccessful Marxist youth rebellion that claimed 15,000 lives). I also found myself, a year later, handing out leaflets in Paris supporting the very beautiful Chandrika Bandaranaike, who was standing against her mother, the then Prime Minister, in Colombo (my motivation here was infra-political, or, depending how one looks at it or where one stands, metapolitical). Chandrika ended up as President and appointed her mother Prime Minister—life is full of surprises. But that's another story. I also smuggled nearly the complete works of Mao Tse Tung in Persian (after picking them up from the Chinese Vice-Consul in Kabul, who wondered what on earth I wanted with them) to a vaguely Maoist friend in Tehran, under the Shah. In those days, it wasn't the Islamists who had a blind belief in violence.

What does this have to do with religion? Millenarianism, the death of the old man within oneself, absolute and transcendent truth, universalism, fear of never being on the right side—that of the pure… and in the most radical milieus, like the Khmer Rouge, culture was the very thing that was preventing the birth of the new man. This morbid, pathogenic, often criminal or suicidal concern to eliminate the old man within the self (and within the other) is also a hallmark of the Jihadists' religious radicalism. The idea of man as a *tabula rasa*: this was indeed a case of holy ignorance.

The religious dimension of communism has long been recognized, but it was even more pronounced among the Maoists; it is no coincidence that my former group leader, the man of formal logic and the class struggle, is now the great expert on Persian mysticism (at least this comes under neither logic nor ignorance—as for holiness, that is not my field). If our our beloved ex-leader, "comrade Jean", alias Pierre Victor, alias Benny Lévy, who believed he was God until he met someone with a better claim to the title, ended up as director of a *yeshiva* in Jerusalem, regularly bemoaning the time he wasted "not knowing". Was it in fact a matter of knowing? That's another story. But our careers have continually been haunted by the darkness of holiness rather than its light.

This brings me to the third stage of my student life. I pondered Châtelet's remark. If Mao Tse Tung's thinking was so weak theoretically, why did it "stir up the masses", as people said at the time? Why had it led to an event as improbable as the Cultural Revolution in China? Perhaps Maoism had a cultural dimension that was specifically Chinese—which would invalidate the reasons that prompted us to

adopt it in the name of proletarian internationalism. After the intellectual conundrum of religion, I was faced with the enigma of culture, encountering it anew each time I crossed a border. So I decided to learn Chinese. After three years of evening classes at Paris-VII University, our teacher informed me that I had reached the minimum level required in China for the average peasant from the lower category, i.e. 750 characters (out of 49,000), which coming from him, trained in Communist China, was a compliment. Knowing more would probably have denoted class arrogance. As for our classical language teacher, who had followed a similar career path and had become a slavish Red Guard, he had us working on the writings of the Great Leader (accessible to an average peasant from the lower category) instead of those of Confucius (but I made up for it in the libraries). The conclusion (mine, this time) was definitive: the language of *The Little Red Book* was full of clichés, proverbs and sayings that echoed popular Chinese wisdom, comparable to allusions to the fables of La Fontaine in a political discourse in France, but there was no secret wisdom, alchemy of Chinese characters, mystery of Taoist dialectics or the intellectual subtleties of a Go player. There is also age-old ignorance which religion does not explain!

The problem was, my exams were approaching and in order to obtain my Masters thesis, I had to find a link between my philosophy studies and the years spent learning Chinese and Persian and travelling. Studying under Yvon Belaval, master mariner turned philosopher (or vice versa), I discovered that G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716) had been fascinated by China. He was a rationalist, Lutheran (and German) philosopher who supported Italian and French Jesuit missionaries facing harassment from the Vatican over religious rites in Manchu China. The same philosopher sought the keys to universal language in Chinese writings, a rational theology in the Chinese "religion", and finally, the first binary calculation table in the Taoist I-ching. In studying his work, I was guaranteed to find plenty of food for thought.

The quarrel over rites was the beginning of a modern argument. The Chinese imperial authorities were not interested in Christian theology any more in the seventeenth century than in the twenty-first, they simply wanted everyone to worship the Emperor—worship here to be understood as a simple "civic religion", in other words a moral adhesion to the political order and to the values of the empire; that had nothing to do with defending an official religion. What was at stake

was today's issue of the separation of church and state: a religion could not set its own principles in opposition to the foundations of a political community. The Jesuits, secularist before the term existed, continually opposed the Vatican in defending the idea that the Chinese rites were simply a sort of oath of allegiance and not idolatrous worship. The Congregation of Foreign Missions, eventually followed by the Vatican, claimed on the other hand that in honouring the Emperor and in using the Chinese character denoting the sky to name God, the Jesuits were negating the God of the Bible and his son Jesus Christ.

The old theme of "formal logic and class struggle" came back to me, via the recurrent question: how does one conceive of an absolute truth? Can religion be reduced to culture or reason, or does it affirm its implacable and menacing transcendence? For Leibniz, it was a matter of establishing a rational theology, one that was universally acceptable and already present in all the world's major religions; he reduced religions and cultures to universal reason. His opponents considered that this was to ignore the centrality of the figure of Christ—which by definition is the very essence of Christianity. But the figure of Christ is not a rational theorem: it is an event, a sudden appearance, a presence, and here, faith prevails over reason (this was the argument of Pascal who preferred the God of Abraham to that of the philosophers, and this was the God of the young evangelical Christian of La Rochelle). Christianity, like all religions, cannot be absorbed into philosophy and places itself beyond the cultures to which the historian and the anthropologist alike are keen to reduce it.

Neither philosophy nor culture, but a constant reminder of a transcendence, irreducible to the material world, and on which the world order is founded: what should be religion's place in the social order? Can it be brought into the framework of other symbolic systems (culture)? Can it develop within its own sphere (private life, the faith community or in another world, another space) without coming into conflict with the other symbolic systems? Should the "brazen wall" of separation be erected, for lack of finding common ground with the man of faith, of great faith? All religions, or to be more precise, all believers make a choice of this nature: can a person disrupt a game of table-tennis shouting "Hallelujah, Christ is risen!"? The fact is that today it is this attitude which characterizes what we call (mistakenly, as we will see) "the comeback of religion". So what should we make of this religious challenge?

All this happened more than thirty years ago. Since then, I have worked a little, read what I can and travelled widely. For what? To emerge from holy ignorance into a state of knowledge that is marginally more cheerful? He who laughs last laughs longest.

INTRODUCTION

Modernity, Secularization and the Revival of Religion

Why do tens of thousands of Muslims in Central Asia become Christians or Jehovah's Witnesses? How can an evangelical Protestant Church establish itself in Morocco and Algeria? Why has Protestant evangelicalism built up a huge following in Brazil (twenty-five million adherents in 2007) and West Africa? What is the explanation for the fact that the world's fastest growing religion is Pentecostalism? Why does radical Salafism attract young Europeans, both black and white? How come Al Qaida is the "Islamic" organization that has the highest percentage of converts? And conversely, why is the Catholic Church finding it so hard to retain its flock, with priestly vocations plummeting in the West? Why is it that today's custodians of the conservative Anglican tradition are Nigerian, Ugandan or Kenyan, whereas Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the English Church has spoken out in favour both of allowing British Muslims to use *sharia* law in civil cases and the ordination of gay priests? Why have the Slavic Orthodox Churches, contrary to Protestantism, fallen back on national identities, likewise Hinduism?

Why is Buddhism catching on in the West? Why has the ideological emphasis on religion in Iran led to a secularization of civil society? Why does South Korea supply the highest number of Protestant missionaries in the world in proportion to its population (in absolute figures, it ranks just behind the United States)? The theory of the clash (or dialogue) of civilizations does not explain these tectonic movements which confuse the issue, blur territories and identities, and sever the traditional links between religion and culture. What happens when

1

religions break away from their cultural roots? Or, to put it simply, why do religions seem to be engines that drive such reformulations of identity?

Two conflicting theories emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century: one contends that secularization is an inevitable process, both a condition and consequence of modernity, the other acknowledges or welcomes the comeback of religion, perceived either as a protest against an alienating or illusory modernity, or as a different way of entering modernity. This discussion is not purely intellectual: in France, it is central to the argument about secularism. Should secularism be imposed at the expense of individual freedom, to combat religion if need be, or is the revival of religion simply a reflection of diversity, cultural richness and human freedom?

But there is a huge misapprehension in this debate: secularization has not eradicated religion. As a result of our separating religion from our cultural environment, it appears on the other hand as pure religion. In fact, secularization has worked: what we are witnessing today is the militant reformulation of religion in a secularized space that has given religion its autonomy and therefore the conditions for its expansion. Secularization and globalization have forced religions to break away from culture, to think of themselves as autonomous and to reconstruct themselves in a space that is no longer territorial and is therefore no longer subject to politics. The failure of political religion (Islamism as a theocracy) comes from the fact that it tried to compete with secularization on its own ground: the political sphere (nation, state, citizen, constitution, legal system). Attempts to politicize religion in this way always end up secularizing it, because it becomes mixed up with day-to-day politics and because it presupposes both allegiance from each person and individual freedom. Political religion is quite simply torn between two imperatives: non-belief is unthinkable, but faith can only be individual; a collective faith is therefore inconceivable, whereas previously there had been a collective system of norms. This political religion works on the principle that everyone must be a believer, but it cannot guarantee this belief, and must therefore impose a conformity reduced to appearances, which makes it impossible for it subsequently to present itself as the expression of a faith shared by an entire community.

There is a close link between secularization and religious revivalism, which is not a reaction against secularization, but the product of it.

Secularism engenders religion. We are not witnessing a religious come-back, but a transformation. This transformation is probably only temporary: it will not necessarily lead to a new religious age.

A preliminary question does however arise: does religion's increasing visibility and the amount of media and political attention paid to it really equate to an increase in religious practice? In Europe, this is not obvious at all: John Paul II's papacy embodied religion's media-friendly modernity, but over the past twenty years, while growing numbers of young people have flocked to meet the Pope on World Youth Day (WYD), the number enrolling in Catholic seminaries has fallen continuously. Should we conclude that the more young people see of the Pope, the less inclined they are to become priests? Or rather, to put it more delicately, that their need for spirituality no longer corresponds to what the traditional Church can offer? Europeans' religious practice has declined steadily during the decades of the "religious revival". In Spain, a law passed in 1987 and approved by the Church allows the state to levy directly a voluntary religious tax (0.52 per cent of income tax) which is paid to the Church; but the number of tax-paying households ticking the box fell from 42.73 per cent in 1993 to 34.32 per cent in 2002.[1] In Great Britain, there has been a general decline in religious practice except among three groups: Poles (50 per cent attendance at mass), Pentecostalists and Muslims.[2] But a large proportion of Pente-costalists are from African or Jamaican backgrounds: thus religious "revivalism" is associated with population categories (in particular immigrants), not with the nature of religions themselves. Religion recruits on the fringes, in the same way that the major eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious revivalist movements (Methodism) concen-trated on the geographical fringes (Wales, Scotland) and ignored the heart of England. In Spain, the astonishing spread of Protestantism, which rose from a few tens of thousands of followers in 1995 to some 400,000 in 2005, is chiefly due to the conversion of immigrants from Ecuador and other Latin American countries. In the Christian Ortho-dox countries, the rush to the Churches that followed the fall of com-munism seems to have fizzled out.

Those who claim there is a religious revival stress that Europe is the exception and that on other continents the return to religion is much more pronounced. In actual fact, even though it is difficult to measure religious practice, what we are seeing today may be new forms of reli-gious visibility rather than an outbreak of religiousness. In the United

States, the percentage of people stating they are non-believers rose from 7 per cent to 13 per cent between 1990 and 2001, while the number of Catholic seminarians plunged from 49,000 in 1965 to 4,700 in 2002, even though the number of Catholics was rising as a result of the Hispanicization of the population:[3] likewise, although there are growing numbers of students in Protestant theological colleges, the percentage of those wishing to become ministers is diminishing.[4] In Israel, the increase in the number of orthodox Jews is due to natural population growth rather than to a sudden surge in the number of *bal teshuva* (born again).

Some observers have noted a parallel between a decline in Christianity and Islam's expansion. But it is Christian Pentecostalism that is growing fastest the world over, along with Mormonism. The religious practice of the Muslim minority in Europe seems much more visible, but that is because public practise started from nothing, whereas in fact regular individual observance of the rites (prayers) appears to be not much greater than that practised by other religions.[5] The spread of Islam has been linked to the expansion of Muslim populations rather than to a conversion trend. However, Muslim population growth is experiencing a sudden slowdown: nearly all Muslim societies are currently seeing a demographic transition which places them on a par with or below European fertility levels.[6]

Furthermore, the expression "religious comeback" implies a revival of religions as they formerly were, like after an eclipse. Are the religions that are successful today the same, apart from their labels (Christianity, Islam), as those on which the great civilizations were founded? We are witnessing a shift of the traditional forms of religious practice—Catholicism, Hanafi Islam, classic Protestant denominations such as Anglicanism and Methodism—towards more fundamentalist and charismatic forms of religiosity (evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, Salafism, Tablighi Jamaat, neo-Sufism, Lubavich). But these movements are relatively recent. Salafism derives from Wahhabism which was founded at the end of the eighteenth century. The Hasidim and Haredim were born in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The various evangelical movements belong to the tradition of Protestant "awakenings" which began during the eighteenth century, while Pentecostalism dates from the early twentieth century. Similarly the forms of Buddhism and Hinduism which recruit and export themselves are recent reformulations from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century (Soka

Gakkai, Falun Gong and Hare Krishna, as well as the political Hinduism of the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Sri Lankan *theravada* Buddhism). The movements which the French call sects and the Americans cults, or more academically "NRMs" (New Religious Movements) are thriving: the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, which also began in the nineteenth century, expanded hugely worldwide at the close of the twentieth century.

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

It is the relationship between religion and public life that is changing, for religious revival in the public sphere no longer takes on the form of cultural visibility but becomes a display of religious "purity", or of reconstructed traditions. Religious conversions in all directions are a sign of this muddying of the link between culture and religion. But one thing is undeniable: in all cases it is the so-called "fundamentalist" or "charismatic" forms of religion that have seen the most spectacular growth, be it Protestant evangelicalism or Muslim Salafism. There has been a similar increase in hardline orthodoxy in the Catholic Church and Judaism, and even in Hinduism. Fundamentalism is the religious form that is most suited to globalization, because it accepts its own deculturation and makes it the instrument of its claim to universality.

Deterritorialization and Deculturation

Clearly it is not the first time that religions have exported themselves and converted beyond their cultural heartlands, but religious change triggers deculturation/acculturation processes where religious and cultural markers attempt to reconnect, often in the context of conquests or some form of political supremacy. The territorialization of religions resulted in their acculturation, or inculturation to use a more recent term (they establish themselves within an existing culture). Christianity and Islam respectively had an undeniable Westernizing and Arabizing

effect, even if new syntheses between religion and culture gradually emerged which made it possible to divide the world into cultural regions (Persian or Ottoman culture, Latin American Christianity). Moreover, some claim that the territorialization of religion is the root cause of the clash/dialogue of civilizations, a theory which suits political ends.

Anthropologists have come up with a whole array of concepts to express these connections: acculturation, hybridism, syncretism, mixing… Marxists of all stripes have bandied around the concept of alienation to explain how political or ideological supremacy could implant beliefs whose purpose was to maintain this supremacy by internalising it: this explained why the dominated embraced the religion of the dominators, the most typical example being the African-American slaves' adoption of Protestantism despite the lack of a systematic conversion policy among slave owners (but how do we explain the fact that their counterparts in the Catholic areas of the Americas turned instead to syncretist religions such as Voodoo?).

But nowadays, "religion" circulates outside all systems of political supremacy. Of course, many see the growth of Pentecostalism as a new avatar of American ideological imperialism, but things are more complicated: how then can the spread of Islam, the proportion of Africans in modern-day Catholicism or the expansion of Buddhism be explained? Does the conversion of many African-Americans to Islam make Islam the new form of alienation or the opposite, anti-imperialism in a new guise?

Two factors play a key part in the transformation of religion today: deterritorialization and deculturation. Deterritorialization is not only associated with the movement of people (which only affects a small percentage of the global population), but also with the circulation of ideas, cultural objects, information and modes of consumption generally in a non-territorial space. But in order to circulate, the religious object must appear universal, disconnected from a specific culture that has to be understood in order for the message to be grasped. Religion therefore circulates outside knowledge. Salvation does not require people to know, but to believe. Both, of course, are far from being incompatible in religions which are embedded in culture and where theological reflection is stimulated by contact with philosophy and literature. But not only is this connection no longer necessary, it also becomes an obstacle when it is a matter of circulating in "real time" in a space where information has replaced knowledge.

The separation of religious and cultural markers is not a result of deterritorialization: it goes with it, but it also happens *in situ*, driven by variable factors both internal and external. Secularization prompts religion to distance itself from a culture now perceived as indifferent, even hostile. This is where the argument between "fundamentalism" and "accommodationism" is played out; these are two positions rather than two theologies: the first assumes a breakaway from culture, the second considers that the embodiment of religion in a culture (established or developing) is a pre-requisite for its existence. For the fundamentalist, the criterion of separation is faith: you only share with a person of the same faith. For the accommodationist, the believer can share a common culture and values with the non-believer. We can speak of a Jewish atheist or of a culturally Catholic nonbeliever, and today we are witnessing the appearance of the concept of the "Muslim atheist"; on the other hand it is hard to conceive of an atheist Pentecostalist, an agnostic Salafist, or an intellectual Jehovah's Witness.

So religion then turns against the surrounding culture that is no longer perceived as simply secular, but as pagan (from Pentecostalist preachers to the Taliban and Wahhabis). The space in-between, that of accommodation, disappears. The temptation is then to define a "religious purity". This religious purity can be constructed in diverse contexts. It can be a crisis in social relations that leads to the rebuilding of identity on the basis of a religious marker (immigration, a dramatic crisis in tribalism). It can be the explicit construction of a religion "for export": the missionary urge in the face of a standardized global market, taking a marketing-type approach, tailoring the product to the market, playing on demand but also stimulating a demand. Deterritorialization is also a consequence of the crisis of the territorialized nation-state, to which political secularism still clings. And political secularism attempts to restrict the autonomy of religion and resist the influence of globalization (from France to Turkey) by taking authoritarian measures.

If religions are able to extend beyond their original cultures, it is because they have been able to "deculturate" themselves. The religious marker circulates without cultural markers, even if it means reconnecting with floating cultural markers—*halal* fast food, eco-*kosher*, cyber-*fatwa*, *halal* dating, Christian rock, transcendental meditation. Political correctness has abandoned Christmas in favour of Winterval, thus help-

ing not only to neutralize religion, but also to reinforce it by arresting its metamorphosis into culture, thus preventing it from becoming "embedded" in culture

The deculturation of religion has some fundamental consequences: first of all it transforms the gap between the believer and the non-believer into a barrier, since now they no longer share either religious practice or common values. So all the intermediary spaces of non-practising believers, nominal followers, culturally religious non-believers are vanishing. In the eyes of the believers, the lukewarm, the cool or those who have not been born again belong to the secular—or even pagan—world. Conversely, to the non-believer, the believer appears incongruous, even fanatical. Deculturation is the loss of the social expression of religion. Believers feel themselves to be minorities surrounded by an atheist, pornographic, materialistic, secular culture which worships false gods: money, sex or man himself. This sentiment holds true even if statistically believers are in the majority, as in the United States.

On the other hand, the simultaneous presence in the market of different "religious products" results in both competition and standardization, not of theology but of religiosity. This standardization is also apparent in the sociological profile of followers of new religious movements, who display certain traits specific to so-called neo-fundamentalism: modern family structures (i.e. couples of a similar age and background) but conservative values; political lobbying to promote moral values, but indifference to political ideology and to the form of the state; campaigning, professionally active women who demand traditional roles (women wearing the headscarf for the first time claiming that it is a personal choice); modern professionals (engineers, civil servants) whose discourse is rooted in "tradition"; insistence on the norm rather than on love and compassion; a closed community but a universalist vision of religion; indifference to traditional culture and art but a fascination with modern technology. All religiosities are similar, even if their religious identities are divergent. The standardization of lifestyles, norms and values is a corollary of globalization.

As people are seeking identical things (self-affirmation, fulfilment, happiness, salvation), religions format themselves according to these demands. Market-driven formatting is heightened by the role of institutions, either through legislation or through legal processes which tend to treat all religions in the same way and therefore to mould them

in similar categories. Gradually a common template of "religion" is emerging, since institutions need a one-size-fits-all definition that applies to all religions. But this formatting does not simply obey a desire to control, dominate and acculturate, as was traditionally the case when the state intervened in spiritual matters. Nowadays, the formatting of religion occurs for precisely the opposite reason: it is done in the name of freedom and equality. In order for religions to be treated in an egalitarian manner, they must be part of a shared paradigm: for example, allowing a religion to have chaplains in the army assumes that the religion in question has a category of professional ministers of religion, and if that is not the case, it will be invented. Although the principle of the separation of Church and state in democratic countries is there precisely to ensure that the state does not define religion, it nevertheless seeks to use a common paradigm. The paradox is that in the past, religion was formatted so as to reinforce domination in the interests of territorial and political uniformity generally based on a national programme, but nowadays it occurs in the name of "human rights", religious freedom and multiculturalism. Far from being the acknowledgement of primary differences, multiculturalism is no more than the expression of the formatting of cultures and religions within a common paradigm of the lowest common denominators: a few religious markers, divorced from their context, "made equal" by legal process and established as cultural markers. Multiculturalism boils down to obliterating cultural depth and placing under the name of culture a reduced set of religious markers, all of which are similar to each other (dietary and dress requirements reduced to a few paraphernalia, like the headscarf). Multiculturalism is the communal estate comprising only the property acquired after marriage.

What is Pure Religion?

What is the meaning of "pure religion"? A tension has always existed between faith and culture, especially when there is a breaking away (revelation, conversion). Breaking away from the surrounding culture therefore leads to a fundamentalist-type assertion (a demand to return to explicit religious norms and only to these) or integralist (i.e. every aspect of my private life must be governed by my faith, even if I don't impose it on others).[7] New or born-again believers and converts will not allow their faith to be categorized by anthropologists as one cul-

tural symbolic system among others. For them, it is an absolute. This is what the Protestant theologian Karl Barth terms the "leap of faith" that makes religion what it is. There can be no theology without faith. The argument between faith and knowledge is certainly inherent to all the revealed religions. The "moderate" currents, like Thomism, have always argued that there is no contradiction between the two: faith and knowledge mutually reinforce each other. But deculturation destroys this dialectic relation: the sacred texts must be able to speak outside any cultural context. And so we are witnessing the deculturation of the sacred texts. We are aware of the extent to which the Bible is a cultural text, and yet the evangelical Protestants follow it "to the letter", but a letter freed not only from the original language, but from language itself, in order to see no more than a simple message. The ultimate process of this deculturation is the very thing that accounts for the Pentecostalists' success today.

The hallmark of Pentecostalism, in addition to the characteristics specific to what we call evangelicalism (the emphasis on being born again, and the literal belief in the Bible), is glossolalia, speaking in tongues. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in imitation of the Apostles, some believers start "speaking in tongues", and people with whom they have no common language are able to understand what they are saying. Admittedly there are several schools within Pentecostalism: they do not all see glossolalia as a condition for salvation, but "speaking in tongues" is indeed a key feature of Pentecostalism. The Pentecostalists who preach in "tongues" do not preach in any specific language and have no knowledge of foreign languages. Glossolalia is no more than a series of sounds, and yet the "message" is transmitted: God's word no longer needs to be enshrined in a particular language and culture; it is detached, like tongues of fire. There is something extraordinary here: the language that is spoken is no longer a real language, the Word of God is no longer embodied in a given language. There are two simultaneous approaches to taking the Scripture literally: Pentecostalism is "literalist", i.e. it does not question the veracity of the letter of the scriptures, but nor is it interested in the actual language of the text, nor, incidentally, in any specific language. But the Biblical text, we suspect, poses a problem: written in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, it poses problems of translation, of the cultural environment of the language of the time, for there is no such thing as a neutral language: all languages are rooted in a complex cultural context, every

language has a history. In ignoring real language, Pentecostalism resolves the question of the contextualization of the sacred text: God speaks outside any context.[8]

How Can Faith be Passed on to the Next Generation?

How can a person be born from a born-again, how can a person be the child of a convert? A radical breakaway cannot be transmitted; it turns into a new tradition. That is why religions have always acculturated or inculturated themselves. But this severing of the connection between religion and culture today persists precisely because globalization challenges cultures' durability and territorialization. The knowledge society being advocated is that of a deculturated knowledge, reduced to information that circulates. The autonomy of religion and the separation of cultural and religious markers are congruous with this process. That is modern religiosity.

But this permanent tension between religion and culture is unstable. Two recurrent problems arise for converts and the born again—how do you pass on to your children and how do you reach out to others? The buzzword today is reconnection, the only alternative to the ghettoization of religion. The all-or-nothing attitude to faith is not tenable, especially for a new generation which sees the "revival of religion" as a phenomenon that is both established and outmoded.

Reconnection is therefore a recurrent problem in the Catholic Church, for the centrist Muslims, the Jews threatened by assimilation and American evangelicals shaking off the idea that the return of Christ is imminent. Believers do not spend their time praying: they also expect something from politics and from the economy. The American Christian right has run out of steam, as evidenced by the fact that in 2008, it no longer recognized itself in the Republican presidential candidate.[9] The battle against abortion and gay marriage makes it impossible to dodge the concerns of many believers over issues like global warming, healthcare or growing poverty. From Iran to Saudi Arabia, including Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the implementation of *sharia* law has done nothing to resolve economic and social problems. The growing poverty of the ultra-orthodox community in Israel is an economic problem for the state. Furthermore, a number of young Jewish Haredim are losing their faith, without necessarily becoming socially integrated secular beings.[10] The social and cultural question is resurfacing to haunt faith communities.

So religions are trawling for new cultural markers, in particular borrowed from youth culture:

Heaven may not be too far away if you're a teenager. On the south-western outskirts of Savannah awaits a new 33,000–square-foot facility soon to be filled with games, parties, friends and rock concerts. It will all be free at Savannah Christian Church's new youth centre called The Link. The two-story centre will be unveiled tonight during a three-hour grand-opening celebration. Prizes, including free iPods, will be given away every hour to junior high and senior high school students who register at the door.

The Link includes a plethora of pop-culture diversions rarely found in one place, much less a church. There's a rock-climbing wall, nine Xbox 360s, a basketball cage, skateboard ramps, a cafe, a lakeside patio and lots of comfy couches.[11]

In Lourdes, France:

The bishopric of Tarbes and Lourdes is organising a night of partying and prayer on New Year's Eve. Codename: 3D, the Discothèque of God. The programme includes a concert by the Christian rock band Exo, followed by a procession top at the grotto of Massabielle, where there will be a mass celebrated by Monsignor Jacques Perrier. The young people will then have the choice between a night of worship or an all night café.[12]

With ice cream sundaes, iPod giveaways, spa days and yoga classes, a group of Orthodox rabbis in the Washington area is employing decidedly unorthodox methods to address a growing problem: the fading involvement of Jews in local Jewish life.[13]

American evangelicalist literature, like that of conservative or orthodox Jews, is full of these frantic attempts to reconnect, the proof that the pure religion position is not tenable for much longer.[14] But what is at issue here is definitely the cultural dimension of these new markers, since code is probably being confused with culture. Encoding religion in youth-speak is likely to remain transient and temporary. That in fact is often the view of the religions in question, for which it is a matter of using a sales pitch to attract customers, but not of adopting their world view. But that does not answer the question of what a religious culture is. Meanwhile, Holy Ignorance prevails.

The New Converts

Conversions have always existed, but mass conversions have generally been collective and in specific political circumstances (conquests, assimilation strategy, expression of local identities). What is new today

is the high number of conversions undertaken as a result of individual choice and in very different contexts. They have the character of mass conversions and go hand in hand with the rapid boom in new religious movements spawned either by existing religions (charismatic and evangelical movements in Christianity at the expense of more liberal or traditional forms, the rise of Salafism in Islam), or emerging as new religions, often described as "cults". But the key factor in conversions is the lack of a connection between religion and culture; in other words, religions are recruiting outside the cultures with which they are traditionally associated, or are having a deculturation effect which is not followed by acculturation: they distance themselves from each of the surrounding cultures, which are seen as too secular, pagan even, without necessarily promoting new cultures.

The boundary between new forms of religiosity, new religions and cults is not very clear. Where should the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses be classed? They consider themselves to be Christians, but are rejected as such by the other Churches. That is why sociologists of religion have coined the term "New Religious Movements" (NRMs), which allows us to go beyond genealogies and affiliations and reflect together on these new movements, be they Pentecostalist, Jehovah's Witnesses or Hare Krishna.

Converts are first and foremost nomads, even if they do not move around physically: they shop around, test out and experiment, surfing the web. A large number of conversions are self-conversions: people choose their religion for themselves, declare they are members and then seek out a religious authority to confirm their choice. Conversions to Judaism, other than for pragmatic reasons (in order to marry or to acquire Israeli nationality), are particularly striking. The Jewish faith does not proselytize, and yet, each year, hundreds of would-be converts knock on every possible door in order to be recognized as Jewish.[15] Conversion here is neither the result of political pressure, nor of the influence of a mainstream culture nor of voluntarist proselytism.

Converts' stories are curiously similar: they generally involve a very personal journey, beginning with a feeling of dissatisfaction and failure, followed by an investigation of various systems of thinking and ending in suddenly finding Jesus, Allah or a guru. Muslim websites abound in stories of conversion, all the more valued if the neophyte was previously Christian, and preferably Western and cultured. Evangelicals prefer a public confession in front of an audience of the faith-

ful: "I used to drink, take drugs and steal, and then one day I found Jesus".[16] Conversion can also be internal, within the same religion, but people are "born-again"; this is a fundamental principle for the evangelicals and Pentecostalists: it is not enough to be baptized, you personally have to return to Christ. The believer is a "confessant": he or she must express their faith in every aspect of their lives. This is equally true of the Salafis and the Jewish Haredim. All the charismatic Christian movements, including among Catholics, follow this pattern, even if there is no specific ceremony. In their own way, the Muslim Salafis and Tablighis consider that a true return is necessary and therefore the traditional conception of Islam must be renounced. (Re)conversion is a personal experience, an illumination, more rarely the result of reasoning. There is no room here for theological debate: it is the "life story" that counts.

Converts and the born-again are central to our study, since they epitomize the phenomenon of the deculturation of religion. Converts and the born-again share common characteristics, even if there are clear differences in style and substance (in particular between groups that tend to be ascetic and those advocating ostentatious wealth as proof of God's blessing).

Conversions and reconversions within the same religion are not evenly matched. There are winners and losers. In Christianity, it is Protestant evangelicalism that is on the rise, with Pentecostalism in the lead. They encroach on all other religions, Catholicism being the primary victim. The figures show that in Brazil the number of Catholics dropped from 90 to 67 per cent of the population between 1965 and 2005; in Spain, between 1995 and 2005, the number of Protestants rose from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands due to the conversion of immigrants from Latin America; in less than two decades (1980–1998), 10 per cent of the population of Cape Verde switched from Catholicism to Protestantism. But the Christian Orthodox countries (such as the former Soviet Union) and Muslim countries (e.g. in Central Asia) have also been affected. Pentecostalist communities can be found in places as unexpected as Sicily, Greece and Lebanon. This breakthrough by evangelical Protestantism has long been studied by American scholars, but has received little attention in France.[17]

But it is not appropriate to speak only of an internal transformation within Christianity, since evangelicalism is also spreading in China and in the Muslim world. Changes of religion are no longer confined as

they once were to areas of tectonic contact, where a new political power imposed its religion. It is a global phenomenon. Nowadays, there exists a real religion market which means that there is a very wide range of choices available. This does not mean that religious freedom exists everywhere, but that the traditional link between a religion and a culture has been eroded: an Algerian is no longer necessarily Muslim, a Russian Orthodox or a Pole Catholic. Choices once unimaginable have become conceivable, if not easy. A typical example is Christian proselytism in a Muslim milieu. Why were there so few conversions to Christianity in the days of colonialism, when conversion was encouraged by the authorities? The secular French Republic supported the missionary activities of the White Fathers. It is no coincidence that the founder of the White Fathers, Cardinal Lavigerie, was also the rallying force who sought to reconcile the Catholic Church with the Republic. In Algeria, a French territory, applicants were not required to abandon the Muslim religion in itself in order to obtain French citizenship, but, as it involved the renunciation of personal status, it is clear that conversion to Christianity facilitated assimilation, so there was a strong incentive to convert. However the results were very disappointing. Apart from a few families of Berber intellectuals (Amrouche, Reghi), the White Fathers' proselytizing activities were astonishingly ineffectual. The Catholic Church gradually abandoned its attempts to convert Muslims and settled for "witnessing" instead (like, for example, at the Tibehrine monastery in Algeria); Father Christian Delorme went so far as to declare that they should not convert Algerians because Islam was integral to Algerian identity.[18]

However, in February 2006, the Algerian Parliament passed a law banning religious proselytism. Why? Previously, such a law would have been pointless as such occurrences were rare. But now, conversions to Christianity are affecting the man and (especially) the woman in the street, without pressure from any external form of domination. In 2008, for example, several Algerian converts to Christianity were put on trial.[19] Explanations in terms of acculturation or of political supremacy do not hold water in this case. Nor did this spate of conversions occur because there was suddenly religious freedom combined with an abundant religious offer. On the contrary, societies, like governments, are hostile to missionary activity. This is primarily true of authoritarian Muslim countries, but in different circumstances many other states are hostile to proselytism. In Russia and India for example,

laws were introduced in the first decade of the twenty-first century to curb conversions (in 2006 in Rajasthan): the Hindu nationalists targeted conversions of the lower castes either to evangelicalism or Buddhism in particular. In France, the Miviludes, a parliamentary mission, is explicitly monitoring all the NRMs. Paradoxically, the proliferation of laws and anti-conversion campaigns bear out the success of the new missions.

In recent decades, much has been written about conversions of Christians to Islam, which have swelled the ranks of fundamentalist tendencies (Salafism, Tablighi) and Sufi movements. But it is not so well known that Al Qaida is the "Islamic" organization that counts the highest number of converts (10 to 20 per cent among its internationalist wing) and is the only one which gives them responsibilities (so converts are far from being merely a backup force to dupe security checks and stymie "profiling"). Both Islam and Protestantism are making inroads among North America's Latino immigrants.[20] Islam is gaining a strong foothold among African-Americans, illustrated in 2006 by the election of Keith Ellison, a convert, as the first Muslim American to Congress. As a matter of fact, it has been observed that conversions in all directions affect the same social milieus: second-generation immigrants, the destabilized working classes, "visible minorities", rebellious youths in search of a cause. In France, there is an 80 per cent overlap between the map of mosques and the map of new evangelical churches (Northern France, the Paris region, Alsace, the Rhône corridor and the Mediterranean rim). Attending an evangelical or a Jehovah's Witness' service affords a glimpse of the vast range of ethnic groups involved.

Less trumpeted is the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, namely Protestantism, of course, even if the statistics of the Catholic Church in France show that in these early years of the twenty-first century, around 400 Muslims seek baptism each year, compared with 200 in the 1990s. But, whereas the Catholic Church tends not to proselytize much, the evangelicals have adopted a very aggressive conversion policy.[21]

The most famous case in France is that of the minister Said Oujibou, born in Morocco and President of the Fédération des Nord-Africains Chrétiens de France (FNACF)—the Federation of Christian North Africans in France—which claims to have 10,000 members. Mention should also be made of Azedine Bentaiba, the head of Oasis Toulouse (a local Christian converts' association) as well as the minister of Saint-

Ouen, Amor Bouaziz (of Algerian origin). They are all evangelicals, but a glance at the directory of the French Reform Church also shows a number of names of Muslim origin (Rachid Boubégra, minister in Lunéville in 2005).

I encountered the phenomenon of Muslims converting to Christianity in Central Asia during the 1990s. It is difficult to obtain an exact figure,[22] but it is in the region of tens of thousands. When I was on a mission for the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OCSE) in Tajikistan (1993–1994) "monitoring" human rights abuses, religions were clearly ethnic: the Muslims were Tajiks, Uzbeks or Kirghiz, the Jews were from Bukhara and the Protestants bore Slav, Armenian, German or Korean names ("indigenous" Koreans deported by Stalin to Central Asia 1940s). Generally they were Baptists, whose communities were long established. But at the end of the 1990s, there was a noticeable change: the majority of the names of the ministers or followers arrested were Muslim, and the Churches tended to be Pentecostalist, of Korean *obedience* (now South Korea); at the same time, Jehovah's Witnesses had a more dominant presence.[23] The Churches mentioned most frequently, as well as the Baptists, were: Grace of Christ Pentecostal Church (minister Felix Li in Tashkent), Good News (ex-Sun Bok Ym), Love Presbyterian Church, Full Gospel, Church of Jesus-Christ, Sonmin Grace Church in Khojent (where the minister was named Alisher Haydarov: an example of a Korean Church with an ex-Muslim minister). Most often they belong to major international Pentecostalist movements which sprang up in California at the beginning of the twentieth century or in the Sixties.

And so we are witnessing a mass movement of conversions to Protestantism among those born Muslim, a phenomenon that is affecting traditionally Muslim countries. In Turkey, where Christianity is historically associated with minority ethnic and linguistic groups (Armenians, Greeks, Syriacs), the first ethnically Turkish Protestant Church was recognized in 2005: the temple of Altintepe, a district of Istanbul, was accepted as a *vaqf*, the legal structure for religious associations. During the same period, after a lengthy application process, several converts succeeded in formally changing their "religion" on their identity papers from Muslim to Protestant. In 2007, in Adiyaman, the first bishopric since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 was established on present-day Turkish soil. The New Syriac Orthodox bishop, Malke Ürek Gregorios, does not practise conversions, but receives requests from dozens

of Turks speaking only Turkish but claiming they had a Syriac or Armenian grandmother. This causes some tension: Christian converts were murdered in Malatya in 2007 by people affiliated to the nationalist rather than Islamist movement (the AK [Justice and Development] party is much more open on the issue of Christian religious practice in Turkey than the nationalists of the left and the right, for whom Christianity is the religion of the enemy). In 2008, in Malaysia, the Federal Court refused to recognize the conversion of Lina Joy, née Azlina Jailani. On the other hand, in Egypt, the courts were prepared to recognize the return to Christianity of a Coptic woman who had converted to Islam.[24]

In Morocco, as in Algeria, but also in most Arab countries, clandestine Christian Churches are springing up. The Algerian authorities have reacted strongly: converts are put on trial, priests arrested and missionaries expelled.

Over and above the demographic issue (the number of conversions), the very fact that there are conversions from Islam to Christianity breaks a taboo. Until now, the prevailing wisdom was that of a conquering Islam which is supplanting Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa and gradually expelling the traditional Christian Arabs. But things are more complex than that: although the traditional Christian Churches are suffering a crisis, both demographic and spiritual (the withdrawal of the Christian community from the Middle East excluding the Maghreb), Christianity on the other hand is expanding, but under new Protestant and fundamentalist forms.

Of particular note are the breakthrough of Buddhism (Zen, Soka Gakkai) and forms of neo-Hinduism (the Sri Aurobindo and Hare Krishna movements) in the West as these movements have tended to affect the middle and upper classes. But the spread of a "globalized Buddhism" is interesting as nowadays it is happening in very varied milieus, from among the Indian lower castes to African-Americans. The first American congressman who converted to Buddhism, (not counting the representatives from Hawaii of Japanese origin, for whom Buddhism is a "cultural religion"), Hank Johnson, from Georgia, is an African-American, a member of the Soka Gakkai; incidentally, the first Muslim elected in the same year, Keith Ellison, is also African-American. But on the other hand Buddhists are converting to Protestantism: in the Russian republic of Tuva, where Buddhism is the official religion, the ministers Bair Kara-Sal and Buyan Khomushku of the Sun

Bok Ym Church, founded by South Korean missionaries belonging to the Full Gospel Pentecostalist movement, are stepping up their activities in the Tuva language. And lastly, conversions of figures in the public eye are making newspaper headlines (after leaving office, former British prime minister Tony Blair converted from Protestantism to Catholicism).

In the current climate, it is the question of apostasy in Islam which appears to be the issue most likely to lead to crises and tensions. Many militant secularists, who are outraged at the fate of "apostates" in Islam, are the first to be suspicious of all converts in the other direction, whether their conversion is genuine or assumed. But the question of apostasy is only one aspect of this general transformation of religion in modern times. It is not just a human rights issue; conversion is central to the disconnect between religion and culture. There is no longer an automatic link between culture and religion. The religious marker is free and floating. Tensions will be aggravated by the growing number of conversions and switches between religions in today's world, until people have come to terms with the divorce between religions and cultures. Conversions are a key to understanding what is happening, but their inevitable increase will also be a sign that religions now operate outside cultures, and that the famous clash/dialogue of civilizations, which implies a permanent and reciprocal link between culture and religion, is a futile illusion.