Abstract: Taking as its point of departure the idea that community refers primarily to the identification of groups of human beings, the presentation enquires into the changing relation of religion to collective identities in contemporary global society. After an introductory portion that uses world maps as illustration of the general question, a first part presents an historical analysis tracing the rise to global dominance of a peculiarly modern notion according to which there is a strong, but also contested, ambiguous, and incomplete isomorphism between state-centered and religious collectivity, in particular between (nation-)states and religions: the ‘(national-)societal community’ and the ‘religious community’ are seen normally to be largely overlapping. A second part then considers how later twentieth century global developments especially have begun to strongly undermine the dominance of this assumption and its socio-structural correlates to yield an uncertain situation in which the very idea of religious community is transforming in directions that encourage much more diverse forms of collective religious identification, an increasing proportion of which are deemed to be subjective, chosen, and exhibiting fluid boundaries of religion, and relatively less inherited, attributed, kinship based, and exhibiting stable and clear boundaries. The paper concludes with empirical examples of such transformation drawn from the author’s current research on religious identity in the Canadian context.

Keywords: religion construction, Westphalianism, globalization of religions, religion and state, religious identity, religious communities, global migration, post-Westphalianism, Canada, religious change

1 Introduction: ‘Mapping’ religious communities

There are many ways to understand what constitutes ‘religious communities’. Rather than rehearse even a portion of them, I begin my analysis with one that is not only quite common but also often translates itself into and onto maps, and specifically maps of the world. Maps of the world are most frequently composed according to geography and political state boundaries, but it is not at all difficult to find ones that divide the world’s land masses according to reli-
gious identities or communities. This means, in brief, that we often associate religious communities with locality, with land and territory, and this in such a way as to cover the entire globe. It is a global vision and a global understanding. One interesting source of such maps is the internet site, Wikipedia, in the article entitled, ‘Major religious groups’ (n.d.) and on Wikipedia more generally. This source is of interest for my purposes because, as a ‘creative commons’, it reproduces a kind of global public discourse knowledge that is neither ‘expert’ (read: scientific) knowledge nor is it simply ‘common’ or ‘popular’ knowledge. It is, one might say, ‘useable’ without being ‘reliable’, and therefore a good place to start a discussion about how ‘religion’, and more particularly the idea of ‘religious communities’ is understood and perhaps used in the contemporary global society that we all inhabit.

The maps in question are both contemporary and historical. The historical ones are of special interest because they offer a hint as to the development of our contemporary understandings: where these first arose, how they came about, and who was more involved in their construction. In that light, it is significant that the historical maps that one finds on Wikipedia are generally ones produced by people from Western countries with a noticeably ‘missionary’ impulse. To illustrate, fig. 1 shows one such map. It dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and not before. It is of American provenance, produced during a time when the British and European colonial empires were well on their way to developing, but had not reached the apogee of their influence. Of particular note is, first of all, the obvious: it is a map of the entire world; there is a universal impulse and vision expressed here. Then there is the title of the map: ‘Moral and political chart of the inhabited world, exhibiting the prevailing religion, form of government, degree of civilization, and population of each country’ (emphasis added). One notes that there is a substantial overlap between ‘civilizational level’, country or political subdivision, form of government, and religion, without these being isomorphic. One might say that the map tries to present polity, religion, culture, and typology of human bodies as strongly correlated as well as being located by geographic region. In this regard, a few details are of particular note. The ‘religion’ mapped here is a matter of substantive units, that is, the religions. It is also a matter of bodies, populations, and numbers of adherents. There is no effort to distinguish the two. In other words, religious collectivity or community and religion are treated as alternative ways of designating the same thing: religions are their collectivities of human beings or at least the two can be spoken about interchangeably. Moreover, there are only six possibilities for religious identities or religions: four of them are Christian (i.e. Christian, Catholic, Protestant [Lutheran and Other Protestant], and Greek [Eastern or Orthodox]). Then there is Islam (called Mohametan), and the residual category of
‘Pagan’. One might say that for the map maker only Christianity and Islam count as ‘defined and distinct’ religions. In this regard, no part of the map that is not dominated by Christians is deemed either civilized or enlightened, the upper ‘degrees of civilization’. Eastern Europe contains some ‘islands’ of enlightenment in a barbarian sea, and from this we can surmise that the map considers Eastern Christianity as less civilized than Western Christianity. The best the non-Christian parts of the world can do is ‘half-civilized’. The map divides the world’s people by race, peoples, and what it considers ‘countries’ or political units. Christian countries are all classified according to which version or versions of Christianity dominate there. Few have more than one. And, of perhaps equal note, one of the ‘religious’ categories listed is ‘missionary stations’ adding a kind of dynamic element to the map: Christianity’s contours include its effort to spread around the world. In consonance, one of the government categories is in effect ‘colonial’, but in relatively few areas as of yet: the European colonial empires, like their religions, are still expanding. Outside of these classifications, most of the world is actually governed monarchically or by ‘chiefs and tribes’, the latter regions being mostly ‘pagan’. Again the religion and the polity correlate even at the level of residual categories. Finally, the map is very focused on ‘numbers’ (how many millions of each category) and, in that regard, religiously the majority of the world’s estimated one billion people are ‘pagans’. They are the clear majority everywhere except in Europe and the Americas (where, it seems, the vast majority of the aboriginal populations are deemed to have been Christianized). Put slightly differently, most of the world’s population falls outside ‘the religions’ and are therefore, strictly speaking, outside of expressly religious communities. ‘Religion’, one might say, for the American William Woodbridge in the early nineteenth century, is not (yet) global.

Another map, reproduced in fig. 2, was created by another American, the Baptist missionary, F.S. Dobbins, but toward the end of the nineteenth century, in 1883. This map is more purely ‘only about religion’, but it is now much more global. Unlike the previous map from the early nineteenth century, this one includes Hindus and Buddhists, meaning in effect that these religious collectivities – the map divides the religions in terms of their adherents – have moved out of the ‘pagan’ category. Those that have not are here but in a new residual category, called ‘fetishists’. The map therefore shows the ‘progress’ of the ‘world religions’ category, whose presumed adherents now are deemed to dominate in most of the world. Only sub-Saharan Africa and portions of the Americas are seen as the domain of the residual ‘fetishists’. In that regard, like the map in fig. 1, the evidently missionary motive behind the construction of this map is quite evident, especially when one considers that it was published in a book entitled, Error's
Chains: How Forged and Broken. It is in that sense just as much an ‘imperialist’ or ‘colonialist’ map as the previous one.

If we move now to the present era, the next two maps portray a remarkable completion of the logic inherent in these first two. They date from the beginning of the twenty-first century and their provenance is less certain. They are, however, two of many such maps that one can find both on Wikipedia and the Internet more generally. Regarding the first (see fig. 3), the basic structure of that peculiarly post-World War II political division of the entire world into (sovereign) states is noteworthy: extremely few ‘colonies’ are left and all of the world’s land mass belongs to one or another of these states with, moreover, very precise (and very stable since the late 1940s) boundaries. It is onto this political division of the world that the ‘religions’ are now mapped; and this is more or less the case for the vast majority of these sorts of maps that one can find so easily in this public domain. On this map of ‘Prevailing world religions’ – one notes that this is not the same as ‘dominant’ – the religions ‘prevail’, not just in regions, but within the precise boundaries of these states. Mostly each state is deemed

to have only one ‘prevailing religion’, and at most two. Of note as well is that the ‘residual’ category, which is here either ‘other’ (restricted to North Korea [Juche] and Japan [Shinto]) or ‘nature religions’ (only Madagascar), is now deemed prevailing in very few places. For this map, the ‘world religions’ now prevail globally, their numbers have increased slightly and some other world religions beside Christianity are now recorded according to their basic subdivisions.

The last map, in fig. 4, introduces a number of important ambiguities into the picture, and in this regard shows interesting continuities with the nineteenth century maps. First, while maintaining the state boundaries as basic, it avoids ideas like ‘prevailing religion’ by introducing shading to show what we might call ‘degrees of prevalence or dominance’ and by using ‘provincial’ boundaries wherever possible in order to further track this variation in dominance or prevalence. Second, it seems thereby implicitly to introduce the idea of ‘no religion’, the possibility of people being identified with ‘none of the religions’, by using lighter shades. It does not, however, also seem to include the idea of being ‘less religious’, of the category of religion applying ‘more or less’. People are, it seems, either inside or outside the religious collectivities. Third, this map appears to revert a bit to the early nineteenth century vision of the first map in which there are really only two religions: magenta for Christian and cyan for Muslim. The category of ‘pagan’ is replaced with ‘other religions’, in yellow. One notes that Judaism is represented, not by a different color, but as a combination of the ‘Christian’ and the ‘Muslim’ color.

Fig. 3: Predominant religions of the world, mapped by state.
The original uploader was LilTeK21 at English Wikipedia
I have begun the analysis with a look at these world maps depicting the distribution of religions not because they somehow represent in some convincing fashion the ‘way things are’ or the ‘way things were’, let alone how they ‘ought to be’. They are in fact just someone’s idea or projection from a given place and a given time; they are neither authoritative nor necessarily even all that convincing. Yet they are by that token also not simply ‘wrong’ or ‘illusory’, although definitely invented and constructed. Instead, what they offer is a visual way of entering the question of religious communities in the contemporary world, of religious collectivities in today’s global society. Going further, they are visual representations of an important part of the main arguments I want to make concerning the history, the construction, and the transformation of understandings of religious collectivities or communities in our world, and of the institutional, structural, and lived realities of those religions and religious collectivities for a great many, perhaps most, but by no means all, of the people and societal regions of the world today. In particular, there are four aspects of these maps that are important for the analysis that follows. First, all these maps elide the units called ‘religions’ and the sets of human beings that are identified with those religions, what we often refer to as the religious communities. Second, each of them tries to map religious collectivities onto geography. Together they show a certain consistency of association of territory, people, and religion; even though they thereby also reveal ambiguity, a kind of taken-for-granted po-

![Map showing the distribution of world religions by country/state, and by smaller administrative regions for the largest countries (China, India, Russia, United States). % of MAGENTA stands for nominal adherents of Christianity, % of CYAN stands for nominal adherents of Islam, % of YELLOW stands for nominal adherents of Buddhism, Chinese religions, Hinduism and indigenous religions.](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_religious_groups)
sition that is not quite sure of itself. Third, these mappings change over time and vary from one attempt to another; that is part of the ambiguity. Finally, fourth, the apogee of precision in this regard is presented on the third map, a very recent one; but there is also the odd continuity of the first and last maps with regard to ‘which religions really count here’, another ambiguity.

Another characteristic of the ‘religion’ that these maps present, while perhaps more implicit, is nonetheless just as important. This is the assumption that religion, and therefore religious communities, are ‘foundational’. Religious identity is a fundamental identity that can and does characterize entire states, regions, societies, as well as individual people. It is not the only such foundational characteristic, however. Another is quite evidently political or ‘national’ identity. The entire world, without remainder, is divided into collectivities whose fundamental distinguishing features – what differentiates one from the another – include religion and polity.

2 The historical construction of religions: a narrative

From this starting point, I now unpack this somewhat odd combination of assumptions as portrayed in these maps, and this through an historical analysis of how we got to this point. A key assumption in doing so is that these portrayals of seeing and doing religion did not have to be this way; what we mean by religion is not anything essential and particular, simply ‘out there’ challenging us to observe it in the way that it is. Religion, to arrive at this point, had to be socially and consciously – which is to say contingently – constructed that way. And this has been a more or less accidental outcome of recent and not so recent history. As such, like all social constructions, it will be open to contestation, implicated in the nexus of power relations that are subject to challenge, and therefore could be otherwise and could change over time.

One could start the historical narrative at almost any time and any place, because as the maps pretend, the development eventually is supposed to cover the entire globe. Each region of the world will therefore have its own history in this regard, its own path-dependent and long-term journey. In addition, the story will be necessarily selective, since we know what we are looking for: the antecedents of a particular development whose outcome we know. Saying this is also another way of pointing to the contingency of the development, meaning among other things that there is really no way of telling in early parts of the history in what direction things were going to move thereafter. The history of development
is accidental and does not follow some sort of internal, teleological logic that simply ‘works itself out’.

Therefore, for practical purposes, we can start with that ‘religion’ that we now call Christianity, already in its early history. The key Christian idea, present from very early on, is the idea of ‘church’ or ‘ecclesia’. This is a notion that the Christian movement appropriated and developed early on and it designated from early on the ‘community’, the collectivity of Christian followers, meaning that the idea of being Christian included a communal dimension which was deemed defining. In addition, however, the Christian idea of church also carried from relatively early on an organizational meaning: the Christian communities were organized communities, under a progressively more defined leadership and with normative structures that defined who was inside and who was outside the community. The possibility of being considered a heretic or a pagan/heathen occurred early in this development. Being a Christian was also a totalizing idea: it involved all of a person’s life and not just a partial identity beside others. In that regard, and even more important, being Christian, as a deliberately religious identity, abstracted from other, what we might call ‘cultural’ or ‘ethnic’, identities: in that sense it could be, and was seen as, overarching all these other possible identities, as opposed to being subordinate to them. This was distinct from the way Jews thought about themselves – and much of this development was of course modeled on and distinguished itself expressly from the way Jews identified their collectivity and collectivities – or, even today to a significant extent, the way being Hindu often still carries simultaneously a ‘religious’ and a ‘cultural’ meaning (cf. Dalmia, von Stietencron 1995). Not surprisingly, therefore, we can witness how, in the late Roman Empire period, when the Christian religion had become the official as well as increasingly the practical religion of the empire, the already implicit idea solidified that the Christian religion and thereby the Christian community was one such religion beside others – albeit the only ‘true’ one – the others being designated as Jewish and Pagan (Boyarin 2007).

During roughly the same era, another movement arose and developed which incorporated a similar idea, and that is Islam. Although this movement may have begun more as a religion of the Arabs, of a, broadly speaking, cultural identity, we find that here as well it soon developed in this same direction as a religious community – here designated by the word ‘ummah’ –, a societal grouping defined in terms of its religion, its ‘din’ (Gardet 1960 [1980]), along with the understanding that there were other ‘dins’: notably and unsurprisingly, the Jewish and Christian ones. Like the Christians, moreover, the Muslims also defined themselves over and against these other religions, which included a category corresponding to ‘pagans’, who were basically without religion or the practitioners of an anti-religion: here simply infidels who could and should become members.
of the religion. In the Islamic case, a critical aspect of the process is even clearer than it is in the Christian case: the early development depended in part on the close association of the religious religion with political empire, the Roman one(s) in the case of Christianity and, of course, the Muslim empires in the case of Islam. In neither case, however, is the development dependent on empire. It is still ‘about’ religion. Nonetheless, this feature shows how these very much self-identified religious communities already carried with them a practical territorial reference: they were territorially based to a large extent, even if they were not also what we today might call culturally specific.

Outside the Christian and Islamic spheres, I am aware of no other instance of this kind of religion formation in other parts of the world during this era, essentially before the end of the first millennium CE. This is a way of saying that the Christian and Islamic developments were not simply a further expression of the advent of the so-called Axial Age (Eisenstadt 1986). Religions like these two had not developed already in the middle of the millennium before the Common Era, although the traditions out of which they eventually did develop will have seen certain critical developments, and maybe even arguably starting points, during those centuries. In this context, it is to be noted that the Buddhist idea of ‘sangha’ is not a parallel development since it quite specifically included only the monastics and not also the laity as was the case in the Christian and Islamic cases.

Jumping ahead now, to several hundred years later, the scene of the narrative, again somewhat but not entirely arbitrarily, shifts to Christian Western Europe. What is rather unprecedented, but also highly consequential in this case, is that the Christian religion, as what one might call a societal collectivity, continues to develop in spite of the gradual disappearance of its former imperial political carrier, the Roman Empire, whether eastern or western. This is not the case in the (still) core Islamic areas, where empire – even if not single and united – continues as a very important political substratum for the religion. This is where the organized feature of the Christian idea of ‘church’ takes on critical importance, since it was the church organization that carried on the possibility of identifying the Christian collectivity as foundational to the identity of an entire regional society, only partially aided by political structures. Thus did the Christian church, now seen primarily as the organization, develop (until at least the eleventh century at the time of the so-called papal revolution) as both a religious and, increasingly, as a quasi-state structure, with something close to state pretensions, as exemplified in the idea that the church was an entire and distinct society or ‘societas’ (Berman 1983). This society of the church, however, conceiving of and structuring itself as expressly religious, understood itself as still needing political structures in the form of the ‘secular’ arm of the
political state. But this arm not only did not have to be unified as the church had to be, it did not have to be and indeed could not be identified with the church: the two could be, and indeed were, conceived to be necessarily differentiated – two ‘swords’, each a ‘societas perfecta’. This idea of differentiation is critical. Of particular note, in this regard, is that this era in Western European society also saw the beginnings of the development of more than one of these ‘secular’ spheres, notably one for science, especially in the universities (Huff 2003), for law (Berman 1983; Berman 2006), and somewhat later especially for capitalist economy (Wallerstein 1974). Still, the society as a whole was, if at all, identified through the idea of religious collectivity as Christendom, somewhat coterminous with the geographical designation of Europe, which during this time meant mostly Western Europe (cf. Cantor 1993, chapter 7). As this last expression indicates, the religious designation did not also have a uniform political one, polities during this time increasingly and contestably being structured as multiple states, kingdoms, etc. within Europe; Christendom was not a political so much as a cultural, and by implication a religiously designated, territory.

The early modern revolutions, generally beginning with the Protestant Reformation but extending until the end of the seventeenth century, then brought a subtle but highly significant change in this situation. The main sections of the Protestant Reformation sought to ‘purify’ religion, at least in the sense of making the ‘church’ less ‘of this world’, thereby contradicting the direction the main Roman Church had taken. In this sense the Reformers were working toward a clearer differentiation of religion from the, by contrast, ‘secular’ sphere. Yet in so doing, they did not deny the ‘foundational’ quality of religion, but rather sought the transfer of the ‘worldly’ or ‘secular’ functions of religion to precisely that secular sphere, namely the state, law, and one could argue to the universities and to economic enterprise. In this development therefore, it is as much the ‘princes’, the ‘lawyers’, the ‘businessmen’ and the ‘scholars’ who were the movers of the revolution that the Protestant Reformation represented as it was the religious Reformers themselves. In other words, the ‘princes’ did not so much ‘hijack’ the Reformation to get Rome and the Emperor ‘off their backs’ as they were the executors of the Reformation in the ‘secular’ realm. Through the Counter- or Catholic Reformation, the Roman church tried to counter this development in those parts of Europe that did not ‘go Protestant’, but the result over the longer period was not that different given that the states in these areas also abrogated to themselves more of the functions that the church had claimed for itself in the preceding period. The states moved to becoming themselves a more and more ‘foundational’ sphere, like religion and with religion, but also differentiated from religion.
Under the circumstances, this Reformation eventuated first of all in a very protracted period of violence, within states, between states, and only in that context between Reformers and Catholics. The upshot of the development was presaged, symbolized, and to some extent embodied in the eventual solution to the violence as expressed in the Peace of Augsburg in the sixteenth, and then the Peace of Westphalia in the seventeenth, century. These agreements contained a double feature which in effect reordered the relation between the two sides of the explicit and implicit distinction that informed the entire development: the distinction between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’. As expressed and intimated in that famous phrase, *cuius regio, eius religio*, the state plurality that these peace agreements helped on its way to solidification, the state ‘sovereignty’ that they envisaged, was to be paralleled by a more or less coordinated religious plurality, with the states, in the form of their rulers, determining which ‘religion’ would ‘reign’ in which ‘realm’. One notes the peculiarity of this arrangement or attempted arrangement. There was a plurality of more or less arbitrary political units, which were seen as ‘sovereign’, which means and meant legitimately distinct and not subordinate to some overarching political unit, perhaps as represented by an empire with its emperor. These states were to be sufficiently foundational that they should and could determine which version of religious foundationalism they would embody, the options in this regard also being limited to equally more or less arbitrary, but now plural, religious units, all (Western) Christian: the states could choose to be Calvinist, Lutheran, or Catholic. England then added its own somewhat hybrid version to this list. The addition of the Eastern Christian possibilities, for practical reasons, had to await the nineteenth century, even though the basic plural structure of the Eastern Churches was already there to be eventually appropriated for this purpose (Roudometof 2014). In sum then, these ‘Westphalian’ solutions effected double, and in both cases plural, religious and political foundationalisms, which were to be more or less parallel, if not exactly isomorphic, since, although each political unit was to be designated by a single religious identity – something which in practical fact never quite happened in most of the states – the religions or confessions in fact followed different boundaries, each being or becoming the ‘prevailing’ religion of more than one state, even to some extent the Anglican version. Westphalian coordination of this sort did not negate differentiation of religion and polity: it was a way of structuring it further, of expressing and developing it.

At this point, it must be pointed out that these Western European developments were from very early on increasingly ‘not just Western European’. The sixteenth century, besides being the century of the Reformations, was also the century in which European imperial expansion had its real beginnings. While these
two developments were not the same thing, they occurred together and mutually conditioned each other. Therefore, what I am calling the global appropriation – always including adaptation or particularization – of this initially European development with regard to state and religion began early. It was quickly appropriated for the colonial territories that some European powers acquired in the so-called ‘New World’, eventually to include not only the Americas, but also Australasia and parts of southern Africa and, if we want to extend it, the contiguous-ly expanding Russian empire into most of northern Asia. These ‘settler’ society examples are important because they show that such appropriation was never simply a diffusion of things European, but rather at the same time a transformation and development, different in the various cases. The examples of North American and eventually Australasian ‘denominationalism’ – the division of the religious domain into organized and distinct units – are particularly telling of how such appropriation could work, although here cannot be the place to go into detail of what exactly this means.

In other parts of the world, the appropriation and transformation was just as and even more complicated. Particular examples include the consolidation and eventual transformation (reform!) of Islam in its various contiguous territories, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ constructions of Hinduism in the process of eventual state formation in South Asia, and what I have elsewhere called the appropriation through partial refusal of the whole idea (Beyer 2006, ch. 5) in East Asian parts. This manifests itself today in the fact that, measured internally by the states concerned, these countries are the only ones in the world where from half to the vast majority of people today consider themselves to be of ‘no religion’, even though they have a corresponding understanding of what that word means. The East Asian states, in the process of their modern re-formation, have a complicated history of trying out different, but not unrelated, approaches, generating such various foundational quasi-religious ideologies and practical programs as, for instance, State Shinto in Japan and Maoism in China.

Out of this accidental, complex, and ambiguous development since the sixteenth century, probably reaching a high point or apogee in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has emerged what I have been calling a ‘Westphalian’ modeling of religion and polity (Beyer 2012). Briefly put, this modeling differentiates religions and states, not simply from each other, but in relation to each other while maintaining and developing the difference. An important intermediary or connecting idea in this process has been that of a kind of double collectivity, which manifests itself in a double foundationalism. It is through the collectivity of adherents or citizens that the actual modeling has taken place. In other words, the idea of peoples or nations, collectivities of persons, has come to act as the intermediary by which two different socio-structural entities, reli-
gions and states, are carried. Both religions and states have come to be seen as particular entities, but also as entities embodied horizontally by the persons that are deemed to belong to them and that think of themselves as belonging to them. Hence results the idea that a (nation-) state has a dominant nation that it represents, usually carrying the same name as the state itself; but it also has a ‘prevailing’ religion which consists of most of the same people, the adherents, the believers, the members, or similar term. Such modeling leaves room for a great many variations, because it is not and never was complete or precise. It never was a question of isomorphism of political and religious foundationalisms. And therefore one can conclude from the variations either that by the twentieth century there were few exceptions or a great many, because no particular way that a particular state carried out this modeling has become, or ever has been, normative or, in turn, the dominant model for all the others.

At the core of this Westphalian modeling are thus the following ideas: each state is sovereign in its own precisely defined territory and is characterized by a single dominant collectivity, usually called a nation, as well as, ‘incidentally’ or not depending on the particular understanding, a typical or ‘prevailing’ religion or ‘confession’ of a religion, sometimes two or a very limited number of religions or confession. Furthermore, as a reflection of the foundationalism of each quality (polity and religion), mediated through the people who compose the two foundational collectivities, each person ‘normally’ will only have one of each of the two types of belonging: they will be members or citizens of one and only one state, national community or nation, and they will be members or adherents or practitioners of one and only one religion or subdivision like a confession. The religious identity will in most cases be the one associated with the state in question, but not always. Therefore, peoples (religious or political) will have states that culturally embody and allow for the expression of a typical or national way of life. Religions, largely overlapping but not isomorphic, will also be ways of life and each of these communities, the religious community and the national community, will be cohesive and integrated and thereby ‘proper’, solid, stable, dynamic or simply put, healthy.

Having so stated this thesis, it must also be qualified because, as I have been emphasizing from the outset of the analysis, while there has definitely been this pattern of religions formation in relation with polity or state formation, there has also always been much more going on, for most of which there is not sufficient space for further discussion here. Two ways of now approaching this ‘much more going on’ are, however, on the one hand, to look at what one can call the question of religious minorities, and on the other, to examine religions under the rubric of globalization and the globalization of religions specifically.
The idea that there are such things as religious minorities is quite evidently a key part of the picture that I have been painting: creating ‘dominant’ religions implies the comparative existence of other religions that are not dominant and, using the collectivity principle of what constitutes a religion, there will therefore also always be religious minorities. This is not just or even primarily in a numerical sense of counting heads, but more importantly in a ‘political’ sense of being marginalized, de-privileged, and even ‘not belonging’ (here). Correspondingly, as the Westphalian system of states with their dominant religions or dominant religious communities built itself up around the world over the last centuries, each state thereby also created within itself, by default, religious minorities. In a real sense, these religious minorities were indicative both of the arbitrariness of this way of doing things as well as its ambiguity and indeed internal contradiction. Such minorities could be ‘confessional’: divisions of the dominant religion that do not ‘belong’ in the particular state (but may or may not belong in another state). They could also be minorities of other recognized religions. Whatever the case, within the Westphalian logic, they called for an orientation or policy with respect to them, thereby introducing, again almost by default, the idea of ‘toleration’ (or no toleration). Much like this word carries a certain negative connotation, it reflects the fact that in many cases, these minorities were viewed in their various states in at best a neutral fashion, and often in a very negative one, being called by such monikers as ‘dissenters’, ‘sectarians’, or even ‘heretics’. One might even see the idea that religions have denominations or confessions as itself an indicator of the constant insufficiency or instability of this way of conceiving and structuring what we call ‘religion’. Nonetheless, as this last example shows, the religious minorities, their idea and their concrete reality in states, were also an outcome of the logic of the system, a constant ‘problem’ or ‘question’ perhaps, but not as such a symptom of the undoing of Westphalianism or of its nonexistence in the first place.

3 The reconstruction of the religious system:
   a post-Westphalian condition

The globalization of religions introduces another complexification. In this context, one can again refer to the first two maps discussed above, the ones from the nineteenth century drawn up by Christian Americans with an implicit or explicit ‘missionary’ bias (figs. 1 and 2). Those maps show not just the ‘imperialistic’ or ‘colonialist’ aspect of the construction of these worldwide religious and political systems, but also implicitly point to the fact, already adumbrated
more than once, that religious boundaries – the boundaries of the religions, the boundaries of their respective collectivities – were not and never were simply co-
terminous with political boundaries, even if the social construction of these re-
ligions did to a real extent depend on the simultaneous construction of the po-
litical entities, especially the modern states. This globalization of religions, in the
sense of global spread, was mostly an affair of the late eighteenth to twenty-first
centuries; and in its earlier stages it was mostly, but not entirely, a case of the
spread of one particular religion, namely Christianity and its various ‘confes-
sions’. The more partial globalization of Islam has its main temporal center of
gravity before this time, but also has a strong nineteenth and twentieth century
history (see e.g. Lapidus 1988).

The more recent chapters of this story, especially from the late twentieth and
into the twenty-first centuries, are seeing a much more complete geographic
globalization of most of the religions out of their erstwhile dominant geographic
heartlands; so much so that this development has brought about a new and in-
creasingly dominant concern among observers of the scene, especially including
academic or scientific observers, with the question of ‘religious diversity’ (see
e.g. Meister 2011). This concern with religious diversity is not only a reflection
of the geographic globalization of religions (including of course the physical dis-
placement of their ‘adherents’ through global migration). It is also a reflection of
the complexity of the story that I have presented here in greatly simplified form.
What has been going on in the development of religions over the last few centu-
ries is in fact not just the Westphalian patterns and modeling. There have always
been developments in the religious domain that have not been subsumed in this
Westphalian direction. This is the case not just with respect to minorities, but
also with respect to developments that did not and do not follow the boundaries
of the religions. These can perhaps be subsumed under such terms as ‘hybridiza-
tions’ – which in many cases simply resulted in the construction of more reli-
gions, but not always – and what one might call ‘doing religion’ differently, even
though this ‘differently’ might not always be recognized or understood or enact-
ed as religion or one of the religions by its carriers or other observers. This points
to the idea and the possibility that current phases in the historical process of
globalization may actually be undermining the dominance of the Westphalian-
ism that I have been attempting to describe.

Above all, the globalization of religions loosens – but does not undo – the
Westphalian assumptions about the coordination of boundaries: religious and
political or societal. It does so especially in the sense that ‘diaspora’ or non-
‘heartland’ manifestations of any given religion are not thereby less authentic,
legitimate, or recognized by virtue of being reproduced outside those countries
with which a given religion is strongly associated under the Westphalian as-
sumptions (Beyer 1998). What this multiplication of centers of authenticity – and authority – accomplishes is that it challenges above all the ‘foundational’ assumptions attributed to religion, as more religions locate in more places, especially those locations not hitherto associated with them in Westphalian fashion. Belonging to a particular religion thereby comes to appear more and more ‘voluntary’ in the sense of optional for ‘national societal’ membership. As more and more religions establish a presence in more and more countries, it can become more and more apparent that there need be no close association between a particular religion, or at least a very small number of them, and the ‘health’ of a particular society. Indeed the conviction that ‘national societies need to be nationally integrated’ itself can come under challenge. As Roland Robertson puts it, this sort of ‘relativization’ of identities – at the national and by extension also at the personal, individual level – is in fact a critical aspect or consequence of more recent globalization (Robertson 1992). Intensifying communicative links among all parts of the globe present a challenge to all particular local/national identities, without thereby necessarily or even strongly undermining their possibility. Such particular identities need, however, to be rethought and reconstructed over time. I hypothesize that this sort of challenge is one that we are currently undergoing all around the world. Its outcome, of course, is not in the least bit determined, any more than the contingent developments of earlier phases of globalization were in some teleological sense determined by essential characteristics of the historical globalization process.

What consequences would this relativization have for religious communities or collectivities? While the contingency of this process disallows us from predicting anything with any confidence, a few aspects can probably be foreseen. First, overall, it likely will mean that the self-conception of most religions and their religious communities will become more and more simply global, all the while still recognizing historical centers of gravity in these self-conceptions. The ‘houses’ or ‘doms’ of the religions may well trend more to becoming simply global, all the while recognizing an increasing number of ‘local’ variations, which do not necessarily have to be physically all that localized. This may mean not the reduction of subdivisions, of ‘confessions’, but rather their multiplication as the ‘discipline’ of the boundaries of regions and states becomes more and more attenuated. Religious communities should thereby become more multi-local, transnational, and global. This may eventuate into something like what José Casanova probably means by ‘global denominationalism’ (Casanova 2010).

Nonetheless, this new situation does not mean that the possibility of ‘national religious communities’ in Westphalian style cannot or will not continue. They may weaken, they may strengthen; the latter possibility demonstrated and forecast, for instance, in the late twentieth century rise and success of
quite a number of religio-political movements at the state level: movements in-
tent on reasserting the national society/national religion bond, even under
the guise of seeming to question the legitimacy of the (secular) nation-state (cf. Juergensmeyer 1993; Juergensmeyer 2008). In addition, however, and somewhat in
contrast to these two possible trends, we might also foresee the greater multipli-
cation of small, face-to-face and local religious communities that make little re-
ference to either the national state or the global societal levels. These sorts of
communities have continued to exist all along in this historical process, but it
may be that the comparative decline of the Westphalian arrangements, at least
in terms of being the prevailing and relatively unquestioned pattern, will make
these micro-communities both much more common and much more visible to
us as observers.

More generally, under the heading of speculative ‘post-Westphalian’ trends,
attendant upon this more intense and different globalization that we have been
experiencing in the course of the last few decades, there are a few other devel-
opments in the realm of religious communities that we might intimate. As the
Westphalian model loses its dominance – but certainly not its concrete possibil-
ity and presence in most if not all areas of the world – it may be that not so much
entirely new trends will develop, but possibilities that have been marginalized
hitherto will become more prominent. One of these is the further development
of what one might call (local) religious cultures, which is to say ways of doing
what we call religion that have not been much observed as religion, or at
least not as religious, whether by outsiders or insiders. The cogent critique of
the idea of religion, and the world religions especially (see e.g. Masuzawa
2005; Mendieta 2001; Peterson, Walhof 2002), points in this direction, namely
that religion does not have to work this way, and that there is much in all soci-
eties that is perhaps religious but does not get observed nor structure itself as
differentiated religion. Such a trend might include the so-called ‘rise of spiritual-
ity’, about which much has been written lately (e.g. Batstone 2001; Heelas et
al. 2005; Houtman, Aupers 2007), the greater prominence of what sometimes get
called the ‘marginally religious’, or even the so-called ‘religious none’:
people who may ‘belong’ to a religious community or not, but who in any case do not
perform much that would reproduce the religions, or do so only very occasion-
ally (Davie 1993; Kosmin 2008; Lim, MacGregor, Putnam 2010). Other trends
might be even more interesting. Two in particular, about which there is currently
a growing and controversial literature, are what are often called the ‘consumer-
ization’ of religion and the ‘mediatization’ of religion (Campbell 2010; Gauthier,
Martikainen 2013a; Gauthier, Martikainen 2013b). This is religion that genuinely
deviates from the hitherto dominant Westphalian forms (centered on such things
as exclusive and single religion involvement and identification) to make the
practice of religion resemble more the consumption of products and services in a marketplace rather than the faithful reproduction of an often national religious community with clear boundaries and standard orthodoxies, orthopraxies, and authorities. This is religion less like patriotism and more like shopping. Or it could be religion that takes a form resembling more closely a mediated performance, including virtual on-line religion that transfers its collective structure to the virtual sphere and, by that token, also to the highly individualized and perhaps even anonymous level (Dawson, Cowan 2004). Again, this would be religion less like disciplined, mobilized, and patriotic engagement and more like episodic, if still very serious and perhaps very regular, program loyalty and dedicated ‘watching’: moving from regular attendee to regular audience, as it were.

4 Post-Westphalian structuring of religion: some Canadian research

These observations are admittedly rather speculative, but I think there is at least room for seeing these more recent developments, with intimations and starting points often much earlier in recent history, as signs of changing times when it comes to the imagining and structuring of religion, religions, and religious collectivities or communities. To put flesh on these observations in a more concrete fashion, I want now, in a final section, to look at some of my own research results on these and related questions in Canada. To do this, I have to begin by presenting the extent to which Canada has formed a very particular example of all that I have been talking about, both with respect to the historical construction of Westphalian arrangements, and with respect to the current and ongoing challenging of those arrangements in light of the global developments I have just discussed.

Canada as a country and a (nation)-state is a rather clear outcome and expression of modern globalization. It is a ‘settler’ society, the product especially of seventeenth to twentieth century European migration of people, power, and understandings. It has also been a very Westphalian state, with Protestant and Catholic forms of Christianity dominating in every way, albeit not as formally ‘established’ religion after the mid-nineteenth century. In the settlement process, people who were culturally and religiously ‘too different’ were more or less excluded, kept out, and the ‘difference’ represented by indigenous peoples was overrun and actively suppressed, at least until the late twentieth century. Since the 1960s, things have changed, not totally, but gradually and significantly.
After 1967 the doors to truly global migration were opened with, among other effects, an attendant increase in religious diversity: both intra-Christian diversity and in terms of the world religions. The country officially and popularly considers itself multicultural and multi-religious, and recognizing and incorporating the difference of indigenous peoples has increasingly become an important priority. The Canadian province of Quebec is somewhat of an exception, but more as a variation on these themes than a clearly different case.

In order to try to better understand aspects of this situation of transformation, my colleagues and I have been conducting research primarily among the second generations of post-1970 immigrants, a portion of the population that can arguably be seen as the embodiment of these changes to the extent that they are happening: the second generation is religiously and culturally very diverse, does not reflect the old Westphalian Canada, and yet is ‘from here’. In the Canadian case they are also relatively young, having been born only after 1970. Together with the larger post-1970 cohort, which we have also begun researching on the same basis, they are arguably what Canada is becoming. The question we asked of all of them is, how are they expressing religion in the context of a factually increasingly multicultural Canada?

In very summary fashion, this ‘up and coming’ Canada regards the country as multicultural in its fundamental identity, and by that token also multi-religious, this latter in two senses. First, while recognizing both the historical dominance of Christianity in Canada, and the continuing ways in which this religion is still in some ways privileged as a result, generally the new generations consider that all religions are, or are becoming, increasingly at home in Canada, including the religion that each of them may be practicing. That is also and even especially the case for non-Christian religions. Second, however, most members of the generation also recognize Canada as a now secular country in which religion, in whatever form or expression, is (and for most, should be) a private and community affair. National identity and religious identity have little to do with one another except, perhaps, in so far as to be Canadian is to be diverse. This diversity includes the fact that one does not have to be religious at all: that identities like atheist, spiritual and not religious, and marginally/eclectically religious are just as Canadian as being Christian (in increasing varieties), Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist or ‘whatever’. It is also entirely possible and acceptable to be multi-religious in whatever way one understands this idea. In this context, large, let alone overarching, institutional religious structures are not part of the picture. There is not, or at least should not be, any dominant religion or even a dominance of religion outside personal and community life. Matters are somewhat different in Quebec, but only to the extent that the ‘national’ iden-
tity here is still strongly a French-speaking cultural identity that includes secularism (*laïcité*) and a continuing cultural presence of Catholic public symbols.

5 Conclusion

Overall, one can conclude from this research that religious communities in Canada – at least to the extent revealed among these younger generations – are following the trend toward smaller, more diverse, and horizontal egalitarian communities, in contradistinction to large, dominant, and authoritatively hierarchical communities that include a national, or even a subnational, religious community to which all but minorities putatively belong. This is an example of a post-Westphalian condition: one that is rapidly succeeding a previously Westphalian condition of, if not a Christian Canada with an established religion, then certainly one whose self-identity was foundationally Christian with a ‘shadow establishment’ (Martin 2000).

Canada is in global context, of course, just one country, and a demographically rather small one at that. Nonetheless, I would suggest that it is one that at least presents one variation on what is a larger, even global, trend toward the increase of post-Westphalian circumstances when it comes to the role, form, and importance of religious communities. The ‘old’ Westphalian forms are very much still possible and actual in many parts of the world, but I would argue that they are no longer the prevailing trend to which there are some exceptions. Rather, the exceptions have not just become the rule, the rule is that all is exception, and that we have entered a fluid and uncertain era in the global formation of religions, the religious, and religious communities.

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