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Global religion and the re-enchantment of the world

The case of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

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Abstract
The Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement is a paradigm case for an examination of the globalization of religion. Centred in Rome, but spread throughout the world, it invites reconsideration of centre-periphery and local-global dynamics in the contemporary world system. Working through a small but intriguing body of literature on the movement by ethnographers working independently of one another who have encountered the phenomenon in the field, I trace the international expansion of the movement and compare its local instantiations in India, Brazil and Nigeria. The movement simultaneously invokes contrasting images of universal culture and cultural fragmentation, and raises a series of questions about religion and social class, bodily experience and re-enchantment of the world in a global perspective.

Key Words
bodily experience • Catholic Charismatic Renewal • cultural fragmentation • globalization • re-enchantment • universal culture • world system

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a movement that began in the United States within the Roman Catholic Church, synthesizing elements of Catholicism and Pentecostalism with ecumenical leanings and a tropism towards development of intentional communities. The international expansion of this movement within the religious field in the early and middle 1970s coincided with the development of world systems theory in academia (Wallerstein, 1974). As a graduate student examining the movement and reading world systems theory, I was struck by its almost total neglect of ideology, let alone religion, although Wallerstein did eventually address issues of ideology (1983) and culture (1990). This was particularly problematic since a world system was supposed to be a complete
social system and therefore must be expected to have all the institutional dimensions of a social system, including religion. In the past decade, since the development of a language of globalization to discuss such matters, there has been an upsurge in writings on classical Pentecostalism in a global perspective (Coleman, 2000; Corten and Marshall-Fratini, 2001; Poewe, 1994; Robbins, 2004), but I want to focus on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement as a particularly apt example of globalization or re-globalization, or perhaps planetarization (Melucci, 1996) of world religions. Christianity, in its earliest phase of globalization, spread the power of a Church that was the dominant world institution of its time, and later on supported the power of the colonial empires which were the dominant institutions of their time. No such dominant institution supports the current wave of globalization of Christianity, which often takes the form of Pentecostal or Charismatic evangelization, spread rapidly and dramatically by movements, ministries, fellowships, or independent denominations taking advantage of all the available technologies of travel and communication.

To rehearse, in brief, the history of the movement, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal began in the United States in 1967, blending influences from the Cursillo movement that originated in Spain and the indigenous American enthusiasm of Protestant Pentecostalism. In the midst of the 1960s cultural ferment, it promised a dramatic renewal of Church life, based on a born-again spirituality of a ‘personal relationship’ with Jesus and direct access to divine power and inspiration through ‘spiritual gifts’ or ‘charisms’, including faith-healing, prophecy and speaking in tongues. Adherents formed informal prayer groups or tightly disciplined ‘covenant communities’, with larger institutional structures taking the form of a National Service Committee in the United States in 1970 and an International Communications Office in 1975. The latter began under the auspices of ‘The Word of God’ covenant community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, subsequently moving to Brussels under the sponsorship of Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens, and finally to the centre of the Catholic world in Rome. Pope Paul VI took note of the movement’s existence as early as 1971, and publicly addressed its 1975 International Conference in Rome. Pope John Paul II continued to be generally supportive, apparently tolerating the movement’s relatively radical theology for the sake of encouraging its markedly conservative politics, its militant activism for ‘traditional’ values, its opposition to women’s rights to contraception and abortion, and its encouragement of individual spirituality and contribution to parish activities and finances.

In sum, there have been two principal modes of international expansion. Evidence suggests that the typical pattern for the movement’s introduction in a Third World region was as follows: a missionary priest visited the United States, was exposed to Baptism of the Holy Spirit, organized a prayer group on his return, and subsequently called on outside help for doctrinal instruction or healing services. A class of Catholic healer-evangelists can be called on for such purposes. The International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) is an instrumental clearing house in this respect through the retreats, workshops, leadership training and newsletter that it sponsors. The second mechanism is via the communitarian branch of the movement. From very early on, some Charismatics wanted to live lives of greater commitment to spiritual ideals of Christian community than was found in weekly prayer groups. They began to adopt formal written documents, called covenants, that established basic rules of life, and referred to the resulting groups as covenant communities. The Word of God
Community, whose leaders founded the International Communications Office, was among the earliest covenant communities. During the 1980s these groups began to affiliate, creating two broad-based international ‘communities of communities’. The Word of God created a super-community called The Sword of the Spirit. Authoritarian and even apocalyptic tendencies within The Sword of the Spirit led to a split within the Word of God, with one of its two founding leaders remaining within the original community and founding an international Charismatic evangelistic ministry focused on countries in Eastern Europe and Africa, and the other remaining as president of The Sword of the Spirit. Today the Internet ethnographer can identify 47 member communities and 16 affiliated communities globally. The second major network is called the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, which today includes 34 members, six communities in the process of becoming members, and three associate members. The cultural diacritic between the two major networks is that membership in the Sword of the Spirit is ‘ecumenical’, meaning that non-Catholics can be members of the constituent communities, while the Catholic Fraternity is restricted to purely Roman Catholic membership, and is embraced by the Vatican by means of recognition ‘as a private association of the Christian faithful, of pontifical right and endowed with juridic personality, in accordance with the norms of canons 298–300, 304–29’. These covenant community networks are powerful transnational religious entities alongside the ICCRS.

Given this formulation of the typical modes of the movement’s transnational expansion, however, there is no consensus over whether the movement spread initially from a North American origin, and later from its official centre in Rome, or whether separate local movements eventually became co-opted by the Charismatic Renewal and hence tied to its social centre and ideological agenda. Seth Low (personal communication) has suggested, with regards to Costa Rica, and Johannes Fabian (1991), with regards to Zaire, that non-Charismatic Catholic prayer groups began independently and were subsequently co-opted into the international movement. In Zambia, the movement had two origins: one with missionary priests, and one with former Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo (1984). In Italy, independent groups appear to have existed outside formal movement sanction (Pace, 1978).

For a long time now, I have imagined a study that could examine the nature of the relation between religion and globalization, using the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as a paradigmatic empirical case. Such a study would require a team of ethnographers in different countries where the movement has taken root, and a research presence in the Vatican where the movement’s International Communication Office has been transformed into a permanent institution under the title of the ICCRS. The required resources would be substantial, of course, but to my gratification there has begun to emerge a small but intriguing literature on the movement by ethnographers working independently of one another, who have encountered the phenomenon in the field. In earlier writings, I have presented descriptions from available sources of the movement’s development in the United States, Quebec, France, Italy, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Nigeria, Zambia, Zaire, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan (Csordas, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997). In this article I will update these accounts with recent material from India, Brazil and Nigeria, then proceed to some reflections on what the Charismatic Renewal has to teach us on the theme of religion and globalization.
INDIA

As in many countries, the Charismatic Renewal was introduced to India in the early 1970s. By 1976 a national convention in Bombay attracted 1500 registered delegates, and another in 1978 attracted 3500, including Cardinal Lawrence Picachy of Calcutta, along with the archbishops of Bombay and Hyderabad, and the bishops of Quilon and Kottar. In addition to the convention, there was a leaders’ conference, two priests’ retreats, and a three-day leaders’ seminar on healing, conducted by the renowned Francis MacNutt (at the time still a Dominican priest). A report from the movement’s international newsletter in 1986 cited the spread of the movement into rural northwest India, and one in 1994 documented evangelization in tribal areas in northeast India, bordering on China.

The movement is perhaps most prominent in the south-western state of Kerala where there is a concentration of Catholics of Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, and Latin rites. In 1987 a priest of the Vincentian Congregation named Mathew Naickomparambil received a divine inspiration to transform his small prayer group at Potta into a healing ministry, which has since grown into a veritable moral metropole within the movement, even bragging its own train station. Day-long healing services attract as many as 5000–10,000 people – foreigners as well as people from all across India – apparently including substantial numbers of non-Christians. Six kilometres from the church/ashram, the group has built a Divine Retreat Centre where week-long retreats are conducted for as many as 10,000 (and up to 20,000 in the summer season), with preaching from 6:30am until 10:00pm simultaneously in six auditoria: in the buildings on one side of the road services are conducted in Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu, and on the other side services are in English, Konkani, Hindi and Kannada. Mental patients are excluded from retreats, and instead their family members are instructed to attend as surrogates.

Anthropologist Murphy Halliburton visited Potta in 1997 and reported that during the week-long retreat, participants were not allowed to leave the grounds, nor were they permitted to drink or smoke. The facilities were impressive, with physicians, bookshops, snack bars and pharmacies on site, and the auditoria were large enough to hold several thousand people. He described the atmosphere as being ‘like that of a major rock concert in a big stadium, only with more facilities’ (2000). He was also able to see patient wards, including a locked ward for alcoholics, where television monitors constantly showed what was transpiring on stage in the auditorium. Halliburton’s informant indicated that about 60 per cent of participants were patients with a variety of medical problems, including psychiatric and substance abuse issues, with many others seeking help with marital problems, infertility, or other situations, and about 10 per cent coming ‘just for prayer’.

What is of critical import for our discussion is not only that Potta is a destination for foreigners and non-Christians, nor that Father Naickomparambil and his colleagues conduct retreats and services all throughout India, but that they also have an energetic presence in North America and Europe. For example, their website announced a five-week, nine-stop tour of the United States, a bible conference in Germany, and listed numerous contacts among past retreat participants from the United States, England and Germany.

describes the healing ministry of Jude, a lay Catholic south Indian living in a north Indian city sacred to Hindus and attracting both Catholic Charismatic and Hindu supplicants. Jude was a repentant alcoholic and womanizer who relocated following a dishonourable discharge from the military and a failed business venture selling an Ayurvedic remedy for sexual impotence, subsequently returning to the Church and joining the Charismatic Renewal on the advice of a confessor.

The cross-fertilization of Hinduism and Catholicism appears on several levels in the account of Jude’s healing ministry. The forms of empowerment he deploys include the readily recognizable Charismatic ‘spiritual gift’ of ‘discernment’ – a form of divine inspiration which allows him to identify the problems of supplicants, often embodying their afflictions himself as clues to their nature. They also include an authenticating narrative of a miraculous birth in which, during a medical crisis, he was surgically removed and replaced into his mother’s womb, a theme paralleled in myths of the births of Krishna, Mahavira, Buddha and Parikshit.

On the level of disjunction in practice and interpretation, Schmalz recounts the case of a female patient who experienced disturbing visions of three men that appeared to be Hindu bhut or pret spirits, brought to the Catholic healer by a Protestant lawyer convinced of the Satanic identity of the traditional spirits. The Catholic healer attributed the problem instead to the effects of sin and troubled interpersonal relations, but was understood by the patients’ parents in terms of a Hindu paradigm of the body’s response to purifying fluids when the patient was blessed with Catholic holy water. Homologies in ritual symbolism appear in the juxtapositions of the Christian Eucharist and the eating of Prasad, or food left over from offerings to the Hindu deities, of the Christian scapular and the rakhi or wrist string worn as protection, of Christian holy water and water or milk used to ritually cool the Hindu deities, of prayerful repetition of the name of Jesus and the Hindu use of mantra, of the Charismatic blowing of a blessing in a supplicant’s face and the parallel Hindu practice of duha. Again, that such parallels can be found is predictable; what it of interest is whether, and if so how, they are thematized in practice. For instance, the healer Jude strenuously objected to equating the repetition of the name of Jesus with the ‘pagan’ practice of uttering mantras, but quite unselfconsciously blew his blessings in a way that would not be recognized by Catholic Charismatics elsewhere. Finally, in several ways, Indian and non-Indian notions become inextricably conflated, as in the healer’s implicit understanding of sin not necessarily as a matter of intent but as one of contamination by the acts of others, implying an Ayurvedic conception of the body in terms of vital fluids passing through channels, so that the effect of sin is that it ‘occludes the flow of grace as it ripens or hardens in the body’ (Schmalz, 1998: 105–6).

The outlines traced by the Potta phenomenon, and by the interface between Hinduism and Catholicism, as well as the points of both syncretism and contradiction that become highlighted in such accounts, are more than jarring anomalies. They are symptomatic of the simultaneous pull towards universal culture and postmodern cultural fragmentation that characterizes the global condition of religion. A final dimension is added by the work of anthropologist Corinne Dempsey (2001) on Christianity in Kerala, with respect to competition between indigenous Syrian Christianity purportedly introduced by Thomas the Apostle in the 1st century, and Roman Christianity forcibly imposed by Portuguese colonialists in the 16th. She recounts a conversation with a priest whose denunciation of western influences included everything from the
Portuguese to contemporary culture, claiming that it was undermining the faith of young people in particular, but who was optimistic in part because of the Charismatic Renewal. She notes the irony in the fact that the movement itself is an import from the United States, but resolves the irony by suggesting that ‘the Charismatic movement has been assimilated and transformed by the Kerala Catholic community . . . domestic adoption of this “Western” movement seems to have been so thorough as to enable it to be wielded by and on behalf of Malayali Christians as a means to combat what it used to be itself: “Western” influence’ (2001: 32). Dempsey interprets this in the light of Babha’s understanding of how hybridity reverses the effects of ‘colonialist disavowal’ – that is, of the rhetorical/ideological assertion of sameness that masks domination. The hybrid assertion of sameness – in this instance, participation in a purportedly universal and homogeneous international movement under allegiance to Rome – in effect is not only a strategy for autonomy, but has the potential to subtly transform the centre. In this sense, the empirical fascination of the Charismatic Renewal is that there is no bipolarity between colonist and colonizer, but a multinational religious conglomerate that invites the layering of hybridity upon syncretism upon synthesis, in a universal culture that is not polyglot but glossolalic.

BRAZIL

Our initial observation must be that Brazil, unlike India, is a predominantly Catholic country, and therefore the cultural landscape in which the Charismatic Renewal can move differs in the most significant way. The Charismatic Renewal was introduced to Brazil in São Paulo by Jesuit priests from the United States, by one account in 1969 and by another in 1972. By 1992 the movement’s international office reported two million Catholic Charismatics in Brazil. The estimated number of followers in 1994, according to Pierucci and Prandi (1995), was 3,800,000. The Renewal has largely been a phenomenon of the middle class since de Oliveira’s early article in 1978 (when participants numbered only in the thousands), according to the writing of Prandi (1997: 159–62). Among the many Charismatic prayer groups and communities in Brazil, the Catholic Fraternity covenant community network has three affiliates, while The Sword of the Spirit has none.

The literature I have relied on for India was all produced by young ethnographers from the United States. For Brazil, the literature on the Charismatic Renewal is the work of Brazilian anthropologists. Uniformly, they situate their analyses in relation to four cultural forces within the Brazilian religious landscape: popular Catholicism with its devotion to Mary and the saints; liberation theology with its base communities; Protestant Pentecostalism; and the dynamic between clerics and laity (Braga, 2004; de Oliveira and Martins, 2004; de Theije, 2004; Maues, 1998; Steil, 2001, 2004) – only the latter two forces are relevant in discussions of the movement in its home country, the United States. Much less attention is given in these Brazilian works to the movement’s relations with spiritualism and the Afro-Brazilian religions that are so prominent in the literature on Brazilian religion. There is a sense that the movement has imposed itself on the religious scene in a striking and unavoidable fashion. One author, Raymundo Heraldo Maues (1998), began his discussion by saying that his initial interest was in popular Catholicism in the rural Para state, but his attention was ‘powerfully diverted’ by the lay participants of the Charismatic Renewal in the city of Belem. The
research of Carlos Steil (at the other end of the country) originally focused on contemporary apparitions of the Virgin Mary, but his attention was drawn to the involvement of Charismatics in activities of the faithful surrounding these apparitions (Steil, 2001; Steil and Mariz, 2003).

The work of Maria José de Abreu (2002) examines the manner in which Charismatic experience is understood as unmediated access to the divine, not only in relation to the Church as the traditional mediator of religious experience for its faithful, but especially in relation to the electronic media, in the manipulation of which the movement has exhibited a certain virtuosity. The issue is the possibility of ‘transferring an idea concerning non-mediation to the very core of the media sphere’ such that ‘the TV screen is not so much about images as about revelatory communication’. This is, in effect, the question of whether televangelism is conceived in terms of transparency and immediacy or in terms of opacity and mediatization. In other words, the problem for Charismatics is how to maintain the ‘principle of subjectivity’, or the fundamental experiential postulate that the imitation of Christ ‘is an inward process of imitation, a spiritual resemblance, which stems from a presence’ rather than a mere representation enacted on stage’. She looks at two of the most visible Charismatic media presences in Brazil: the Canção Nova Media System of Communication and the ministry of evangelistic healing priest Marcelo Rossi. Canção Nova is one of the original and best-known Brazilian Charismatic communities, with 12 branches throughout Brazil, two in Portugal, and one in Rome. It has facilities on campus for retreats and services, as well as broadcasting and publishing facilities, and 150 transmission antennae across the country, as well as internet broadcasting. Marcelo Rossi is a handsome, 37-year-old priest, who has composed many devotional songs and is widely known for elaborate masses ‘of cure and liberation of bad energies, during which people participated in what he called the “aerobics of Jesus”’ – masses that are, in effect, Charismatic pageants performed in front of large audiences. De Abreu sees both phenomena as reflecting ‘the extent to which the Charismatic Renewal has gradually moved from the intimate space of the prayer group (grupo de oração) to the big stadiums and the global media space’.

A key event in de Abreu’s account (2002) is a gathering at which Rossi (regarded by some both within and outside the movement as a marginal loner who has become more of a showman than a Charismatic leader), despite consorting with celebrities and film stars, was recognized by the pre-eminent movement leader and founder of Canção Nova, Father Jonas Abib, as having been the victim of enemies of the Renewal. As he called on the crowd, including those watching on television, to collectively pray for and lay hands on Rossi, the latter fell on his knees, awash in tears, and Abib cried out that the movement belonged to the masses and they should not be afraid to say so. De Abreu marshals several important observations to account for this event. She points out that, unlike both popular Catholicism and liberation theology, the Charismatic Renewal is ‘compatible with the urban segmentation of identities and spatial fragmentation’. The Renewal also exhibits the ‘idea that it is not the content per se, but the form and means of dealing with symbols and images that distinguish the movement’. The movement is in part predicated on the fundamental need to transmit the Word of God by testimony, prophecy and healing, but also ‘as a result of the mass media, the gift of transmission, which should be a sign of inward spirituality, becomes an outward token of popularity’. In sum there are two contradictory effects of mediatization. In de Abreu’s words:
1) While Charismatics initially wanted to change the meanings attached to sanctity by redefining the borders between this world and the other, the media has created a new divide, jeopardizing the distinction between a living icon and an icon of idolatry.

2) . . . media can enhance and reproduce the logic of Charismatic embodiment and transform frozen images into ‘lively’ ones. Since this reformulation depends on the primacy of the Charismatic self, the dynamic character of the mass media re-affirms the notion of ‘living icons’ rather than that of religious representations. (de Abreu, 2002)

The famous healing priest, by falling on his knees and allowing himself to be prayed over in public, was saved for the movement from becoming a representation, a creature of the virtual reality of media stardom.

Carlos Steil (2001) takes up the encounter between the Charismatic Renewal and apparitions of the Virgin Mary, another prominent phenomenon of contemporary Catholicism. He sees this encounter in terms of a multiple intersection or syncretism between Pentecostalism and Catholicism, popular Catholicism and the Charismatic Renewal, tradition and modernity. Whereas Dempsey invoked Bhabha’s notion of an inversion of the colonialist disavowal of difference for the Indian situation, Steil invokes Bhabha’s notion of the ‘narrative ambivalence of disjunctive temporalities and significations’ (2001). One might add the intersection between the local and global in the precise sense that Steil, while placing the Brazilian apparitions firmly in the Brazilian context, recognizes the Marian apparition of 1981 in the Croatian village of Medjugorje as the transnational prototype of a new mode of performativity in the historical genre of Marian apparitions. He discusses an apparition in Taquari in 1988 and juxtaposes it with a similar recent phenomenon known as the Piedade de Gerais. In both cases, Charismatics were involved from the outset, some moving to live in the locality of the apparitions, while at the same time deploying their access to the media to transmit the message beyond the locality as one of universal significance – in Taquari they went so far as to acquire control of a local radio station. In the case of the Piedade do Gerais, the Charismatic ethos not only penetrated the community of local devotees, but the Charismatics became a network of support for disseminating the event – assisting the original visionaries in travels to other cities and even to Europe. A different outcome was at hand in Taquari, where the Franciscan friars who ran the parish developed strategies of control, suppressing the Charismatic gift of prophecy by limiting it to one individual of their choice, disallowing it in the chapel and restricting it to the sacristy, subjecting it to the scrutiny of a committee, and allowing it to be disseminated only in writing. Their rationale was protecting the faith of the poor from the implicit standpoint of a liberation theology suspect of the bourgeois Charismatics.

Steil’s discussion emphasizes the issue of mediation in a number of ways that complement and enrich the discussion by de Abreu. Beyond use of the mass electronic media, the mediation achieved by middle class social capital, and the use of science as a medium of authentication rather than of debunking the experience of visionaries, performance of the genre of Charismatic ritual language known as prophecy is critical in this respect. Prophecy is the most typically Charismatic among Charismatic media and epitomizes the notion of transparency and immediacy of access to the divine, for it is an inspired
first person utterance in which the ultimate speaker is understood to be God (note that I am referring to the genre as the medium, and not the person making the utterance, as is typically implied in referring to spirit possession).

The transmutation of the genre between the Charismatic context and the context of apparitions in popular Catholicism consists in the fact that the speaker is no longer God but the Virgin. However, the implications are far greater. Certainly one of them is the appropriation of discourse from the local visionaries by the translocal Charismatics. But on an experiential level there is a movement of revelation from the apparition in the form of an externality to the experience of prophecy as an ‘inner locution’, contributing to the subjectivity and reflexivity characteristic of the Charismatic sacred self. Steil reports that in Taquari, eventually even one of the original visionaries began to recast her experience in terms of such inner locutions. On the sensory level, this marks a profound shift away from a visual orientation with images of the Virgin, the dancing sun and the weeping tree as emblems for a fixed message or series of secrets to be transmitted from the virgin through the visionaries to the faithful. The shift is toward an auditory/oral modality, and moreover one that is indeterminately productive/generative as new prophecies are received. And to the extent that the prophets include members of a community not limited to the original visionaries, the revelatory inspiration is dispersed among a field of the faithful that has the potential to expand indefinitely and on a global scale. Steil summarizes nicely:

... insofar as the clergy seeks to define truth from outside the event, by the authority of the Church, the Charismatics want to produce a truth through the adherence of a constantly increasing – that is, within a specific mode of temporality – number of devotees. What is more, it is critical to observe that [ironically or not] the criterion applied by Charismatics also belongs to Catholic orthodoxy, which recognizes the sensu fidelium as a secure basis for defining a dogma or recognizing the authenticity of a divine manifestation. (Steil, 2001: 139)

This is the globalization of religion on a level of populations, spreading devotees in networks of communities that create styles of inter-subjectivity and inter-corporeality through adherence to common experiential modalities and performative genres. Steil (2004) also observes that the Charismatic Renewal is not only a synthesis between Catholic and Pentecostal ritual forms, but that its activities provide a revolving door opening onto both Catholicism and Pentecostalism for participants, thus forming a threshold between the two forms of religious sociality. In this process, aspiration to a universal culture (or in indigenous terms, to the task of bringing about the kingdom of God) exists in generative tension with the cultural prisms of culturally distinct settings and syncretistic opportunities crisscrossed by transnational media activities of healing and evangelization (or in indigenous terms, the movement of the Holy Spirit among the people).

**NIGERIA**

Pentecostalism exerted an influence on the religious scene in Nigeria from very early on, taking the form of the Aladura churches described by Turner (1967) and Peel (1968), as well as the classical Pentecostal denominations. Neo-Pentecostalism or Charismatic
Christianity is discussed by Ojo (1988), who observes that this wave of Pentecostalism originated in the early 1970s among college students and university graduates of various denominations. As in many settings around the globe, a primary emphasis is divine healing, but in addition there is much attention to restitution ‘for one’s past sins, mistakes, and every sort of unchristian act’ (Ojo, 1988: 184), reflecting aspects of the traditional Yoruba concern for purification. Restitution often takes the form of returning stolen articles, which Ojo interprets as a reaction against the quest for material wealth following the Nigerian oil boom of the 1970s. Restitution applied to marriage assumes the greed of a polygynous man who makes amends by divorcing all but his first wife (Ojo, 1988: 184–5). According to Bastian (2002), by the late 1980s born-again neo-Pentecostalism was widespread in southern Nigeria and the notion of charisms or spiritual gifts was intriguing to many Protestants and Catholics, with numbers of adherents skyrocketing during the 1990s and the movement highly mediatized by the start of the 21st century. Particularly striking is the popularity of ‘spiritual warfare’ against Satan and his legion of demonic spirits – in Nigeria augmented by the seductive sea spirit Mami Wata (Queen of the Coast) and a variety of ancestral spirits – through the form of healing called ‘deliverance’ as popularized by North American neo-Pentecostals (Bastian, 2002).

Specifically among Catholics, by 1976 the movement’s first national leadership conference in Benin City attracted 110 participants with official support from the local bishop. In 1983, a National Advisory Council was formed to oversee movement activities. Francis MacNutt (1975), the first and most widely known among American Catholic Charismatic healers, recounts a Charismatic retreat in Nigeria in which traditional deities were cast out or ‘delivered’ as occult spirits, including the following case of a man in Benin City:

An outstanding Catholic Layman, he was a convert who had been brought up in the old religion. He discovered as a child that after certain practices of dedication his toes were affected by a divining spirit. If the day of his plans were to be propitious, one toe would pinch him; if they were to be unlucky, a different toe would pinch. Consequently, he came to plan his life around these omens, which he said always came true, even if he tried to disregard them. When he desired to pray out loud at our retreat, however, his unpropitious toe began to act up; at this point, he decided that these strange manifestations must be from an evil spirit and had to be renounced. (MacNutt, 1975: 9)

This incident – a variant of the time-honoured Catholic strategy of ritual incorporation of indigenous practices – is based on acceptance of their existential reality but negation of their spiritual value, condemning them as inspired by the demonic forces of Satan. By the early 21st century, regional integration was manifest in events like the International Praise and Worship Workshop organized by the Anglophone West African Coordinating Team Services and drawing 85 participants from Nigeria and Ghana (the first joint Francophone-Anglophone Charismatic event was also held in 2002, and in 2004 the Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal for Anglophone Africa had as part of its agenda the organization of a pan-African event in 2006).
Anthropologist Misty Bastian encountered the Catholic Charismatic Renewal during the 1980s in the ethnically Igbo southeast of Nigeria, where Catholicism is the dominant form of Christianity. Bastian (2005) describes a male healer/visionary firmly enshrined in the official Church networks and endorsed by the hierarchy, and a female healer/visionary who was both explicitly criticized by her male counterpart and marginalized by the Church hierarchy. Both healers were most active from the mid-1980s through to the early 1990s. We can interpret her account as an excellent example of how the Charismatic Renewal can be seen as being a discrete interactional milieu in which cultural tensions between tradition and modernity, and between male and female, are played out.

Father Edeh was a mainstream priest whose ministry was at least initially supported by his colleagues in the Church hierarchy, and was appreciated as an overt counterbalance against the appeal of Protestant Pentecostalism. He was academically trained at a US university and had published a book on *Igbo Metaphysics*, based on significant ethnographic fieldwork, with Loyola University Press. His ministry was highly mediated, and he was building a cathedral and prayer compound at his home parish to accommodate the press, as well as the day trippers and campers who came to experience healing prayer, while at the same time travelling to conduct open-air rallies and healing masses throughout Igboland. His ministry was in decline by the late 1990s, because, according to Bastian, his followers did not see enough of the miracles they expected, his reputation was compromised by involvement in commercial activities, and a variety of other spiritual options had emerged to compete with him.

Sister Kate was a young woman who described herself as having the three occupations of ‘housewife, hospital worker and prophet’ (Bastian, 2005). She had experienced visions since her youth in the 1960s, beginning at her First Communion. Alienated from her family in part because of her spiritual characteristics, her father disinherited her and she found a haven amongst Protestant Pentecostals. Eventually she became re-involved with the Catholic Church and began exercising her spiritual gifts of healing and prophecy in the 1970s against the background of the Charismatic Renewal. She carried out her ministry entirely from home, remaining deferential to a disapproving pastor by continuing to attend mass but abstaining from the sacraments in order to avoid confrontation. During the Marian year of 1987 she heard increasingly from both Mary and the Holy Spirit and was banned from her parish and eventually excommunicated from the Church.

The contrast between these two healers plays out a variety of criss-crossing themes in the dynamics between tradition and modernity, male and female. The power manifest in Edeh’s ministry could have a remote effect through notes submitted with prayer requests, or holy water blessed by the priest to protect against theft, to expose witchcraft, or to tap the healer’s power, whereas Kate’s power was manifest only in direct personal contact with the healer granting individualized attention to each patient. Geographically, Edeh’s activities and reputation extended throughout Igboland, whereas Kate’s ministry was localized in her home and parish. Edeh’s group disseminated items such as bumper stickers and pre-printed prayers, engaging in a variety of commercial ventures, whereas Kate had no merchandise and merely charged a nominal fee for those who registered by number for her consultations. Edeh’s activities invoked the power of
literacy both through pre-printed prayers and through the submitting of written prayer requests, whereas Kate’s communication with her followers was exclusively oral.

Edeh attributed his inspiration for the most part to the Holy Spirit, whereas Kate claimed inspiration from both the Spirit and the Virgin Mary. Edeh’s prayers and revelations were primarily directed toward healing, whereas Kate engaged in both healing and prophecy. Sister Kate’s prophetic messages often included quite precise predictions of personal tragedy—a feature that was likely perceived by religious authorities as a focus on the negative and hence spiritually suspect—as well as predictions of the dark political times under the regime of General Abacha. Whereas Edeh gave prominence to the struggle against evil and countering witchcraft, Kate in addition placed considerable emphasis on healing barrenness among her female clients. Finally, Father Edeh preached spiritual submissiveness, while the life, work and demeanor of Sister Kate were a testimony to spiritual and personal independence.

Indeed, Sister Kate explicitly described herself as ‘modern’, and Bastian describes her not only as a full time career hospital worker, but in terms of her demure (although contemporary) attire, in contrast to the black clothing of the traditional Igbo visionary woman who never bathes and is either sexually submissive or celibate. It was likewise striking that during Bastian’s interview with her, Sister Kate remained seated while a male follower stood in her presence, an explicit reversal of traditional gender dominance. In this context it is noteworthy that Father Edeh in public made overt attacks on Sister Kate, claiming that she was inspired by Satan and was a manifestation of Mami Wata, the archetypal urban witch. Stories of Edeh’s healings include examples such as that of a rich woman who obtained her money by witching and killing her husband, and who repented when touched with holy water blessed by Edeh. Again, sick children who were in fact enchanted dada twins turned into serpents when sprinkled with holy water, the moral being that bringing animal spirits into a patrilineage through bestial adultery is to be condemned. For Bastian, this story bears the anti-female message that multiple births are bad, whereas for Sister Kate multiple births were signs of blessing and doubled evidence of the healer’s success in relieving barrenness.

In sum, this Nigerian case outlines the convergence of Igbo culture in which it is more common to encounter male than female dibia or diviners, and Catholic culture characterized by an age-old tension between female visionary experience and male hierarchical control or suppression of such experience. Although males have never been excluded from such visionary experience, in the Charismatic Renewal males as well as females have relatively equal access to the ‘gifts of the Spirit’, or charisms, with the overall apparent result of further strengthening the framework of patriarchal domination. All of these interwoven themes and contrasts merit further examination in the Igbo context, and could well constitute an outline for a comparative examination of local instantiations of the global Charismatic renewal.

CHARISMATIC PERMUTATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL TRANSCENDENCE

The three comparative cases I have discussed based on recently published scholarly material represent three continents, and, perhaps not coincidentally, come from populous countries, each of which is recognized as the most dynamic and diverse nation
on its continent. Standing economically between the developed and developing worlds, these three crucibles of globalization may also be points of convergence between the fetishization of commodities and the fetishization of experience – ideal crucibles of religious ferment and re-enchantment. Part of this is certainly related to the technological possibilities for mediatization of spirituality in these nearly-developed nations. At the same time, specificities of the cultural milieu in these countries offer intriguing grounds for further comparison of Charismatic permutations. Brazil is a predominantly Catholic nation where the Renewal interacts with strong Marian traditions as well as Kardecist spiritism and the gamut of Afro-Brazilian religions. Nigeria is an ethnically diverse nation where Catholicism is strongest among the Igbo and the Renewal exists in relation to traditional religion in the local setting and within the Christian-Islamic dynamic on the national scene. India’s Catholic population tends to be concentrated regionally in the southwest, and the Renewal exists in relation to Hindu and Muslim traditions.

The dimensions of comparison multiply if one considers the varying contours of the movement around the globe (Csordas, 1997). The relative roles of clergy and laity participating in the movement constitute one such dimension: writing on the Renewal in Canada emphasizes its distinctiveness from the US branch of the movement by highlighting the prominent role of the clergy. The degree of US influence is varyingly acknowledged, for example in France, with the caveat that the flavour of the movement was quickly nationalized toward French sensibilities. The relative role of missionaries from various religious orders and of covenant communities from the US and France also affects the tenor of transnational transcendence within the movement. Differing patterns of penetration to ethnic Catholics in multicultural societies like the US and to indigenous groups like the Mapuche in Chile or the Navajo in the US can be traced. Some countries entertain more than one strand of what is ostensibly the same Renewal: Italy has branches associated with the international movement, including both prayer groups and communities, and another with conservative/elderly people oriented toward experiencing and documenting charisms; Zambia has a branch started by Irish missionaries and another started by the indigenous Archbishop Milingo; Zaire has *charismatiques* who participate in organized prayer groups with an identified leader and emphasis on charisms, and the *renouveau* composed of young educated urbanites whose practice emphasizes group prayer.

Adherents in some countries can cite precedents for the Renewal or for orientation toward the Holy Spirit: in the US it was the Cursillo movement; in the Congo it was the Jamaa movement; Hungary had the Social Mission Society founded in 1908 and the Holy Spirit Society founded in the 1930s. Various patterns of trans-class alliances in the name of helping the poor and in competition with social justice Catholicism can be identified in different countries, particularly in Latin America. There is variation in the relative importance of ritual healing, particularly deliverance from evil spirits, in countries where encounters with ‘paganism’ in the form of indigenous religion or of New Age spirituality is prominent. In some instances the renewal may be part of a broader shift in the entire religious landscape, for example as in Indonesia where it has been reported that the main distinction within the Christian community is no longer between Catholic and Protestant but between Charismatic/Pentecostal and non-Charismatic, or between ‘those who clap in Church and those who don’t’.
When I began to examine the international expansion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the mid-1970s, there was no scholarly language of globalization to support the discussion. What we had was the initial wave of World Systems Theory, which paid virtually no attention to the cultural dimension or to the existence of religion. One can point only to Godelier’s discussion of religion and ideology in the Inca ‘world-empire’ (1977), to a few early articles by Wuthnow (1980), Robertson (1989, 1992) and Robertson and Chirico (1985), and to the statement in a review article by Chirot and Hall that ‘along with the material world-system there is an ideological one’ (1982: 90).

In this climate I reverted to describing the movement as a ‘religious multinational’ in analogy to multinational corporations that were beginning to attract attention with respect to the interplay of local and global economic forces, and the influential intentional communities that were the centre of much Charismatic activity as ‘moral metropoles’ in analogy to the centre-periphery imagery of dependency theory. The Charismatic Renewal today still offers an opportunity to examine the nexus of local and global, insofar as transnational influences within the movement, including highly mobile healing ministries and highly organized evangelism such as that associated with Ralph Martin’s ‘Fire Rallies’, intersect with prayer groups and communities embedded in the religious life of distinct cultural settings. Likewise, the renewal offers the opportunity to examine the centre-periphery relation with respect to the lines of influence between the movement’s international office in the Vatican and widely dispersed groups embedded in distinct local cultural milieus. Equally interesting to examining relations within this movement between the global and the local, or centre and periphery, is to recognize in this and perhaps other contemporary transnational religious phenomena a tension between the impulse toward a universal culture and the tendency for postmodern cultural fragmentation. I shall frame the poles of this tension with two images.

In 2001 I was poised to reinitiate my study of the Charismatic Renewal after a ten year hiatus. I learned that the ICCRS in Rome was planning to hold a seminar in the Mediterranean on the topic of deliverance from evil spirits, directed by a leading expert on this form of healing – a Portuguese-surnamed priest from the west of India. Intended as advanced training for those from around the world who already had experience in the deliverance ministry, this appeared to present an ideal opportunity for me to gain an initial sense of cross-cultural variation in the encounter with evil spirits, as well as to develop a set of contacts that could be pursued with subsequent visits to the field. Mobilizing some of my old contacts among movement leadership, I obtained the letter of sponsorship required to register for this seminar – this precaution was to ensure the necessary level of spiritual maturity and legitimacy among participants who were to deal with the sensitive issues of casting out demons, and was certainly necessary for a movement outsider such as myself. Then, just as the preparations were underway, I learnt that the seminar had been cancelled for lack of a sufficient number of participants. The reason, however – and this is the point of the story – was not that there was insufficient interest, and neither that the likely candidates could not afford the expense of travel, but that the Portuguese Indian priest had already presented his experiences among so many Charismatics in so many settings around the world that those who would have participated appear to have judged that the experience would be redundant. The voice for a universal culture of healing had pre-empted itself from drawing into the centre that which it had already sallied forth to touch in its indigenous setting, thus at the same
time pre-empting an encounter among healers with diverse experiences that could have potentially called into question some of the homogenizing goals of the event.

The image of cultural fragmentation, on the other hand, is contained in the story of Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo of Lusaka, Zambia. Quite independently of any broader movement, he began to practise faith healing in 1973 (Milingo, 1984; Ter Haar, 1987, 1992). In 1976, however, he established a relationship with The Word of God Catholic Charismatic Community in the US and founded his own Divine Providence Community. By 1979 the archbishop was a prominent participant in a Charismatic pilgrimage to Lourdes. The Archbishop’s teachings exhibited a simultaneous ‘indigenization’ of Charismatic ritual healing and a ‘Charismatization’ of a distinctly African form of Christian healing. More remarkable, however, is that within a decade, his healing ministry had created such controversy that in 1983 he was recalled to Rome. There he was detained and interrogated, and eventually relinquished his ecclesiastical post. In return he was granted an appointment as Special Delegate to the Pontifical Commission for Migration and Tourism, with the freedom to travel (except to Zambia), and was reassured by the Pope that his healing ministry would be ‘safeguarded’ (Milingo, 1984: 137). Ironically, given that the overt goal of his recall was in part to protect Zambian Catholics from what must have appeared to Church officials as a kind of neo-paganism, Milingo subsequently became immensely popular as a healer among Italian Catholic Charismatics. With established followings in 10 Italian cities, and already a figure on national television, in 1987 he moved his public healing service from the church of Argentini of Rome to a large room in the Ergife Hotel. Once again in 1989, his controversial ministry was temporarily suspended by the Church, and later renewed outside Rome (Lanternari, 1994). In 1994 the Bishop’s conference in Tuscany issued a pastoral note on demonology and witchcraft, quite likely targeted at Milingo’s ministry. The archbishop next re-emerged into the public spotlight at the turn of the millennium as a new devotee of Reverend Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church. As much of a scandal as was his apparent defection from the church – or perhaps from his own standpoint a new level of ecumenism – was his ritual marriage to a nubile Korean follower of Moon in a ceremony central to the Unification doctrine. Only after a great deal of effort that doubtless included coaxing, negotiation and threat did Milingo recant and return to the fold. Archbishop Milingo contributes to a decentring of meaning that cannot but take place in a global movement whose key symbol is, after all, speaking in tongues. Although Lanternari (1987) described the effect as a ‘religious short-circuit’ between Africa and Europe, there is less, not more anomaly in the Milingo case if it is acknowledged that the contemporary situation is best represented not as a modernist circuit diagram, but as a global, postmodern montage of transposable spiritualities.

Neither of these two images allows us to conclude that the global Catholic Church simply served as a kind of institutional trellis upon which the florescent Charismatic movement easily climbed. What is at stake is the fate of that particularly powerful master narrative called ‘salvation history’ which, rather than being undermined by the decentring force of postmodernism, is now globally promulgated in a Charismatic, sensuous immediacy and in a multiplicity of idioms, not least among which is that of glossolalia. The differences between the early globalization of Catholicism and the globalization of the contemporary Catholic Charismatic Renewal lie in changed conditions having to do with mass media and the ease of travel that dramatically affect
interaction between local adherents and the central leadership, as well as in changed idioms of interaction with indigenous religions. A movement such as the Charismatic Renewal weaves the cosmic time of salvation history into the fabric of everyday life, speeding it up and lending it a sense of urgency with the notion that the movement is part of a preparation for the ‘end times’ before Christ’s second coming, but also providing the discipline of a carefully reconstructed *habitus* that structures the rhythms of everyday life, particularly in the more highly elaborated Charismatic intentional communities.

I am convinced that consideration of this movement will allow us to pose, if not yet to answer, some of these issues central to an understanding of religion as a global phenomenon in the 21st century. In my early analysis of the global implications of the movement, I proposed three hypotheses. A cultural hypothesis was that the Charismatic Renewal was a potential vehicle of class consciousness for a transnational bourgeoisie insofar as it could be assumed that a world political-economic system must be accompanied by world religious and ideological systems. A structural hypothesis (particularly relevant to Latin America) was that the appeal of the movement leap-frogs over the working classes to link the bourgeoisie with the very poor, with the excluded middle being the group with the greatest class antagonism to the bourgeoisie and to which the appeal of both classical Pentecostalism and socialism are strongest. It thus may be an ideological articulation of pre-existing social relationships in terms of ‘transcending class and cultural barriers’ in the name of Christianity, and also (as appears now to have been quite true) of appealing to communitarian sentiment while advancing conservative values in opposition to liberation theology. Finally, a historical hypothesis was that the Charismatic Renewal may play a role on a global scale analogous to that played by Methodism on a national scale in 18th-century England, insofar as it can be argued that it promulgates a moral framework and motivational language for the emergence of a new socioeconomic order (Csordas, 1992).

On another level – that of bodily experience – consider only one theme reflecting consequences for the self in global religious phenomena. Charismatics place a premium on bodily events and practices ranging from revelatory sensory imagery and the sacred swoon of being overcome by the Holy Spirit, to ritual gestures such as the laying on of hands and prostration in prayer (Csordas, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2002). To understand the central place of embodiment in the global Charismatic re-sacralization, it is useful to turn to the concept elaborated by Mellor and Schilling (1997) of the ‘baroque modern body’ characteristic of contemporary Western society. For Mellor and Schilling, this is characterized by a heightened sensuality, and is in addition ‘internally differentiated, prone to all sorts of doubts and anxieties, and to be arenas of conflict’ (1997: 47). Such a description fits the Charismatic body perfectly, and given examples such as we have seen in the above from India and Brazil, we can suggest that the Charismatic renewal, and perhaps other planetary religious forms, are promulgating this variant of embodiment in the global arena. Certainly, the tendency to associate the contemporary upsurge of sensuousness with that of the baroque cultures of Counter-Reformation Catholicism is telling, insofar as in much of the Third World Charismatic healing and various spiritual manifestations are likewise playing the role of a bulwark against the enthusiastic spirituality of Protestant Pentecostalism, to say nothing of the sensuality of contemporary indigenous religions.
Finally, are we witnessing a re-sacralization or a re-enchantment? Are the Charismatic Renewal and similar phenomena of interest because they contribute to the constitution of an ideological/religious dimension of a global social system? Insofar as religion is a cultural component of any social system, it would be a mistake not to recognize that such developments would accompany the development of other elements of a global social system, including the global economic order, global communications, global population movements and diasporas. Specifically, it would appear that the increasing articulation of the world social system generates an ideological impulse towards formulations of universal culture such as the Catholic Charismatic movement. What requires empirical determination are the conditions under which global religious phenomena consciously aspire to the status of universal acceptance, in contrast to those in which they are examples of religious ideology as reflexion or reflex of the global social reality. In either case, such religious phenomena constitute a significant part of the consciousness of the contemporary world system, and this can be judged to be a false consciousness in no more or less a sense than was religion in the classic era of industrializing nation states.

Note
1 Quoted text is from the Catholic Fraternity website is http://www.catholicfraternity.net/definition.html.

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