

## **I. Address Title:**

The Politics of Religion: Globalization & Spirituality

--Living in a World without Religious Conflict

--Contemporary Strategies and Structures

--My research deals with the relationship between Religion and Globalization. Specifically, how religion, both as an institution and as a subjectivity of belief & practice, serves as a catalyst for globalization and as a potential mechanism for tribal identity (in the best sense of that word, "tribal"). If, however, the global subsumes the tribal or the tribal in turn refuses integration, or at least a relationship, with the global, then conflict and violence erupts, and ultimately disintegration of the global, or what I call "tribal retrenchment."

## **II. Introduction:**

A. The Subjective Side of our Global Consciousness:

Religion serves as

- a paradigm for our thought patterns
- how we perceive and make sense of the world
- a collective consciousness
- shared oral history and mythos (eg. Abraham & the monotheistic religions of Semitic origin)
- individual awareness

B. To be human is to be religious/spiritual

From the dawn of time we have been "symbol making" spiritual/religious people:

- Neanderthal graves with fossil pollen
- This symbol making, such as in religion, is a powerful force for good and for evil.

C. The current context: The demise of organized religion? (especially as seen in the west)

- Spiritual, not religious
- Religious, non-affiliated (“nones”) – why do millennials prefer this designation?
- The institutions no longer speak for us, nor are trusted sources of identity
- Hybridization of religious practice (Yoga on the beach, Mindfulness, yoga masses)
- Ability of this generation to see beyond the narrow definitions of our world

D. The resurgence of Tribalism? The “backlash” effect (from globalization and hybridization).

- Extremism and push for “purity” (of course there is no such thing; rather constant evolution)
- ISIS, Myanmar, Alt-Right, Politics of Trump

E. Key question

- Is religion, both as an institution and as a subjectivity of belief & practice, a catalyst for globalization? Or is it a mechanism for tribal retrenchment?

F. Thesis:

- While it is certainly observable that tribal retrenchment (particularly within religious institutions) is a growing phenomenon, the New Globalization that religion (and in particular ad hoc assemblies of “organic spirituality”) embodies, gives rise to an awareness that global consciousness as a unitive phenomenon is not predicated upon global uniformity, and that global consciousness itself can and must incorporate the local/tribal consciousness without its obviation, and thus serve to enhance and intensify, as Roland Robertson has said, “the consciousness of the world as a whole.”

### III. Key Points:

- What is “new” about this “new globalization?”
  - We are by nature global creatures, from the dawn of time to today, we continually seek each other out. What is new? “The local community comes to feel like a microcosm of the whole world” (from conference prospectus) precisely because the world is running out of its endless scope. The new globalization is not homogenous, but a patchwork of exhausted possibilities.
- How has religion/spiritual practice played a role?
- Overcoming intolerance (from KCM)

- Possible models of tolerance/Asian Paradigm: India (poly-religious unified within Hinduism) & Japan (poly-religious unified within cultural identity); thus, not “are you Buddhist or Shinto, but are you Japanese?” Could we use the same question for the globe?
- Organic Spirituality (what is it?)
  - Growing hybridization/intermingling of religious patterns around belief and practice with growing comfortability with multipolarities (with occasional backlash...)
- Religion as a catalyst for globalization (eg. of Catholic Mass around the globe)
- Bridge to global understanding and tolerance
- Clash of global cultures need not result in conflict (eg. of Blue Mosque/Mt Sinai)
- Global-Local Conflict: If the Local/Tribal is relegated to only a mirror or microcosm of the Global, then the result is a backlash of racism and religious bigotry. The local must recognize itself within the global as well. The local may become a microcosm of the macro and thus the local is de facto the global; but if at the expense of the tribal, then there’s a backlash against the global (the same plays out in religion).
- How do you find the proper balance between I and we? Where do we affirm the connection between the two, how do we find the I in the We and the We in the I? What is the proper relationship between the tribal and the global?

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

##### **A. Thesis Restated:**

- In a world marked by religious conflict there is a growing trend toward organic spirituality. This paper has explored how the new globalization of spirituality is superseding the institutions and politics of religion and how this may serve as a bridge to global understanding and create strategies that might be employed to bring religious tolerance and understanding in the midst of our diversity, rather than barriers of hatred as so often is the case. So....while it is certainly observable that tribal retrenchment (particularly within religious institutions) is a growing phenomenon, the New Globalization that religion (and in particular ad hoc assemblies of “organic spirituality”) embodies, gives rise to an awareness that global consciousness as a unitive phenomenon is not predicated upon global uniformity, and that global consciousness itself can and must incorporate the local/tribal consciousness without its obviation, and thus serve to enhance and intensify, as Roland Robertson has said, “the consciousness of the world as a whole.”



## B. Review of Key Points

- Religion is a catalyst for Globalization (& Tribal Identity)
- Religion is at its best when expressed as “organic spirituality”
- Religion is/can be a bridge to Global Understanding (vs walls)

## C. Jonathan Sacks Quote:

- *To be a child of Abraham is to learn to respect the other children of Abraham even if their way is not ours, their covenant not ours, their understanding of God different from ours. Our common humanity must precede our religious differences. Now is the time for us to say what we have failed to say in the past: We are all the children of Abraham. We are precious in the sight of God. We are blessed. And to be blessed, no one has to be cursed. God's love does not work that way. God is calling us to let go of hate and the preaching of hate, and to live at last as brothers and sisters, true to our faith and a blessing to others regardless of their faith, honoring God's name by honoring his image, humankind. [Wall Street Journal 10/3/15 “Swords Into Plowshares” by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (former Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth)]*