

Contesting Religious Identity in the Marketplace: Consumption Ideology and the Boycott Halal Movement

Elizabeth C. Hirschman¹ & Mourad Touzani²

Abstract

Consumer behavior is often intimately tied to contemporary ethno-religious conflict, as for example the sale of African 'blood diamonds', Somali piracy of international shipping and the use of economic sanctions by Western countries against Iran. Yet much current inquiry in the field remains cast at the domestic, individual level. The present study directs attention to the multinational Boycott Halal movement. This consumer movement is presently active in Australia, Denmark, France, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain and the United States. Run largely through social media, the Boycott Halal movement aims to restrict the presence of halal-certified products in what are deemed to be Judeo-Christian countries. We use political theories drawn from Fox and Fukuyama to characterize this movement. Drawing from the religious conflict theories of Moss, we also present parallel historical movements which share similarities with Boycott Halal. We propose a *consumption demonization* thesis to explain the commonalities across these exemplars.

Key words: Ethno-religious conflict, Islam, consumer boycotts, economic reprisals.

1. Introduction

"A highly developed civil society can also pose dangers for democracy....Groups based on ethnic or racial chauvinism can spread intolerance...Excessive politicization of economic and social conflicts can paralyze societies and undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions." Francis Fukuyama (2011, p. 472)

"Analysts with a sound dose of materialism tend to look first at the contested resources and the economic interests attached to them, when they try to understand a conflict. I do not recommend anything else." Gunther Schlee, 2010, p. 55.

In his treatise, *The Origins of Political Order* (2011), Fukuyama traces the development of modern statehood from prehistory to the arrival of democratic nations. Along the way he outlines the intricate evolution between religion, politics and the rule of law. In different regions of the world, for example, he argues that these three institutions developed varying relationships with one another. These variations in development have led in modern times to significantly different structures in China, Western Europe, the Middle East and India. In each of these regions, law, government and religion interact to produce unique consumption patterns and relationships within the marketplace. In the past, when residents of these regions led lives largely isolated from one another, the opportunity for consumption-based conflict was less common. But due to heightened contemporary migrations, consumers often find themselves dealing with new-comers whose preferences, beliefs and standards of marketplace behavior may differ greatly from their own.

¹ Hill Richmond Smiddy Professor of Business. Department of Business and Economics. University of Virginia. College at Wise. Wise, VA, USA. elizabeth524@aol.com

² Associate Professor of Marketing, Neoma Business School, Rouen, France. mtouzani@neoma.bs.fr

These new-comers frequently belong to a different religious tradition than that commonly followed within the country. In the past, these new arrivals were expected to modify their behaviors to fit in with the marketplace activities of their hosts (Yang 2000); that is, *to assimilate*. But this is no longer the case. The scale of modern migration and the ability of individuals to remain intimately connected electronically to their countries of origin act to encourage the maintenance of consumption practices, even after arriving in the new land (Mobasher and Sadri 2003).

Additionally, negative attitudes by host consumers toward the new arrivals may create an emotional resistance to assimilation by the immigrants (Horowitz 2000). In some cases, the new arrivals may find themselves voluntarily or involuntarily segregated within certain neighborhoods or areas of the host country (Horowitz 2000). In the most extreme cases, hostile actions may be taken against them by residents of the host country with the tacit support of the country's legal and political systems (Grim and Finke 2011). The current Muslim Diaspora to Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand often finds itself placed in this latter category (Aissaoui 2009).

1.2 The Contemporary Muslim Diaspora

The contemporary Muslim diaspora originates from several factors. During the 1970s Muslim immigrants from Turkey and Central Asia began arriving in Western European countries, such as Belgium and Germany, seeking higher wages (Akcapar 2012). Their subpar economic status and unfamiliar language and consumption behaviors made them frequent targets of ethno-religious hostility (Akcapar 2012). Concurrently, Pakistani Muslims immigrating to Britain, and North African Muslims immigrating to France often met with hostility and residential segregation (Bolognani and Lyon 2011; Aissaoui 2009). These latter two dispersions resulted from Western colonialism during the prior century (Bolognani and Lyon 2011; Aissaoui 2009). Quite often, the European nations that eagerly colonized and withdrew economic benefits from these Muslim countries have not been enthusiastic about having their inhabitants show up on the doorstep decades later (Kuru 2009).

The rise of Political Islam (Volpi 2010) at the close of the colonial period and the critical importance to Western economies of the petroleum supplies found in many Muslim countries placed additional political pressures on Muslim immigration. This was greatly exacerbated by the appearance of violent Islamist political groups in the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War (Volpi 2010). By the early 1980s, several different Muslim extremist organizations were forming; most notably Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, to fight against invading Russian forces (Dreyfus 2005). When these same groups began attacking Western targets in the late 1980s, Muslims living in Western nations became the targets of suspicion (Aissaoui 2009). Post 9/11, the situation has worsened substantially (Schlee 2010). At present, thousands of Muslim refugees are entering Eastern and Western Europe from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and other countries due to extraordinary economic and political crises (Kuru 2009; Schlee 2010). This migration has created unprecedented pressure on the countries of arrival, which are predominately Christian, to adapt to newcomers with customs and behaviors at variance to their own (Kuru 2009; Schlee 2010). In several of these countries, political movements on both the right and left of the spectrum have targeted Muslims socially and economically, often viewing them as a threat to their customary way of life (see e.g., Kern 2012).

2.0 Religion in the Marketplace

Culture manifests itself in the marketplace. The set of available goods, services, retail shops, food providers, and brands constitutes in many ways not only consumer culture, but national culture. Until recent decades, the marketplace in Western countries rarely served as a focal point for religious values or consumer religious identity (Mobasher and Sadri 2003). With the Muslim Diaspora to the West, the marketplace has now become a focal point of religious and ethnic competition in several countries (Grimm and Finke 2011; Schlee 2010). Muslim consumers in many Western nations often are now viewed not only with reservation, but are seen by some as an 'advance guard' bent on taking over the traditional culture and replacing it with Sharia law (Kern 2012). Perhaps the most visible venue in which this scenario is playing out is the Boycott Halal Movement underway in several western nations (www.boycotthalal.com). Distributed primarily through social media such as Facebook and YouTube, the Boycott Halal Movement consists of websites, discussion forums and on-line petitions constructed around the certification of consumables as 'halal-compliant'. Owners and posters on these sites circulate information claiming that – among other things – non-Muslims in their counties are being forced to eat halal foods, because either no other foods are available or most foods available on store shelves are secretly halal.

The metaphorical implication of this seems to be that by *consuming* halal foodstuffs, non-Muslims will become contaminated with Sharia ideology and that their traditionally Judeo-Christian culture will become "Islamicized". On the websites to be discussed, this is often termed 'stealth jihad'.

Our research investigates the content of the anti-halal movement within the theoretical structures of ethno-religious conflict and political development put forward by Fox (1999) and Fukuyama (2011). As discussed below, Fox's proposals deal with issues of religious persecution and exclusion in which minority religious groups turn to confrontation and social disruption in order to obtain a larger share of social resources, which they believe are being withheld by the majority group. However, in the present case, we argue that it is members of the Christian majority who are presenting themselves as persecuted and excluded from marketplace resources. By doing so, they rhetorically are bidding for the higher moral ground in the conflict. By claiming to be victims of an aggressive global Muslim conspiracy to introduce Sharia law into their country, they seek political support from their fellow non-Muslims on both a global and local level.

After presenting and examining the validity of their claims, we next turn attention to two additional aspects of the research. First, following Fukuyama, we examine the phenomenon of Muslim-on-Muslim conflict in terms of intra-religious competition for economic resources and political power. Second, we examine the consumption-relevant content of historical religious persecutions, including Judaism, second and third century Christianity, twentieth century anti-semitism, and the Protestant Reformation. In each of these instances, we argue that very similar rhetoric is used by members of the dominant religion in a culture to vilify and demonize a religious minority.

3.0 Method

Using the search terms Boycott Halal, Halal Certification, anti-Halal, anti-Muslim, anti-Sharia, Sharia and Islamic Law, an internet search was conducted in English and French over a two year period. Approximately 40 websites were visited, most were located in Western nations such as Britain, France, Denmark, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. Website content was downloaded and printed to permit analysis. The research team is bi-gendered and multi-lingual with ancestry in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions. One member is from the United States, the other is from a North African nation and currently residing in France. All content was read by team members independently and then subjected to discussion.

Despite the team members' cultural divergence, the thematic categories we identified in the websites' content are highly consistent. They are listed below in Table One, together with supporting online-site documentation. After presenting the themes, we next consider alternative theoretical frameworks in which they can be interpreted. We then turn to a detailed discussion of ethno-religious conflict in historical perspective, noting that the *same ideological structure is repeatedly invoked* over time to justify religious persecution and that this ideological structure *is rooted in marketplace behaviors*.

Table One

Website Thematic Categories with Examples

•Non-Muslims are being forced to pay higher prices for food products in Western countries, because of the expense of halal-certification.

- 1 The Islamic Society of North America is a wahhabi-funded racket (boycotthalal,10/2/2014)
- 2 Dozens more... rogue Muslim certifiers are rushing to every type of processor in Australia threatening that their export markets will be canceled, unless they pay up. (barenakedislam,2014,11/12)
- 3 Schweppes Australia: We can confirm that our products are *not* halal certified....We do not pay for any certification nor make any contributions to halal organizations.
- 4 Do you shop at Morrisons? If you do, you are now directly funding Zakat in Great Britain. ...The zakat money will only benefit the 4.8% of Muslims in Britain. (boycotthalal, 2015, 3/15)

•Halal compliant products are not clearly marked and may be inadvertently purchased by non-Muslims.

- 5 My local Tesco's is selling halal-only with no labeling! (Lisa Hedges, April 22, 2012, boycotthalal)
- 6 I don't want to eat food that has a Satanic blessing said over it (Tahliae, Nov. 2014)

•Non-Muslim children in public schools are forced to eat halal foods. Pork products are removed from public school menus.

- 7 Pork sausages (bangers) being banned from school dinners (boycotthalal).
- 8 When are we going to see a stop to the Halal Industry taking away our freedom of choice in Britain? Halal food is spreading throughout Britain (boycotthalal)
- 9 Subway [brand] restaurants in Northern Ireland removed ham and bacon from 200 stores and sell only halal meat. (facebook. boycotthalal, 10/2/2014)
- 10 Halal meat is being mixed-in to the general food supply and even going to public school lunch programs...Just before Thanksgiving last fall we found out that Butterball turkeys are now Halal! (Leslie Burt, USA boycotthalal)

• Halal slaughter of animals is cruel and barbaric.

- 11 [Halal slaughter is] scummy, barbaric, inhumane! (Facebook. Boycotthalal. 10/2/2014)
- 12 Animal sacrifice is going on right under our noses in the good old USA. (facebook.boycotthalal .10/2/2014)
- 13 Stop the imposition of 7th century barbaric halal ritual slaughter...Animals deserve respect.(Boycotthalal)

• Local, regional and national government officials are more supportive of the Muslim minority community's needs than they are of the Judeo-Christian majority.

- 14 Vote for Christ! (Facebook. boycotthalal, 10/2/2014)
- 15 We now have found that halal have been granted Government contracts (facebook. boycotthalal, Britain 10/2/2014)
- 16 Photo of former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark wearing headscarf to address a Muslim group. Caption: She continues the tradition of New Zealand politicians selling their souls for the sake of multi-billion dollar worldwide halal trade. (Facebook. Boycott Halal, 10/2/2014.)

• Zakat (charity) funds from halal purchases are used to fund terrorism worldwide.

- 17 It's one of the five pillars of Islam. 20% of halal certification money goes directly to Islamic jihad. Robert Hitchcock, (Sept. 7, 2014 facebook. boycotthalal.)
- 18 Christian Broadcast Network reported that ...France's \$7 billion halal food industry has links to the Muslim Brotherhood. (counterjihad report)
- 19 Many of the thousands of kebab and schawarma shops operating in Spain and other parts of Europe may be using their business proceeds to finance global jihad in Syria and elsewhere (Linda Rivera, November 2014)
- 20 What is happening in Australia...has already been detected happening in Canada where \$14.5 million was found channeled to Hamas via sham charities (boycotthalal, 2015, Canada)..

•Halal products can only be manufactured, handled and transported by Muslims.

- 21 The Halal Industry marginalises British workers, because only devout Muslims are allowed to slaughter the meat (boycotthalal, 2014, Britain)

•Sharia law states that Muslims can have sex with farm animals, but these animals cannot then be eaten by Muslims.

- 22 Islamic dominance over animals is entrenched in the Koran where sexual gratification from an owner's livestock is permitted, but the Koran then instructs that the abused animal must not be eaten but can be sold for consumption to non-Muslims (boycotthalal, 2015, France).

•Islamic banks are loaning money to Western governments and will soon be powerful enough to demand Sharia law be instituted.

- 23 The promotion of halal products is a tool of Islamic mission (dawa) designed to Islamicize the non-Muslim world by bringing it under the authority of Sharia law. (counterjihad report, 2012/01/07)

•Judeo-Christian traditions are being removed from Western culture and public school systems. Muslims must be barred from Western society.

- 24 If we can smash halal certification...we will put a big hole in the power grab of the Islamic Movement. Parallel to this we need a total ban on Islamic immigration and the Niqab/Burqa and Sharia Law. We have to continue the struggle to ban the building of mosques. (Allan Ivarson, boycottthalal, Australia, Nov 2014.)
- 25 Australia does not need Islam...Australia was established as a Judeo-Christian country...and has been a beacon to the world when it comes to multiculturalism. Immigration also meant assimilation...Assimilation does not seem to be important anymore...We hear stories every day of Christians being persecuted and murdered by Islamist extremists....[Muslims] want to take over other nations and societies. (Muslimvillage, 2014/02/26)

4.0 Alternative Interpretive Frameworks

We now present and evaluate alternative theoretical frameworks for interpreting the themes identified in the data set. First, let us consider the settings of the collected commentaries. Importantly, most of the consumers participating in the anti-halal movement are situated in Western nations having large majority Christian populations. Accordingly, many of the anti-halal participants specifically identify themselves as Christian and position their opposition to halal products on religious grounds. In most of the countries represented in the consumer comments given above, the present Muslim population is below 5% of the citizenry. (The exception is France, where it is 8%). This suggests that ethno-religious conflict models may be appropriate as interpretive frameworks (see e.g., Horowitz 2000).

4.1 Cultural Dominance Theories

Several proponents of the anti-halal movement seem to be viewing the entry of Muslims and Muslim ideology into their social systems as a 'zero sum game' (Yang 2000); that is, even a small entry by members of another religion reduces the dominant religious 'brand's' hegemony. As Fox (1999) observes, this perception may lead the dominant religion, in this case Christianity, to assert claims of having cultural authenticity and state-sponsorship. Thus we see in the above consumer commentary claims that a given nation says Britain, has a "Judeo-Christian" heritage with a lengthy and accepted set of beliefs and practices. The adherents of the established faith make claims of *moral primacy* and desire to ensure their culture is not tainted by the intrusion of external ideologies.

Another underlying source of tension seems to be the notion that if a minority religious viewpoint is permitted to remain within one's national borders, it may over time 'seep into' the traditional culture and perhaps lure Christians away to Islam. This is the underlying concern consumers are expressing through the *food metaphor*. If halal food is ingested by non-Muslims, might it cause them to 'become' Muslim? They fear the answer may be 'yes' for some consumers, if we alter the conceptualization from physical food to ideological food. Analogously, suggestions are made by some of the consumer commentators that since Muslims are "permitted by the Koran to eat Christian or kosher food, if halal is not available", then Muslims should be willing (or required) to do so in a "predominately Judeo-Christian" country. The hope here seems to be that if 'we feed Muslims our food, they will assimilate' i.e., become like us.

This food = ideology equation is also why the *removal* of pork from school and restaurant menus is deemed threatening: Christians are permitted to eat pork; Muslims (and Jews) are not. Pork consumption, therefore, serves as a boundary marker to keep the non-Christians at arm's length. Indeed one consumer described how she "covers up all the halal meat at the market with pork and bacon – let them [i.e.,Muslims] try to dig through that!" and another stated that she "re-sanctified" all halal foods she came into contact with "by smearing them with pork fat" (boycottthalal, Britain 2015).

4.2 Resource Conflict Theories

Another set of themes expressed by participants in the anti-halal movement is consistent with resource conflict theories. These theories propose that inter-group conflict occurs when economic resources, for example, jobs, income, or property are deemed to be inequitably distributed across groups (Horowitz 2000). Usually resource conflict theories focus on demands by minority groups for a greater share of societal resources (Fox 1999; Schlee 2010).

A second group of resource conflict theories examine global struggles for scarce resources among nations (Mobasher and Lyon 2003). For example, there are contemporary struggles among nations for critical economic resources such as petroleum, natural gas, fresh water and rare earth minerals (Fukuyama 2011; Klare 2001).

Our analysis also identified themes related to *internal* economic issues of pricing, employment, distribution of charitable contributions and taxation. For example, halal-certification is claimed as increasing the price of products to *all* consumers, as well as the cost of manufacturing to producers of halal-certified goods. The anti-halal movement members additionally claim that any jobs connected to halal production, certification, and transport must employ only Muslim workers, therefore putting 'real-British', 'real-Australian' etc. citizens out of work. Further concerns are expressed that farmers, processors and transporters of pork products will lose their jobs, if halal certification becomes enforced on a nation-wide level.

A perhaps larger, but largely implicit, concern of those in the anti-halal movement is that the possession by Muslim countries of the world's largest oil reserves places Islam in a position of economic strength vis a vis Western nations, which are dependent upon petroleum to operate their economies. They fear that this dependence permits Muslim nations to 'buy' Western politicians and exert undue influence over governmental policies. We address this below.

4.3 Global Conspiracy to Control Capital Markets

The themes we identified in the anti-Halal movement include two that are related to notions of a global Islamic conspiracy with regard to capital markets. For example, several persons state that they believe their local and national politicians are 'bought' or 'controlled' by "Muslim money". Some also express the belief that the opening of Muslim financial institutions in their country, e.g., the Islamic Bank of Britain, will lead to a takeover of the national banking system by Muslims. Indeed, it is proposed by several anti-Halal movement leaders that an Islamic 'financial jihad' is already well underway and that, with the cooperation of 'bought politicians' in the West, Christian economies will soon be controlled by Muslims (see e.g., Kern 2015).

4.4 Moral Depravity and Barbarism

The final themes to be considered are those relating to halal meat preparation and accusations of bestiality. There are several rhetorical consistencies to the anti-halal discussion of meat preparation. Consistently, the anti-halal consumers refer to this practice as "halal slaughter", usually accompanied by descriptors such as cruel, inhumane, and barbaric. Images of cows, goats and sheep hanging from chains in the ceiling are shown on several websites. Other descriptors characterize the practice as 'animal sacrifice' and 'idolatry offerings', since a prayer is said at the moment of death. Halal meat preparation and Jewish kosher meat preparation are quite similar, both requiring that blood be drained from the animal at the moment of death. This is due to religious proscriptions regarding the consumption of blood, which is strongly forbidden in both religious traditions (Riaz 2003). Some commentary in the anti-Halal movement denounces this practice as an "outdated 7th century" tradition". The moral depravity theme is taken to even greater extremes by the (inaccurate) comment that the Koran permits the sexual molestation of livestock.

5.0 The Bi-Polar Aspects of Religious Demonization

Of significance to new theory construction is *why* such allegations are made. How do they fit-in to the overall pattern of resource conflict, cultural conflict and financial conspiracy theories discussed earlier? We propose that they strongly cohere with a *historically consistent pattern among competing religious groups* to 'demonize' competitive faiths. And we propose that this *demonization process* has two consistent ideological claims. First, the accusation is made that members of the competitive religion are *sub-human*, given to beast-like behaviors, bloodthirsty and lacking in moral comprehension. Second, the oppositional accusation also is made that the competitive religion is *super-human*, possessing great intellectual, economic and political power.

Notably, in all three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, *demons* are typically depicted as having this dual, evil nature – more physically and intellectually powerful than humans, but simultaneously lacking in empathy or any sense of kindness or caring about them.

Within the three Abrahamic faiths, demons (or Satan, Shaitan) are depicted as devising brilliant schemes to bring about human degradation and misery. We propose that just as the food = ideology metaphor underlies much of the anti-Halal Movement, the Muslims = demons metaphor is just as potently incorporated. We also propose that these same two metaphoric constructions underlie much of the history of Jewish/Christian/Muslim conflict and that by making them culturally visible and conscious, rather than hidden and masked, much of their power to create conflict may be removed.

Below we explore this line of reasoning using historical accounts of the three Abrahamic religions which, in turn, have been cast as demon and victim. And in each case, *consumption*, especially of food, plays a significant role.

5.1 Judaism and Seleucid Greece: the Maccabees.

As with Muslims, Jews have a distinctive set of dietary restrictions; these are set forth in the Book of Leviticus and include prohibitions against eating pork (Douglas 1964). At several times over their history, Jews faced demands that they assimilate to the surrounding, dominant culture and consume pork as a sign of obedience to the culture (Mitchell 2012). Jewish scriptures and Talmudic literature consistently forbid Jews to break their dietary laws, even at the cost of their own lives (Mitchell 2012). One early example of this stringent consumption norm is provided in the Maccabees (Moss 2013). The books of the Maccabees were written around 162 BC, a time period during which Palestine was ruled by the Seleucid Greeks.

The Greeks demanded that the Jews abandon both their monotheism and kosher dietary practices and assimilate to polytheistic Greek culture. According to the Maccabees text, when an elderly Jewish scribe, Eleazar, refused to consume pork, he was threatened with painful death. Eleazar chose torture and death, believing they were preferable to breaking Judaic law (Moss 2013). In the same narrative, a Jewish widow and her seven sons were made the same offer and steadfastly refused to consume pork. They too were killed. According to the text, the Greek governor then flew into such a rage, that he had the eldest son cut to pieces and fried in a pan. As Moss (2013, p. 51) notes, "The culinary overtones of the scene suggest the ideas of cannibalism and barbarism – a taboo in the ancient world, as today". What is a metaphoric key point in these examples is that not only are observant Jews portrayed as noble victims, but the Greek administrators are depicted as cruel and cannibalistic demons. Consumption serves as the demarcation line between morality and depravity.

5.2 Rome and Christianity

Many consumers (and consumer behavior theorists) rose as Christians in the West are taught that early adherents of Christianity were 'thrown to the beasts' in the colosseum, as pagan Romans looked on in delight (Ton 2000). Recently, however, religious historians have concluded that some of these claims were exaggerated by early Christian chroniclers in order to win converts to the new faith, because martyrdom promised automatic entry to heaven (Moss 2013). What is not commonly taught in contemporary Christian doctrine is the reason *why* the Romans were less tolerant of Christianity than they were of other contemporaneous faiths (such as Judaism and Zoroastrianism) in their conquered territories. The reason is that populist accounts (akin to the current internet anti-Halal commentary) in Roman society viewed Christianity as a *morally degraded religious sect* in which both incest and cannibalism were practiced during religious services (Moss 2013). Most available reports of this slander come not from Romans, but from early Christian advocates who were seeking to rebut the Roman claims (Moss 2013).

As Moss (2013, p. 181) states,

"The notions of incest and cannibalism first appear explicitly in Justin Martyr. Justin's version of the rumor describes how in the aftermath of a [Christian] feast someone would conveniently 'knock over' the lamp, leaving the room in darkness, so that the participants were able to drink human blood and have sex with one another without repercussion".

Two additional Christian chroniclers, Athenagoras (177 AD) and Minucius Felix (third century) write (quoted in Moss 2013, p. 182),

"Now the story about the initiation of novices...is well known. An infant is covered in flour and ...is placed before the one who is to be initiated into their rites. The novice [believing the object to be flour] kills the infant....They thirstily lap up the infant's blood...make a covenant over their sacrificial victim, and by complicity in the crime they bind themselves to mutual silence"

Why would such grotesque accounts be spread about the early Christians? Moss (2013) posits that they may arise from Roman misinterpretations of the metaphorical nature of the Christian writings, themselves. For example, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his followers, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink...Whoever eats me will live because of me" Notably, one of the major schisms in Christianity – that between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism-- developed in part because of the Catholic doctrine of *transubstantiation*, that is the belief that during holy communion, the wafer and the wine do, in fact, become the body and blood of Christ (Lynch 2014).

Moss (2013) proposes also that the early Christian practice of calling female Church members "sister" and male Church members "brother" may account for the Roman rumor that the religion practiced incest, for indeed Christian "brothers and sisters" would marry within their religious community. Charges of cannibalism and incest were used to make the early Christians seem undesirable as citizens and neighbors to the Romans, just as charges of animal cruelty and bestiality against Muslims do today.

5.3 Medieval Christians Charge Jews with "Blood Libel"

Moving forward in time, we find consumption-based demonization charges being made against Jews by Christians during the middle Ages. In the medieval European cities in which Jews resided, they were often charged with crimes of 'blood libel', which involved kidnapping Christian children and then using the children's blood to make Passover matzoh (Dundes 1992). The earliest of these ritual killings was claimed by a monk named Thomas of Monmouth (1144 AD) in Norwich England, which at the time had a large and prosperous Jewish community. Thomas stated that he found a Christian boy dead in the woods and laid the blame on local Jews. Several prominent Jews were then tortured and killed (Laquer 2006).

The charge of ritual human sacrifice for consumption purposes by Jews surfaced repeatedly in Europe throughout the middle Ages (Laquer 2006). The Anti Defamation League estimates that "over 100 charges of child murder and human sacrifice by Jews are claimed to have occurred since the Thomas of Monmouth event" (www.adl.com). These charges against Jews continued even into the twentieth century in the United States and included claims that Jews used the blood of Christian children as a medicine and aphrodisiac (Chanes 2004).

5.4 Christians Charge Jews with Global Economic Conspiracy

Perhaps the demonic consumption narrative most prominent in popular culture is the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, whose authorship is unknown and whose publication date is estimated to be between 1901 and 1920 (Cohn 1966). This booklet is purported to have been written by a secret conclave of world Jewish leaders during the late 1800s and contains statements regarding several consumption-related activities, for example alcoholism, financial manipulation and prostitution. At the time the narrative was likely written, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was either underway or nearing completion; some of its leaders or ideologists were of Jewish descent (e.g., Leon Trotsky, Karl Marx). There was widespread fear in the Western world that communism would spread beyond the boundaries of Russia and engulf the global economy (Cohn 1966), much as Islam is now purported to be doing by the anti-halal movement. The Introduction to the *Protocols* claims to be written by non-Jewish persons who obtained the minutes of a secret Jewish committee and are publishing them to "Warn the Gentile world" of the "Satanic sin" of the Jewish elders, who are plotting global economic collapse and a subsequent takeover of the world under Jewish rule.

The Introduction states that there is only one course of action to avoid this cataclysmic event: "there remains but one way – union of all Christians in Lord Jesus Christ and total extermination [of the Jews]". Hitler in his rise to power in post World War I Germany made skillful use of *The Protocols* to justify the genocide of European Jewry (Cohn 1966). But what do *The Protocols* say that is relevant for our present analysis of the anti-halal Movement? Actually, quite a substantial symmetry can be discerned between this tract and not only the anti-halal Movement, but the other historic incidences of consumption-based religious defamation previously discussed.

First, the main text of the *Protocols* narrative calls for the use by Jews of 'violence and intimidation', i.e., terrorism, (p. 1) against all Gentiles, though how this would be brought about by the small number of Jews present in Europe is not specified.

Perhaps anticipating these doubts among its readers, the narrative states that this can be accomplished by cultural weaknesses already introduced by Jews into Christendom: "The people of the Christians, bewildered by alcohol, their youths turned crazy by... early debauchery to which they have been instigated by our [Jewish] agents, tutors, servants, governesses in rich houses, clerks...by our [Jewish]women in places of amusement [this may mean female Jewish performers or perhaps prostitutes]" will be easily overcome by Jewish control of the economic system. This, notably, is the same charge presently leveled against the 'stealth financial jihad' attributed to Islam.

The Jewish Elders are also said to be aiming at "establishing a new aristocracy based on wealth, of which we [Jews] have control, and on science promoted by our [Jewish] scholars" (p. 8) "by playing on our victims' weakness for profits, on their greed, and on the material requirements of man (p. 8)." The narrative then turns to Jewish plans for creating "a universal economic crisis by all possible underhand means and with the help of gold, which is all in our hands (p. 14)."

The Epilogue, claimed as with the Introduction to be authored by concerned non-Jews, returns to the same call to Christian action given in the Introduction: "The King born of the blood of Zion – the Anti-Christ – is near to the throne of universal power...The Light of Christ alone and that of his Holy Universal Church can penetrate into the Satanic depths". It ends with a call to unite Christianity against this "unholy threat" (pp. 94 – 95).

The *Protocols* is under 100 pages long, repetitive in its claims, and provides no details, names, or dates as to when or how the threats it recites are to be enacted. What it does do, however, is reiterate the same accusations that we have described earlier with regard to the anti-halal Movement – i.e., these violent and crafty strangers are invading our culture with plans to dominate us. They are sexually deviant; they are trying to impoverish us; they will remove our freedoms and require us to live under their repressive form of government. They seek to "devour" us – body and soul.

6.0 Clash of Cultures or Historical Continuity?

The intellectual temptation when attempting to understand a phenomenon like the Boycott Halal Movement is to see it as 'new and different', something that has not occurred before, a novel event in the consumption arena. However, as theorists we often have short memories – only events occurring in our own lifetimes seem to play a role in contemporary understandings of consumer behavior; we fail to historicize, to take a long-term view of the phenomenon at hand. By reviewing earlier consumption-based tensions among the three Abrahamic religions, we hope to show how the themes and charges made in the contemporary anti-Halal Movement echo those made in prior time periods.

Consumer behavior and the marketplace are often intimately involved in these types of religious conflict, precisely because they provide a *tangible site* for the negative charges to be made. It is difficult to peer into individuals' hearts and know their inner-most ideals, but it is relatively easy to observe what those same individuals may eat, drink, and wear. When these items of consumption are believed to bear witness to their user's degraded beliefs and values, they can serve as powerful markers for social segregation and persecution.

When these markers become used by the state, as well as the citizenry, to draw divisions among religions, they gain a legitimacy that is hard, if not impossible, to thwart. Echoing the warning of Fukuyama (2011) given at the opening of this inquiry, Finke and Harris (2012), comment, "Religion can determine residential location, employment opportunities and social stigmatization (p. 56)", especially if such pressures are tacitly endorsed by the state. As pressure to conform to the dominant group's consumption patterns increases, the minority group often turns inward for social support and collective action, often becoming increasingly willing to resort to extreme forms of retaliation, including violence (see Grim and Finke 2011; Finke and Harris 2012).

In the 1990s, Samuel Huntington in his now classic writings on politics, religion and economics (Huntington 1993, 1996) put forward a "clash of cultures" thesis. Huntington argued that the Christian West would find itself at odds with the Muslim Middle East in the post-Cold War global political environment.

Huntington proposed that in the absence of Super Power governance across the world, religious and ethnic minorities would re-assert their identities and political boundaries would be re-formed along these ideological fault lines.

Based on this projected scenario, Huntington recommended the pursuit of *cultural homogeneity* (1993; 1996) as the most viable means of reducing global conflict. This world-view is largely consistent with that advocated by the anti-Halal Movement. The Movement's ultimate goals are to eliminate the Muslim presence in Christian nations by convincing the state and the rest of the citizenry that Muslims represent a dire cultural and economic threat, or failing that, to prevent Muslims from exercising their religion by making halal food practices difficult to follow. In other words, the aim is to strongly pressure these new-arrivals to assimilate to the dominant "Judeo-Christian" culture.

However, a more historically-informed approach would be to educate the public that charges similar to those now being directed toward Muslims were earlier directed toward Christians and Jews. Each of these religions has been slandered with the same false charges of demonic behaviors. Using the marketplace of ideas to show that such charges are, at basis, attempts at maintaining cultural hegemony by those in power may be useful in reducing their potency.

6.0 References

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