

# Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation

*Tim Lee*

In his 'Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue' Jameson puts forth four positions on the topic which he sees as 'logically available.' The first is that it does not exist, ie., nation states and their relationships remain unchanged. The second is that a form of globalism has always existed, i.e., trade routes have extended around the world since the Neolithic period.

Then I suppose one should add two more: one that affirms the relationship between globalisation and that world market which is the ultimate horizon of capitalism, only to add that the current world networks are only different in degree and not in kind; while a fourth affirmation (which I have found more interesting than the other three) posits some new or third, multinational stage of capitalism, of which globalization is an intrinsic feature and which we now largely tend, whether we like it or not, to associate with that thing called postmodernity.<sup>1</sup>

The difference between these last two positions is one of quantity and quality. The first asserts only a quantitative extension of modernist tendencies, the second these extensions bringing about a qualitative change in Western culture.

These last two of Jameson's 'logically available' positions are what this essay will navigate a path between, suggesting that while the globalist ideas examined may differ in form, practice and projected conclusion, all have a common ancestry in the universalist tendencies of Christianity absorbed by the Enlightenment at its inception. It will examine globalisation in the wider historical context of Western thought (and practice) since the beginning of the Enlightenment.

Taking as its starting point the apocalyptic and universalist ideas which surrounded the creation of modern science, and focussing on the place of these within the work of Isaac Newton, this paper will move on to examine the globalising aspirations of the great political ideologies which the Enlightenment gave rise to in the early to mid-

---

<sup>1</sup> Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (eds), *The Cultures of Globalization*, Durham, 1998, p. 54.

## *The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

twentieth century, focussing on Communism and Fascism, and finally explore the idea and reality of globalisation today and what relation or similarities this may hold to the themes mentioned above. Each of these case studies: the apocalypticism inherent in Newton's synthesis of scientific and religious ideas; the millenarianism of Communism and Fascism; and the Utopianism behind some ideas regarding the process of globalisation going on today, and some of the sources of this; will be shown to be manifestations of the same Western ideas originating in the religious influences upon the Enlightenment.

Newton, as is widely acknowledged, was a deeply religious man. To him science was not a purely secular undertaking through which humanity's knowledge could be advanced to practical worldly ends; it was an altogether different enlightenment that he envisioned his discoveries bringing about. In mathematically explaining the design of the universe and experimentally proving the nature of light, Newton felt that he was illustrating the existence of a Creator. In a letter to Dr Richard Bentley, who had sought Newton's advice on questions scientific to aid in preparing 'A Confutation of Atheism' for the Boyle lectures of 1692, Newton stated that 'When I wrote my treatise about our Systeme I had an eye upon such Principles as might work wth considering men for the beleife of a Deity & nothing can rejoyce me more then to find it usefull for that purpose.'<sup>1</sup> Science, the touchstone of the Enlightenment to come, was steeped in religious intention.

The metaphysical ramifications, for Newton, of his physical discoveries were that the universe had an architect, and further, in his own belief, that this figure continued to take a hand in the process of His creation. Humanity, as part of God's design, was ruled by providence. The moral law, as was recognised, stood alongside the physical laws. Newton, with his far-reaching and assimilatory mind, saw a connection between the moral and natural realms. If the laws that bound the physical universe could be discovered, why not also those that dictated the movement of humanity through history? And furthermore, surely, since God had designed them both, they must have some sort of correspondence.

Along with many of his contemporaries, Newton spent long hours examining Biblical and profane histories in an attempt to discover a link between philosophical and moral knowledge. He also combed the apocalyptic texts of the Bible in order to discern

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Newton, *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton: Vol. III*, H. W. Turnbull (ed.), Cambridge, 1961, p. 233.

## *Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation*

God's guiding hand in humanity's history and to affirm his suspicion that with the perfection of moral and philosophical knowledge would come the end of history.

For the event of things predicted many ages before, will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by providence. For as few and obscure prophecies concerning *Christ's* first coming were for setting up the *Christian* religion, which all nations have since corrupted; so the many and clear Prophecies concerning the things to be done at *Christ's* second coming, are not only for predicting but also for effecting a recovery and re-establishment of the long-lost truth, and setting up a Kingdom wherein dwells righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

The 'long-lost truth' pertained to both scientific and religious truths. Newton's view of his science, of the apocalyptic effect it would have, embraced the entirety of the world and all its multifarious cultures. By perfecting philosophical knowledge, and the concurrent perfection of moral knowledge that must come, Newton envisioned the return to a universal culture founded on God's law.

Initially the cultures of the world had been in possession of pristine knowledge of God's universe - physical and moral - however with the fall into polytheism which was the fate of the original monotheism, came a concurrent loss of scientific knowledge. The closer to God and His Law one was, the more perfect his knowledge of the universe became (and, reasoned Newton, vice versa). 'For so far as we can know by natural Philosophy what is the first Cause, what Power he has over us, and what Benefits we receive from him, so far our Duty towards him, as well as that towards one another, will appear to us by the Light of Nature.'<sup>2</sup>

Newton believed that God's moral law was universal. It had surfaced in multifarious teachings throughout history and would eventually encompass humanity:

This was the Ethics, or good manners, taught the first ages by Noah and his sons by their seven precepts, the heathens by Socrates, Confucius and other philosophers, the Israelites by Moses and the Prophets and the Christians more fully by Christ

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St John*, London, 1733, London, pp. 251-2.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, New York, 1952, p. 405.

*The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

and his Apostles . . . Thus you see there is but one law for all nations, the law of righteousness and charity dictated . . . to all mankind by the light of reason, and by this law all men are to be judged at the last day.’<sup>1</sup>

Behind Newton’s discoveries in science was a deeply held belief that the entire world was to be transformed quantitatively *and* qualitatively, that as the truth of his scientific discoveries spread, so too would come a valuative truth ‘by the light of reason’ which would apply just as firmly. The millenarianism of Newton’s times affected his outlook just as surely as the rationalism of his times. There was ‘one law for all nations . . . by which *all* men are to be judged’. This was the firm belief of Newton, founded in deep religious study and conviction, and confirmed by his science and reasoning.

And it was this belief, taken from the universal aspirations of Christianity and shared by many other than Newton, which made its way into the Enlightenment conception of the place of Western society and culture within the history (or evolution) of the world; and remained there long after it had rejected religion as an intellectual influence, looking rather to science and ‘rationality’.

Gray sees this Enlightenment movement as the basis of globalisation, a process, he claims, based in ideological projections rather than reality:

The thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as Thomas Jefferson, Tom Paine, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx never doubted that the future for every nation in the world was to accept some version of western institutions and values. A diversity of cultures was not a permanent condition of human life. It was a stage on the way to a universal civilization. All such thinkers advocated the creation of a single worldwide civilization, in which the varied traditions and cultures of the past were superseded by a new, universal community founded on reason.<sup>2</sup>

The underlying beliefs Gray attributes to the founding thinkers of the Enlightenment mirror very closely those beliefs espoused by Isaac Newton. It was this totalising ideal (along with the progress in transport and information technology) which contributed to the millenarian aspirations of the political movements of the first half of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> John Gray, *False Dawn*, London, 1999, p. 2.

## *Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation*

the twentieth century to be examined in this paper. What Jameson has termed the 'essentially modernist field of political struggle in which the great ideologies still had the force and the authority of the great religions in earlier times'<sup>1</sup>. And the universalist intentions.

It is the ideological struggle between Communism and Fascism which took place in the twenty years leading up to the Second World War, and the aims and methods of each of these ideologies, which this essay will now examine in order to illustrate antecedent ideas and methods of globalisation.

In the twenty years leading up to the Second World War, the ideologies of Communism and Fascism, sponsored respectively by Communist Russia on the one side and Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany on the other, undertook propaganda campaigns which utilised the cutting edge in communication technology and propounded a universalist, or 'global', set of doctrines designed to (at least theoretically) transcend nation states to unite the world under the one banner which - the political manifestations of these ideologies being totalitarian - would encompass all aspects of society.

Both regimes, it can be argued, arose from Marxism: Communism obviously as a political manifestation of Marx's philosophical ideals, and Fascism as a reaction to these. Indeed it is easy to see Fascism as a reaction to the overpowering forces of modernism, of the Enlightenment, of which Communism, Gray has argued, was the most extreme manifestation. 'The true antithesis, not to this or that manifestation of the liberal-democratic-socialistic conception of the state but to the concept itself, is to be found in the doctrine of Fascism.'<sup>2</sup> But beyond simply being Marxism and anti-Marxism, both also incorporated many of Marx's basic themes into their own regimes in various ways.

One major aspect of Marx within both political movements, that gave rise to much of the conflict between the wars, especially from about 1930 onwards, was the millenarianism inherent in Marx's writings. All three regimes - Communist Russia, National Socialist Germany, and Fascist Italy - can be seen to have fostered millenarian ideologies. With modern technology - communication, transport, and military - the idea of global domination became seemingly attainable and was a strong force in the millenarian rhetoric employed by each regime. They were the first to realise,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Alfredo Rocco, 'The Political Doctrine of Fascism', in Carl Cohen (ed.), *Communism, Fascism and Democracy: The Theoretical Foundations*, New York, 1967, p. 340.

## *The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

and put into practice on an international scale, the globalising possibilities of such technology.

Recurrent in the expansionist propaganda of the regimes was the differentiation between Europe and 'the world'. The globe had been mapped out and transportation had improved to the point that any part of it was within reach. It seemed possible to conquer, either by warfare or inciting revolution within each country through propaganda, the entire world. Each regime made grand claims to inheriting the globe. Communism had spread as far as China, and Fascism as far as Japan. This natural adoption in other parts of the world along with the dwindling, though still intact, colonial empires of the great European powers, meant that each regime could, in its more optimistic moments, contemplate world domination as a reality. 'The Proletariat is the real master of the world, tomorrow's master of the world, and it must enter upon its historical rights, take into its hands the reigns of government in every country all over the world.'<sup>1</sup>

Cohn has set forth the parameters of millenarianism as such:

Millenarian sects or movements always picture salvation as (a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity; (b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven; (c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly; (d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth . . . (e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by or with the help of, supernatural agencies.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the last of these articles, both Communism and National Socialism have been judged to fit these categories. Cohn has seen aspects of these ideologies as analogical to his definition of millenarianism in their doctrines of: a 'chosen people', the proletariat and the Aryans; the rejection of religion, and formation of themselves as surrogate political-religions with the plan and power to implement change; their constant militant rhetoric urging their people to be ready for the coming war; and their projecting of the state of the world to come once their various regimes had achieved domination through their art and literature. Campion too has found millenarianism's 'modern secular expression in Marxist-

---

<sup>1</sup> George Dimitrov, *The United Front Against Fascism*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 125-26.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, London, 1970, p. 13.

## *Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation*

Leninism and Nazism<sup>1</sup>. Cohn traces the most immediate influence on modern secular millenarianism in Europe to Marx, and Campion gives a hint as to their influence on Fascism by stating that 'even the fascism of the 1920s-40s absorbed the lessons of the communist revolutionary tactics.'<sup>2</sup> This millenarianism, at least ideologically, was also tried on by the Italian Fascists.

Italian Fascism's attempts at internationalism, along distinctly Marxist lines, and perhaps spurred on by National Socialism's (or Germany's as distinct from Fascism's) growing power in Europe, has been explored by Michael Ledeen in *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936*. Reminiscent of Cohn's remarks regarding millenarianism Ledeen argues that 'one of the most important elements in the appeal of fascism [was] the notion that the world was about to undergo a complete transformation, and that this transformation would be brought about in the name of, and by the energies of, European Fascist youth'<sup>3</sup>

Despite Mussolini's early comment that 'Fascism is not for export' by the 1930's, along with Germany, attempts were being made 'to instil a full-blown mechanical type of solidarity'<sup>4</sup>. This solidarity, in many respects, ran along millenarian Communist lines, utilising ideas of a 'chosen' people and culture preparing for imminent battle. While this was merely rhetoric on Italy's behalf, as opposed to intent on Germany's behalf, as witnessed by World War II, it served the same propagandist end leading up to the war.

The *Fascismo Universale* (doctrine of universal Fascism) was Fascism's answer to the Comintern. On October 27, 1930, Mussolini announced 'Today I affirm that Fascism, as idea, doctrine, and realization, is universal: Italian in its particular institutions, and universal in spirit.'<sup>5</sup> The problem of Nationalism within Fascism was solved at the Congress of the Fascist International, held in December 1934, by the CAUR<sup>6</sup>. Eugenio Coselschi, the leader of the CAUR, stated that 'Corporatism' was the key to the universality of Fascism, with 'agreement between producers' and

---

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Campion, *The Great Year*, London, 1994, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>3</sup> Michael A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, New York, 1972, p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Brooker, *The Faces of Fraternalism*, Oxford, 1991, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Ledeen *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> *Comitati d'azione per l'Universalita di Roma* or Action Committees for Roman Universality.

## *The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

agreement between social classes . . . And so the 'supernational' idea harmonizes perfectly with the national idea . . . When the youth of Europe, or better yet of the entire world, acquires a revolutionary consciousness in our terms, a consciousness as far from Bolshevik materialism as from individual egotism, then Corporatism will have definitely found the way to conquer the world.<sup>1</sup>

It is ironic that Fascism was using language similar to that employed by capitalist economists such as Ohmae regarding the transcendence of the nation state under the single banner of 'Corporatism' - be it Fascism or the Free Market.

A major part of the conflict between Fascism and Communism resided in the propaganda used by each movement against the other. The basis of this lay in the Marxist propaganda tactics employed by the Communists and imitated by Fascism and National Socialism. These techniques utilised all available technology. Along with the many newspapers and journals that circulated throughout Europe during this time, supporting either regime, were the media of radio and cinema. Artists in all mediums were recruited to the cause.

Gifted filmmakers in both Russia and Germany in the period between the wars lent their talent to the regimes to produce extremely powerful propagandist films such as *Battleship Potemkin* and *Triumph of the Will*. 'The propagandist character of National Socialist tactics requires a broad and popular exposition of the aims of the regime.'<sup>2</sup> The power of such propaganda increases when the unfamiliarity of the common people with the propagandist power of the tools of cinema is taken into account. The advances in communication technology meant that the message of each movement could be dispensed more quickly, to larger audiences than ever before. This may help to explain, as much as any inherent appeal within either movement, the meteoric rise of both.<sup>3</sup>

If this world-dominating, universalising millenarianism is to be accepted as an intrinsic part of both Fascist and Communist ideology during the 1920s and 1930s, the similarity in the regimes and their aims is partly explained, as well as the ideological conflict arising from common goals not mutually attainable.

---

<sup>1</sup> In *Universal Fascism*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler's Aims in War and Peace*, London, 1940, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Campion, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

## *Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation*

Communism recognised, and reacted to, the emergence of this universalising aspect of Fascism. At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, the main report delivered began 'Comrades, as early as its Sixth Congress, the Communist International warned the world proletariat that a new fascist offensive was impending, and called for a struggle against it.'<sup>1</sup> The projected nature and outcome of this struggle is later explicated:

We want . . . the working class at the head of all the toilers, welded into a million-strong army, led by the Communist International and possessed of so great and wise a pilot as our leader Comrade Stalin . . . to fulfil its historical mission with certainty - to sweep fascism off the face of the earth and, together with it, capitalism!<sup>2</sup>

Clearly Communism and Fascism were very quick (at its inception in the case of Fascism) to recognise their antithesis in each other - one a product of the Enlightenment, the other a reaction against it.

When Liberal Democracy is brought into the equation, as it was in both Coselschi's and Dimitrov's speeches, the picture that begins to emerge is of three political ideologies all opposed, in part, to what they perceive as the universalist tendencies of the others. In the case of Fascism versus Liberal Democracy what can be seen in the Fascists is the same reaction against Enlightenment values as Communism had inspired. In the case of Communism versus Liberal Democracy, Gray's ideas regarding the Cold War immediately become pertinent, i.e., that both Russian Communism and American Liberal Democracy, being products of Enlightenment philosophy, have the same universalising tendencies and as such see a competitor in the other. 'The Cold War was a conflict between opposed variants of the same Enlightenment project.'<sup>3</sup>

With the defeat of Fascism after WWII, and the end of the Cold War and decline of Russian Communism, Liberal Democracy has emerged as the last of the three ideologies. The greatest of the Liberal Democracies today, America, has intrinsically tied the concept of global free trade into its national agenda. It is in the name of free trade, of economics, that globalisation is most optimistically hailed. Trade, free of barriers - national, geographic,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dimitrov, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-02. Gray's understanding of this 'project' is partially explained by the quote above.

## *The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

political - is held up as the fairest and levellest of playing fields. Ideology, religion, race, all lose significance in the face of the market.

One of the first articulators of this idea was Voltaire - one of the first, arguably *the* first, to articulate Enlightenment ideals. In his letter 'On Commerce' in his *Letters on England* he begins 'Commerce, which has enriched the English citizens, has helped to make them free, and this freedom in its turn has extended commerce, and that has made the greatness of the nation.'<sup>1</sup> From its inception the Enlightenment was equating freedom of commerce with human freedom. Voltaire expands on the nature of this 'freedom' in another letter 'On the Presbyterians':

Go into the London Stock Exchange - a more respectable place than many a court - and you will see representatives from all nations gathered together for the utility of men. Here Jew, Mohammedan and Christian deal with each other as though they were all of the same faith, and only apply the word infidel to people who go bankrupt.<sup>2</sup>

It is this belief in Free Trade as the grounds upon which all differences are dissolved in the name of 'the utility of men' (rather than 'the greed of men' as a cynic may term it) that informed America at its genesis. This emphasis on 'Freedom' (or at least freedom from conflict on the basis of ideology) equated with Freedom of Trade, which, after the religious and social upheavals in England during the seventeenth century, must have been a breath of fresh air, was taken up as its banner by America, and continues to inform that nation today. It is this that Gray refers to when speaking of an 'Enlightenment project':

The United States today is the last great power to base its policies on this enlightenment thesis. According to the 'Washington consensus', 'democratic capitalism' will soon be accepted throughout the world. A global free market will become a reality. The manifold economic cultures and systems that the world has always contained will be redundant. They will be merged into a single universal free market.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Trans. by Leonard Tancock, London, 1980, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

## *Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation*

It is this universalising aspect of American Democratic Capitalism, under the name of 'globalisation' that this essay will now examine.

Globalisation, as a process, goes beyond purely economic considerations. It is the cultural ramifications of globalisation that are pertinent to this discussion. Even if, perhaps, the overt intent to indoctrinate the world that lay at the heart of the millenarian tendencies of Fascism and Communism may not exist within Democratic Capitalism, there is a certain convergence of method and outcome, and while this may not be termed 'millenarianism' (lacking, if nothing else, the militant rhetoric associated with such movements), it may, as Gray has termed it, be defined as Utopianism:

In the American myth founding the Constitution embodies principles that are timeless and universally authoritative. In this mythology the United States is not a particular regime that has arisen in definite circumstances and will at some time pass away, it is an embodiment of universal truths whose future is assumed by history.<sup>1</sup>

On the surface, globalisation is a non-directional (in that it purveys no ulterior ideology or belief-system) expansion of communication technology and networks such that disparate individuals and communities can be in contact instantaneously transcending national, political, religious and geographic boundaries. The results of this for trade are that commodity trades and sums of money can be moved around the world 'at the touch of a button.' Trade is freed of governmental limitations based on the conception of the nation state and as such multinational and transnational corporations are free to pursue the capitalist endeavour of ever-increasing profits unhindered by national prejudices or limitations.

This has been hailed as a cultural and economic liberation. Humanity and trade can escape the bonds of specific national limitations. The world is united as one free market trading in ideas and goods. Specific cultures can celebrate their 'difference' amongst the multitude of world cultures on a playing field where all are equal, 'a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation.'<sup>2</sup>

What is projected in such views of globalisation is a *natural* movement towards a unified world. Enlightenment ideas of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

## *The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

'Progress' and 'Evolution' combine to form a tacit understanding that while many forms of government exist in the various countries the ultimate end of these is Liberal Democracy. This idea is suggested by Fukuyama, in somewhat florid and protracted terms, in the conclusion to *The End of History and the Last Man*:

Rather than a thousand shoots blossoming into as many different flowering plants, mankind will come to seem like a long wagon train strung out along a road. Some will be pulling into town sharply and crisply, while others will be bivouacked back in the desert, or else stuck in ruts in the final pass over the mountains. Several wagons, attacked by Indians, will have been set aflame and abandoned along the way. There will be a few wagoners who, stunned by the battle, will have lost their sense of direction and are temporarily heading in the wrong direction, while one or two wagons will get tired of the journey and decide to set up permanent camps at particular points back along the road. Others will have found alternative routes to the main road, though they will discover that to get though the final mountain range they all must use the same pass. But the great majority of wagons will be making the slow journey into town, and most will eventually arrive there.<sup>1</sup>

The use of distinctly American metaphor, linear ideas of progress, and qualitative evaluations regarding wagons 'heading in the wrong direction', gives a good indication of the mindset and beliefs that Globalisation (or the 'world culture' that it posits) gives rise to. Yes there is a multitude of systems - cultural, governmental, and so on - but all are heading *in the same direction*. This Enlightenment, or modernist, precept of directional history, located by Gray in the 'American myth', underpins the 'postmodern' conception of Globalisation. For this reason the 'mission' of American Democratic Capitalism may be, with reservation, seen as analogous to the universalising ideals of Fascism and Communism.

It is in the distinctly postmodern, or some might say Capitalist, commodification of all aspects of life that this process is being carried out: 'today no enclaves - aesthetic or other - are left in which the commodity form does not reign supreme.'<sup>2</sup> Just as Fascism and Communism utilised communications technology - the forces of cultural production - to further their causes, so too is it

---

<sup>1</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, 1992, pp. 338-9.

<sup>2</sup> Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

## *Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and Globalisation*

utilised in the formation of a unified world culture in that, as Jameson has explored, America's 'product' is culture. And, with the formation of world trade bodies, such as the World Trade Organisation, the protection of national cultures (and their production) from the imperialising influence of America, under the auspices of Trade, becomes ever more difficult.

American mass culture, associated as it is with money and commodities, enjoys a prestige that is perilous for most forms of domestic cultural production, which either find themselves wiped out - as with local film and television production - or co-opted and transformed beyond recognition, as with local music.<sup>1</sup>

This cultural and economic domination by America is undeniable. Ohmae has termed it 'the 'California-ization' of taste' arising from 'the progressive globalisation of markets for consumer goods like Levis jeans, Nike athletic shoes, and Hermes scarves - a process driven by global exposure to the same information, the same cultural icons, and the same advertisements.'<sup>2</sup> These, in the most part, and in their form of 'exposure', are largely American-based or influenced. This is borne out in Scholte's description of how 'the process has in some way touched every aspect of social relations . . . We drink Coca-Cola, munch a Big Mac, wear jeans, listen to the latest hit singles, and watch the newest video releases simultaneously with millions upon millions of other people all over the globe.'<sup>3</sup> What these commentators seem to ignore is the enormous significance of these items transmitting American culture. American culture and 'taste', as Ohmae termed it, comes to be viewed not as American but as 'global' - American in its particular institutions, and universal in spirit - and highlights the universalising aspirations inherent in American democratic capitalism.

Not surprisingly, this opinion of 'American' equalling 'global' is most often adopted by American institutions and other 'Western' (or Westernised) cultures keen to reap the financial benefits of globalisation; those still farther back in the wagon train interpret globalisation in other ways. 'Globalisation is what we in the Third World have for several centuries called colonization.'<sup>4</sup> Hetata too, from within a non-Western context, has seen a certain imperialising 'direction' behind globalisation. 'To unify power, economic or

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, London, 1996, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, 'The Globalization of World Politics', in John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics*, New York, 1997, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Khor quoted by Scholte, *ibid.*, p. 15.

*The End of Religions? Religion in an Age of Globalisation*

cultural, at the top, in the hands of the few, it is necessary to fragment power at the bottom. 'Divide and rule' is the old adage. To break down resistance, a monopoly on culture is necessary.'<sup>1</sup>

These comments suggest that globalisation is simply a newer and more subtle form of imperialism - one that relies on the fallacy of the 'Free' Market, and the treatment of culture as a commodity to subvert 'rival markets', rather than on religious or political ideology or warfare to unite the world under one banner. 'Hollywood is not merely a name for a business that makes money but also for a fundamental late-capitalist cultural revolution, in which old ways of life are broken up and new ones set in place.'<sup>2</sup> Armed with the Enlightenment belief in the universalising course of history, and utilising non-violent, non-ideological, level grounds upon which to engage other cultures and nations, American Democratic Capitalism is leading the world into globalisation.

This is the civilised, fair face of universalising ideology today, ideology grounded in religious roots and carried through to modernity by the Enlightenment, and it is masked by the post-modern idea and processes of globalisation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sherif Hetata, 'Dollarization, Fragmentation, and God', in *The Cultures of Globalization*, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 63.