PART ONE

NEW PERSPECTIVES
CHAPTER ONE

THE NEW RELIGIOUS CONSTELLATIONS IN THE FRAMEWORKS OF CONTEMPORARY GLOBALIZATION AND CIVILIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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Introduction

Many new developments in the religious arenas are taking place in the contemporary scene—developments which entail changes, transformations of the place of religion on the world scene, and which herald a new civilizational constellation.

These developments go far beyond being the usual picture of ‘religion’ and constitute a very strong challenge to the widely accepted assumptions in the hitherto predominant academic and public discourse in which the extension of modernity, the modernization of societies, seemingly as it were naturally entails the secularization of the world; the weakening of religion in its predominance in the hegemonic worldview and of its central place in public spheres—especially in the major modern revolutionary and nation-states—the institutional epitome of the modern programs—and the concomitant removal, as it were, of religion to the private spheres.

In the first stages of the crystallization of the post-Second World War social and political scene, it seemed as if the major developments in the religious arenas in most modern societies indeed provided, as it were, proof of major assumptions about the continual tendency to secularization as epitomizing modernization. Among the most important of these developments were, first, the growing crystallization of the religious sphere in the modern world as just one—among many others—institutional spheres; second, the weakening or loss, as compared to other periods, of the predominant place of religion in the constitution of hegemonic world views; third, the weakening of religious authorities and of religious practices, and concomitantly the seemingly growing de-ritualization or apparent desacralization, both of central public arenas, as well as of private life.