Introduction—Religious Diversity in a Global Religious Field

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Religions in movement around the world are setting the world in motion. This play on words illustrates how numerous societies are discovering that they cannot avoid and must come to terms with novel and diverse forms of religious belief. In particular, this concerns those societies affected by migration phenomena over the last thirty years. Millions of people have moved away from their place of birth to seek a better way of life elsewhere. It is possible to measure the impact of such a massive displacement of people on a nation's social and religious composition by means of statistical indicators. Statistics do not merely tell us how much the religious composition of a given population has changed. These indicators help us to look at the many ways in which changes have taken place in society as a whole and, simultaneously, in the collective awareness of them. It comes as no surprise that the word pluralism brings to mind lexical associations in the collective conscience, associated with words and phrases such as identity, memory, defending a society's religious roots, etc.

After telling us for years that we have embarked on a hazardous historical drift towards a clash of civilizations among the great world religions, Samuel Huntington wrote his last work under the suggestive title, *Who Are We? The Challenge to America's National Identity* (Huntington 2004). A glance at the table of contents suffices to give us an idea of the author's assumptions. After defining the concept of identity—a hot topic in the political and cultural agendas of our time—Huntington shows us the elective affinity between the politics of national identity and religion. The tension between these two elements depends on the level of religious differentiation that affects various contemporary societies all over the world. The questions posed by Huntington precisely concern the destiny of the Anglo-Protestant cultural inheritance that he sees as the essence of the national identity of the USA. To the political scientist, this cultural inheritance seems to be threatened by a gradual weakening that is directly proportional to the growth in numbers of Hispanic (Maduro 2007) and Asian communities.

What is happening in the United States of America also concerns Europe. Recently, European societies have been redrawing their religious maps. Nobody will emerge unscathed from the changes that these new maps will generate, neither the religions that claim to be immutable nor those that are convinced that they represent the collective conscience of entire nations. The economic and social conditions of mobile people coming from more than 180 countries all over the world to Europe—whether they be labor migrants, asylum-seekers, highly or low skilled, rich or poor—are dramatically anchored in a national setting (Garelli and Tazzioli 2017). National laws regarding citizenship as well as administrative rules that regulate the flow of migrants continue to shape the destiny of both mobile people and autochthons. The latter tend to consider the religious diversity of many immigrants and their descendants as a threat to national identity. A consistent part of European public opinion reacts, saying: "we are facing an invasion" or "in the future, Islam will dominate our societies". All those who refer to such religions soon learn that professing a faith in a society with a high rate of religious diversity demands that they learn to believe in something that is no

longer absolute (Michel 1994; Pace 1996). Like it or not, such persons become aware that the symbolic boundaries of their respective systems of belief are no longer secure; they are not impenetrable borders. Symbolic boundaries have become more like gates which can be freely crossed (Leavitt 2007). To put it plainly, new religious maps oblige us, for a start, to draw new memory lines. Religions enjoy a special relationship with collective memory (Hervieu-Léger 1993; Halbwachs 1925). The ongoing development of new social and religious geographies means that people must draw comparisons within a given macro system of beliefs and among a plurality of approaches to gain experience of the sacred and divine. They ultimately must reconsider whether it is better to shut the doors and windows of their places of worship to symbolically defend an integrity that is hard to preserve or whether it is better to facilitate a line of inter-religious communication that now occupies a place even on the political agenda of the European Union.

It is not only Europe and the USA that have tried to come to terms with both this unprecedented religious diversity and with the State's renewed role as a regulator of forces in the religious arena. Religious diversity is also increasing in Latin America, Asia, and Oceania, religiously stable regions until a few decades ago. In some cases, the regulatory functions of the State serve to reiterate the existence of a historical lineage among the majority and minority religions, thereby restoring the alliance between a church or dominant faith and the State. The shifting of people around the globe, such as from one continent to another or from a remote corner of the world to a more populous one, alongside the creation of new and crowded urban areas, has fostered concerns in locations that, up until twenty years ago, seemed to be unaffected by the growing religious diversity.

For example, two small states, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, historically homogeneous and compact from a religious standpoint (at least in nominal terms), have become multi-religious communities because of immigration policies that the emirs have facilitated. Just two figures are enough to give us an idea of the magnitude of the phenomenon: out of a total seven million inhabitants, the current population of the seven countries forming the United Arab Emirates (al-Imârat al-'Arabiyya al-Muttahida), only 20% are autochthonous. The remaining 80% of the population form an ethnic and religious stratification worthy of the great multicultural societies of the world. These are countries with a Muslim majority, of course, but they have rapidly been changing in the face of an overwhelming force (a sustainable economic growth) because of the concomitant presence of people of many different religious faiths. For the time being, these communities are still recognizable, each with their distinctive features in lifestyle and religious practices, even if they are not effectively acknowledged as such.

Societies with a marked degree of religious diversity not only oblige their members to become familiar with a new religious cartography and sacred topography but they also force them to rewrite their national pact of solidarity. This especially occurs in places where national identity has always been considered closely related to a historically predominant religion, right from the nation's foundation myth. A good example, among others, is Sri Lanka, where the political elites have fully embraced an idea put forward by Theravada Buddhist monks as to the uniqueness of the Sinhala nation, one rooted in pure Buddhist tradition (Seneviratne 1999; Bartholomeusz 2002). Religious and political elites consider Sri Lanka the *Dharmadipa*, the island of Dharma. In the defense of Dharma, both agree on the necessity to fight the Tamil people. It provoked a civil war (1983–2009) that tore the post-colonial Sinhalese State apart. There was an ethnic cleansing and religious discrimination against Hindu and Christian Tamils. Now, at the end of the civil war, a new Buddhist movement (*Bodu Bala Sena*, literally: The Force of the Buddhist Power), founded in 2012 and led by two monks, has mobilized the Sinhala people against Muslims and Evangelicals who are regarded as the new enemies of the religious roots (i.e., Buddhism) of Sri Lanka's national identity. The same tragedy has occurred in Myanmar, where a Buddhist monk, Ashin Wirathu, who created and currently leads the 969 Movement, justifies and encourages the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya Muslim people.

Indeed, the State can assume very different roles depending on local power correlations. It can take action with a modern approach, striving to neutralize potential conflicts of value. It might develop on religious grounds or, moving in the opposite direction, it can go back to acting as an all-seeing and

threatening entity. It can act as an astute and flexible regulator of a reiterated hierarchy in which one religion has been culturally and historically dominant, with all others occupying a space on a degrading and discriminatory scale. For instance, in some Latin American and sub-Saharan African countries, Pentecostals—after an initial period of struggling for official recognition—are actively striving to occupy the state apparatus in order to apply or defend corporatist interests. In many societies, such as Brazil, religion plays an important role in the public domain but without acting as the carrier of nationalism or ethnic identity as may be the case in Russia and India. In some contexts, religions are allowed, tolerated, monitored, ostracized, and occasionally obliged to go underground. From Russia to Saudi Arabia to Eritrea, we can collect many examples.

As suggested by Bouma (2006), Beckford (2003), and Stolz and Monnot (2014), respectively, the distinction between a descriptive notion of religious diversity and a normative framework that rules religious pluralism represents a heuristic starting point to understand social and religious change in the contemporary world, given the growing pressures of migration as well as cultural and religious differentiation. The presence of cultures and traditions different from those that historically shaped various nations triggers processes to relate and compare many aspects of daily social life, from politics to education, from economics to healthcare, from legal institutions to the media. These processes also extend to relations between generations and genders as well as the impact on the freedom of religion (Ziebertz and Ballin 2015). Following the reference given by these authors, religious diversity should describe the socio-cultural and socio-religious change occurring in various contemporary societies all over the world. The key word is social change, which concerns a new demographic stratification via religion, a new topography of the sacred, and a pluralistic, unexpected way of religious believing and belonging.

We have been facing a type of compression, in which religions that were born and diffused elsewhere now must operate in a single, common space. These religions may be distant, exotic, unknown, or completely strange, they become a next-door neighbor. De-territorialized, a religion tries to reconstruct its symbolic boundaries in foreign lands. Religious pluralism is a political regime that tries to rule religious diversity. In addition, it is an ideological target which drives political actors in the public arena to compete for consensus. Those who want to limit the legal and cultural recognition of religious diversity confront those who consider religious pluralism a strategy to rule cultural and social change occurring under the sacred canopy.

In 1965, Max Frisch, a writer and architect from Zurich, wrote the preface to Seiler's *Siamo Italiani: Gespräche mit italienischen Arbeitern in der Schweiz* (Seiler 1965), commenting on the bad conditions of Italian migrants in Switzerland. On the first page, he states, "We asked for workers. We got people instead". We can add to this famous sentence: "We discovered they have a soul". The diversity of souls pushes forward the process of changing the soul of a society (Furseth et al. 2014). The change's magnitude and complexity depend on the religious super-diversity that inhabits a society. Vertovec (2007) introduced this notion to describe some current levels of population diversity which are significantly higher than before. From a study of British society, he clarifies his approach, saying that super-diversity "is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who arrived over the last decade" (Vertovec 2007, p. 1025). It denotes increasing diversity not only among immigrant and ethnic minority groups but also within them. It is the diversification of diversity. Islam has now a much higher diversity of meaning among Muslims. It is the same with Buddhism and Buddhists, Christianity and Christians. Citizens with multiple identities who belong to the new "hyphen generations" (i.e., an Anglo-Sikh boy who married an Anglo-Italian-Catholic girl and so on), coexist in a neighborhood of various worship places. At the same time, they share some new spaces for meditation, silence, or funerals (such as in hospitals) which can be clearly interreligious or not.

When one asks where are or which are the compulsive forces which lead to religious diversity in contemporary societies, it is necessary to link these with globalization processes. According to

the seminal studies by Robertson (1992), Beck (1997), and Appadurai (2001), we have been coping with a decentered global religious system. The main feature of this system is an increasingly internal differentiation, marked by the ubiquity of consumer culture, media culture, and the individualization process (Moreira 2014). For Turner (2010), the real effect of globalization is the triumph of heterodoxy (commercial, hybrid, popular religion) over orthodoxy (authoritative, professional versions of the spiritual life). In that sense, this would be and could be seen as an unstoppable source of religious diversity. On the other hand, Turner points out that "a global commodification of religion . . . renders much of belief and practice compatible with secular capitalism" (Turner 2010, p. 663). This commodification of salvation goods also shows itself to be an aestheticization and spectacularization of religion (Moreira 2015; Gauthier and Martikainen 2013), but one which does not necessarily impact religious diversification as a homogenizing force. Indeed, the differentiation or pluralization of religious options could also be seen as a competitive strategy of religious groups in a highly disputed global religious field. Additionally, in order to be recognized as such, religions cannot exist without constantly drawing frontiers. On the relationship between globalization and religion, David Lehmann states, "the life of ritual and symbolism which is at the heart of popular religions is itself redrawing frontiers all the time, that innumerable forms of popular religions are themselves active globalizers..." (Lehmann 2004, p. 346). In other words, religions not only suffer the consequences for accommodating to a kaleidoscopic, new religious diversity, brought about by a supposedly external existing globalization, but they actually are and always have been a driving force of globalization, which is now reshaping religious diversity in contemporary societies.

To analyze this unprecedented religious landscape, new tools are necessary both at a conceptual and methodological level. Religious diversity actually obliges social scientists of religion as well as theologians to come up with new theoretical approaches and methods of analysis. According to Bender et al. (2012), this has occurred in at least two directions: de-centering or re-centering concepts to grasp new multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscapes. The transition from religious diversity to religious pluralism is one of the most important challenges that will reshape the role of religion in contemporary society. This transition will oblige social sciences of religion and theology to reconsider many of the notions, terms, and analytical tools they take for granted. As editors of this Special Issue of *Religions*, we tried to contribute to this ongoing challenge. Therefore, scholars have been invited, sociologists of religion as well as theologians of religious pluralism, to reflect on new cognitive perspectives we need to develop in order to comprehend (in Weberian terms) the social and political change resulting from global religious diversity. We have deliberately invited scholars who, starting with an analysis of different case studies, could show the variety of situations where religious diversity emerges despite different political constellations. Religious diversity is a confirmation of an important social change that has taken place in many societies in contemporary world. In the end, by regulating religious diversity, every social system is obliged to reflect on itself and to redefine concepts of citizenship, national affiliation, and the relationship between the majority and religious minorities.

Lori Beaman analyzes the contours of religious and nonreligious diversity in the Canadian public sphere, identifying the normatively charged nature inherent to measures of religion. She considers the somewhat uniquely Canadian contributions to multiculturalism despite recent controversies stressing this model. Gino Battaglia reflects on the rise of the Neo-Hindu fundamentalist movement in India, showing the resurgent and recurrent religious clashes and riots. These conflicts are likely to undermine the original Gandhian project of a secular and democratic state interested in promoting peaceful coexistence among the different religions in the Indian sub-continent. Mohamed Cherif Ferjani and Raoudha El-Guédri's contribution focuses on the sharp socio-religious change occurring in many Arabic countries affected by the migration flow. The arrival by attraction or compulsion of so many migrants in Arab countries, beyond those in the affluent Gulf, has provoked unprecedented socio-religious differentiation in countries that are still relatively religious today. Moreover, the change in the demographic and social structure of these countries highlights the inadequacy of the rules under which classical Muslim jurisprudence (*fiqh*) established the rights and duties of religious

minorities. Globalization weakens the patterns by which political power traditionally framed religious diversity. Alberto da Silva Moreira gives us a glance at the growing religious diversification in Brazilian society, characterized more by Pentecostal internal differentiation than by the arrival of new religions. The Brazilian case of Pentecostal expansion is used to test functional differentiation in various systemic theories, relational to their limitations to integrate concrete religious violence, human suffering, and state regulating policies in macro theoretical models.

Presenting a case from the USA, James Spickard discusses the American paradox: a country with the highest level of ethnic and religious diversity which has not always embraced pluralism. In a nation of immigrants, religions often functioned as a method of integration for newcomers. It was easy for the "white Europeans", but it has not worked so well for individuals from other ethnic diasporas. Because of increasing economic inequality as well as shifts in the field of religion (religious individualism, prosperity theology, and the sectarian turn among American Evangelicals), pluralism is an open question rather than an acquisition of the whole society.

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