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Globalization and Religion: The Influential Six-Pack

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Abstract: This essay examines some aspects of the influence globalization has had on organized religion in general and on Christianity in particular. This study uses six areas of influence from an essay by Liselotte Frisk. That essay notes that globalization moves religion from the particular to the eclectic, from dogma to experience, from the collective to the personal/individual, from the hierarchical to egalitarian, from the theological to the anthropological, and from an other-worldly perspective to a this-worldly view. Suggestions for Lutheran Christianity's constructive response to these trends are offered for study and action.

Introduction

A recent essay by Lawrence Rast, Concordia Theological Seminary president, examined the pedagogical implications of globalization for pastoral formation in the twenty-first century.¹ Other studies have also examined the effect of globalization on specific religions.² This study will limit itself to interacting with the six points made by Liselotte Frisk in an essay about religious changes related to globalization to see



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the influence globalization has had on religion in general and Christianity in particular.³

Globalization

Though there is no consensus on the beginning of globalization, some feel that globalization began in the 1800s.⁴ Globalizing trends (increased economic and intellectual interaction by the West with the non-Western world, interest in Eastern religions, the industrial revolution, cross-cultural communication, and the rise of the Global South), already evident in the later part of the nineteenth century, continued to grow in prominence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵ A globalized world means a “multicultural, pluralist, interdependent, and interconnected world.”⁶ Our current global health crisis reminds us of how interconnected the world and all its citizens truly are!

Frisk writes that globalization is not the only factor but is “one of the key factors” and “a major cause” of religious change, along with “other aspects of modernization.” Frisk lists six interconnected points relating to globalization that help to move religion from (1) the particular to the eclectic, (2) doctrine to experience, (3) the collective to the individual/personal, (4) the hierarchical to the egalitarian, (5) the theological to the anthropological, and (6) from an after-death perspective to a this-life perspective.⁷

I. From Particular to Eclectic

A particularistic view of religion distinguishes its beliefs from the beliefs of other faiths, leading to the view that only one religion—ours—is true. For Frisk, globalization helps to move people away from viewing their religion as the only true religion, to viewing other religions with “extreme tolerance.” Such a view leads to the perspective that all religious and spiritual beliefs are “relative,” and all have part of the truth. This eclectic view sees religious differences as “vague” and “unimportant” so that elements of various religions can be blended together often “without awareness” that this mixture has occurred.⁸ This blending of beliefs is “one of the major global trends in religion.”⁹

The mixing of different beliefs is illustrated by studies which show that in the United States “religious faith is often eclectic, idiosyncratic, and syncretistic, inconsistently . . . mixing together elements as diverse as belief in infant baptism, interest in horoscope predictions, and the collection of religious kitsch.”¹⁰

“A researcher asked a college graduate what her religious preference was. ‘Methodist, Taoist, Native American, Quaker, Russian Orthodox, and Jew,’ she replied. . . . Traditional scholars describe this as ‘cafeteria-style’ or ‘supermarket’ spirituality. Others, better disposed to it, prefer the more dignified term ‘trans-

religiosity.”¹¹ This syncretistic blending of different religious and spiritual teachings creates “a new belief system.”¹²

The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) interviewed 3,390 youth and adults and followed up by personal in-depth interviews with 267 youth. These interviews revealed evidence of the mixing of different beliefs. The data indicated that a majority of the respondents of all religious faiths and even of those who were not religious, believed that (1) God created the world and watches over it, (2) God wants all people to be good—an idea taught in almost all religions, (3) life’s goal is to be happy and to feel good about oneself, (4) God isn’t involved in the daily lives of human beings unless there is a problem to be solved, and (5) that good people go to heaven when they die.¹³

Operating specifically with the responses of the 267 teens interviewed, researchers found that of those 267 teens, only nine spoke of love for God, and fewer than nine talked of righteousness, Christ’s or the Christian’s resurrection, salvation, the Kingdom of God, the Trinity, God’s grace, the Bible as holy, holiness, or God’s justice. None of the 267 teens spoke of justification, being justified, sanctification, or being sanctified.¹⁴ These results led the researchers to conclude (1) that the majority of the respondents had lost the experience of “Trinity, holiness, sin, grace, justification, sanctification, church, Eucharist, and heaven and hell,” and that (2) for these respondents the language, doctrines, and ideas of Christianity had been supplanted “by the language of happiness, niceness, and an earned heavenly reward,” and that (3) Christianity was being “colonized and displaced” by a “different religious faith.” These conclusions were primarily based on the responses from the number of Christian teens that were interviewed. Those responses also led the researchers to conclude “that a significant part of Christianity in America is actually only tenuously Christian in any sense that is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition.”¹⁵

But Christianity is not the only religion being colonized and mixed with different beliefs. Smith and Denton concluded that the “popular religious faith” of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is not only stealthily colonizing Christianity, but is also colonizing many other historical religious traditions and is converting members of those religious traditions to an “alternative religious vision” which is made to appear like it is part of the religious tradition of which one is a member.¹⁶

II. From Dogma (Doctrine) to Experience

Frisk sees globalization evident because of the “many different belief systems” that “coexist side by side.”¹⁷ This is seen in the increasing number of mosques and other non-Christian religious buildings in America. This multiplicity of religions with their conflicting doctrines and practices contributes to the belief that no particular religion or spirituality is exclusively true.

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For example, one religion teaches that a person gains heaven by God’s grace through faith in Christ and another teaches reincarnation. Both cannot be true. These different contending dogmatic “truths” often lead to undermining “the plausibility of all belief systems.” What have many religious people done as a result of this conflict? Often it has led them to change their “focus away from dogmas and belief systems to other aspects of religion” or spirituality. Hence, objective dogmatic teachings of the faith fade from prominence, and the subjective experience of one’s faith gains in prominence, and ultimately becomes “the most important aspect of contemporary religion.”¹⁸ This perspective also promotes the idea that all religions lead to the same God since similar subjective experiences are shared by Christians and non-Christians alike.¹⁹

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While recognizing that Christians can be a mixture of the following perspectives, Stephen Prothero classified Christians today as belonging to three basic groups: confessionalists, experientialists, and moralists. The smallest of these groups are the “confessionalists who emphasize above all else Christianity’s doctrinal dimension.” These Christians write doctrinal books, issue doctrinal statements, preach doctrinal sermons, argue about doctrine, and dispute doctrinal differences held by different church denominations. For Prothero, the two largest groups are the experientialists and the moralists. The experientialists emphasize “encountering God via the emotions.” In this group one would find the Pentecostals, and others for whom the emotions and feelings of religion and worship are prominent—(How did the sermon/service make you feel? How do you feel about Jesus? Did you feel the music today?). The moralists emphasize Christianity’s “moral dimension.” These Christians emphasize the importance of social stands on subjects like abortion, the environment, homosexuality, gay marriage, saving the whales, and the like. Dogmatic theology is of little importance for those in the two major groups.²⁰

Others have observed this displacement of the Bible and its doctrines as the foundation for the Christian faith, and their being supplanted by a number of things, including the Christian’s personal experience.²¹ This trend toward the importance of personal experience is evident in the increased emphasis on charismatic experience, and the rise of the importance of feelings in worship and religious practice.²² Scholars have termed Pentecostalism as “one of the ‘four faces’ of global culture.”²³ Other scholars have noted that “Pentecostal forms of Christianity are . . . the United States’ most successful global export.”²⁴ “The Age of the Spirit is best understood as a Christianity based in an ‘experience of Jesus.’” The “Age of the Spirit is nondogmatic, noninstitutional, and nonhierarchical.”²⁵

This experiential trend is also evident in practicing spirituality rather than religion, for true spirituality occurs when “you discover in your own experience some sliver of the ineffable.”²⁶ This movement away from an emphasis on doctrine and towards the Christian’s personal experience is a shift in the history of Christianity. The three ecumenical creeds, the Canons of the Council of Trent, the Lutheran Confessions, the various confessional statements of the Reformed, and many other doctrinal statements throughout Christian history are evidence of the importance of doctrine for historic Christianity. Today’s emphasis away from doctrine to common religious experiences across faith lines blurs doctrinal differences and leads to the perspective that all faiths are equal in validity. Pentecostalism appears to have become the dominant form of Christianity today.

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III. From Collective to Personal

A traditional view of religion places greater emphasis on the gathered group (congregation, denomination), on being part of the whole, rather than emphasizing the individual.²⁷ One of the elements of globalization is the strong emphasis on individualism. Traditional religions which were formerly “a realm of the collective” have now had the collective replaced “by a spiritual quest that is more individualized.”²⁸ Thus, globalization fuels an emphasis on individuals rather than on institutions. This has led to a decline in personal deference to many institutions including religious ones. For Frisk, globalization “favors the privatization” of religion, thus making it more difficult for it to gain public influence.²⁹ This rise in antipathy to organized religion has contributed to the decline in denominational loyalty, to more individualized spirituality, and to alternative religions and New Religious Movements (NRMs).³⁰ As one author noted, NRMs “sprout from globalization like plants from the earth.”³¹ Antipathy to organized religion has also helped fuel the rise in independent congregations with little or no ties to a religious denomination.

Those who identify themselves as spiritual but not religious have “disdain for so-called organized religion.”³² For many in the twenty-first century, the “highest good is individual freedom, happiness, self-definition, and self-expression.” Institutions “of external authority” like the organized church “are rejected and personal authenticity is lauded.”³³ Thus, globalization helps to fuel the trend recognized by Richard John Neuhaus already in the 1980s of the attempts at privatizing religion and relegating it to some safe place outside of the public square.³⁴

The emphasis on individualism in religious and spiritual beliefs undermines the corporate nature of the Christian faith. The balance between gathering together and

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one's individual faith is disturbed in the current climate of individualism in matters of faith. This emphasis on individualism in one's faith has led to a lessening of the authority of the Bible in the Christian's life, an indifference to the understanding and knowledge of the doctrines of one's Christian denominational faith (deeds, not creeds), a downturn in fidelity to the Christian faith in contradistinction to other religions or spiritualities, and to the growth of independent non-denominational congregations.

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IV. From Hierarchical to Egalitarian

A religious hierarchy is an organized ecclesiastical body that most often exercises authority from the top down. Globalization has engendered "contempt for . . . all hierarchies."³⁵ It has contributed to an emphasis on "populist" spirituality and away from a hierarchical view of religion. Frisk describes this as the "liberal option" which is linked to the perspective of a global society where no one is an outsider, but all are neighbors. The liberal option in religion sees the possibility of salvation and enlightenment in all religions, a view that is seen as being both egalitarian and "democratic."³⁶

This egalitarian position, seeing salvation in all religions, is a form of universalism. Globalization is one of a number of factors that have contributed to the dramatic rise of universalism in Christian and other religious circles in more recent times. The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* has also significantly influenced the rise of universalism.³⁷

Many Christians today believe that salvation is possible in almost all religions. Of the Lutherans surveyed in the 1998 Lutheran Brotherhood survey, 65% said that although "there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God."³⁸ Of the Lutherans surveyed in the 1972 *Study of Generations*, 72% agreed with that same statement.³⁹ Of the ELCA Lutherans surveyed in the 2008 leaders' survey, 70% believed that it "is possible for a faithful follower of any religion, including Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, to find the truth about God through that religion."⁴⁰ However, these non-Christian faiths are not centered in salvation by God's justifying grace received through faith in Christ. What happens when Christianity becomes "just one more religion in the marketplace of religions"? Then Jesus and His justifying grace fade "into the background."⁴¹ What then is the basis for the salvation of those in non-Christian religions if not by God's grace through faith in Christ?

Part of the answer to that question is found in the above surveys. The Lutherans in those surveys struggled with belief in the doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith in Christ apart from the works of the law with 60% believing that the main emphasis of the Gospel is on "God's rules for right living."⁴² One other study indicated that 73% of the Lutherans surveyed believed that if a good person does "enough good things for others, he or she will earn a place in heaven."⁴³

This devaluation of the doctrine of justification is evident in the rest of Christendom as well. Of the American Christian teens mentioned above, 61% indicated they believed "that a good person can earn eternal salvation through good deeds."⁴⁴ The interviews conducted by Christian Smith and Melinda Denton led Smith to conclude that it is "unbelievable the proportion of conservative Protestant teens who do not seem to grasp elementary concepts of the gospel concerning grace and justification. Their view is: be a good person."⁴⁵

Studies by religious sociologists indicate that the majority belief of Americans today is Golden Rule religion/Golden Rule Christianity. Christians espousing this theology feel that religious experiences are important for their faith life, and have little feel for doctrine, but they believe that living a virtuous life is the essence of their faith. Being a good person will gain one a blessed afterlife.⁴⁶

This movement away from forensic justification had its modern genesis in Karl Holl's analytic understanding of justification. It has been growing since the 1973 LWF document on justification and has continued with the rise of New Perspectives on Paul (NPP), the Finnish interpretation of Luther, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, and Golden Rule theology.⁴⁷

The lack of a solid grounding in the doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ apart from the deeds of the law opens the door to the acceptance of universalistic and works-oriented theology. Who needs justifying faith when all with or without faith in Christ will be saved by simply being as good as one can be, or simply by being born?

The lack of a solid grounding in the doctrine of justification . . . opens the door to the acceptance of universalistic and works-oriented theology.

As one writer noted, religion is now experiencing the decline of doctrinal orthodoxy because the focus has shifted from the corporate to the individual and from dogma to "personal ethical concerns." For many, the church has now changed into being a place where human beings can work out their own salvation.⁴⁸ Globalization has lessened the importance and understanding of doctrine for many (especially the doctrine of justification), has influenced the trend towards individualism in matters of faith, and given rise to universalistic theology, a study of the influence of globalization on the doctrine of justification appears necessary.

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V. From Theological to Anthropological

Frisk sees globalization leading people away from the theological to a more anthropological view of religion and spiritual beliefs. Matters of salvation are viewed as “more of an inner realization than related to an outward divinity.” This is a “self-sacralization” trend which is characteristic of popular spirituality. This “radical emphasis” on human beings makes religion and spirituality more secular.⁴⁹ Some scholars note that most NRMs hold the human being sacred and “sanctify things human,” using Enlightenment teachings which make “the human being and the material world the starting point of all else.”⁵⁰

This trend has also led to attempts to redefine religion and spirituality in ways that do not involve a deity. The emphasis on spirituality without God arose at “the end of the nineteenth century,” and has gained ever greater influence to the present day.⁵¹ This type of spirituality includes “systems of thought and practice that cover much of the ethical, intellectual, and experiential ground of religions but reject [the idea of a deity,] religious dogmas and institutions.”⁵² This idea was emphasized by the death of God movement also known as Christian Atheism, which has had a recent revival. Schilling notes that one of its theologians, Thomas J. J. Altizer, holds that the “sacred has been replaced by the profane, the God of grace by the gracious neighbor.”⁵³

The influence of globalization is evident in modern Christian universalism which is “a religion of humanity,” having reconstructed “the doctrine of God in this-worldly terms.”⁵⁴ Scientism and sometimes science have their own spirituality, and for some, a quality almost like religion.⁵⁵ At least six science-fiction-based religions have arisen in the last fifty years.⁵⁶

The emphasis on life in this world leads to understanding of reversing global warming, saving the environment, advocating for universal health care, engaging in politics, and the like, as spiritual quests and even as secular substitutes for religion.⁵⁷ These may be good things for Christians to do, but the question remains: are they truly spiritual quests? Are they worthy replacements for religion? Today spirituality seems tied to everything—there is the spirituality of photography and anorexia, as well as the quest for spirituality in higher education and much more.⁵⁸

Lutherans and other Christians have an incarnational theology. God was clothed in human flesh in the birth of Jesus Christ. The triune God created the physical world in which we live. Christians are to celebrate and thank God for the physical blessings He gives. However, an overemphasis on the earthly and physical blessings leads to viewing people and the created world as sacred. The fact of Christ’s divinity is easily lost with an overemphasis on His humanity. Christians should heed the advice of S. Paul Schilling that Christians need “to resist the temptation to make God wholly secular or human.”⁵⁹

VI. From After-Death to This-Worldliness

According to Frisk, globalization has contributed to viewing religion as being much more about this world rather than about the world to come. Nature and “intimate relationships are seen as sacred.” Hence an emphasize on the concept of holy mother earth. Popular spirituality allows for personal gratification and has set aside “subjects like punishment, hell, damnation, and demonology.” This trend is also visible in institutionalized religion. Frisk notes that a this-worldly view of religion and spirituality has made it much more difficult to identify what is good and what is evil, thus “undermining” and “relativizing” extant moral codes.⁶⁰

Ross Douthat has also written about the influence of globalization, recognizing it has led to this-worldly “theologies that emphasized the divinity of the self,” and to Christianity’s “turn from the supernatural to the natural, from theology to anthropology, and from the Kingdom of God to the City of Man.” Douthat wrote about theologians who taught that the Gospel was a call to “secularity,” and that God wanted each human being “to be interested not in Him but in his fellow man.”⁶¹ Globalization’s this-worldly view has thus led to making sacred the “profane” and making profane the “sacred.”⁶²

Globalization’s tendency to emphasize the sacredness of close personal relationships has led to concepts like the spirituality and sacredness of sex.⁶³ Other aspects of life are increasingly seen as religious. One scholar has described contemporary sociology as a secularized religion because it has established the “*emancipation, equality, and moral affirmation of all human beings as autonomous, self-directing, individual agents.*”⁶⁴

Frisk sees globalization leading not to the death of God but rather to “the death of the devil.”⁶⁵ In light of the previous section and the rise of religions and spiritualities without a deity, it would perhaps be more accurate to note that globalization can lead both to the death of God and to the death of the devil (right and wrong). Further study of Frisk’s perspective should be pursued.

The two-kingdom theology of Lutheran Christianity is a hedge against the excessive emphasis on the things of this world. Christians live in two kingdoms: the state/world and the church. Christians have duties and responsibilities in both. The calling and vocation of the Christian occurs in both kingdoms and helps provide a balance to offset any overemphasis on things material.

Conclusion

For those viewing religion through the lens of emotion or experience, who believe that all religions lead to the same God and to the same end, the above trends, influenced by globalization, will be viewed in a positive light, as will the rise of new religious movements and spiritualities, and the movement away from organized religion. The

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trend toward viewing all religions as capable of granting salvation has led to a dramatic rise in the acceptance of religious universalism even among more conservative Christian denominations and theologians. Adherents of these ideas will view these religious trends positively.

However, these trends will be viewed differently by religious believers and church denominations still holding specific dogmatic religious beliefs, denominations like the LCMS.

This study has shown that globalization has, in the six areas noted, significantly impacted organized religion and Christianity in particular. This study has not attempted to explore the religious backlash against globalization, nor has it attempted to study any other aspects of globalization's influence on religion aside from the six mentioned by Frisk in her essay.

Recognition of globalization's impact is important for Christianity's continuing mission. Christianity is a global religion and has always had to adapt to meet changing circumstances and to address differing theologies and spiritualities with the faith once delivered to the saints.

How should the Christian Church, with God's help, address and hopefully offset the changes in religion noted by Frisk in her essay? That task begins with the teaching that Christ died to save people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. God's justifying grace in Jesus Christ needs to be at the center of our faith for it will empower our response.⁶⁶

Christians need to study globalization's effect on the church's theology, and the teachings and trends which have given rise to alternative religions, so that they can more effectively address these trends, witness boldly to those who hold faulty beliefs about Christianity, and who follow the tenets of alternative religions. These studies are important because the above-mentioned faulty beliefs are held by some of the parishioners in church bodies that adhere to fixed theological beliefs like the LCMS. Members and clergy of LCMS were also among those surveyed in a number of the Lutheran surveys noted above. Members of the LCMS have also been influenced by globalization.

Courses on globalization and its positive and negative effects on religious beliefs should be taught at our LCMS seminaries to offset globalization's negative effects on the students.⁶⁷

Bible studies addressing the influence of globalization need to be produced, along with books, articles in religious and lay journals, and perhaps several CTCR documents. Conferences on globalization and a Christian response to it should also be held. Sound doctrinal studies on the basics of Christian doctrine and the importance of doctrine should be written as a foil to the negative effects of globalization. Biblically

sound apologetic, witnessing, and evangelism tools need to be developed which are aimed specifically at the issues noted above.

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Special attention should be given to the doctrine of justification, the Christian's social responsibilities in the world, Christian ethics, the uniqueness of the Christian faith, the Christian's role as a steward of the planet, the proper place of experience in the Christian's life, the doctrine of the Church, the importance of both the corporate nature of the Church, the Body of Christ, and the individual Christian's faith and the proper balance of the two, studies combatting universalism, a proper distinction between the sacred and the profane, an understanding that the Christian's life in this world is a holy calling and vocation in two kingdoms, studies on charismatic Pentecostalism, and a sermon series countering the six points in this essay. Our Synod continues to produce comparative religious studies and evangelism materials that address specific belief systems.⁶⁸ Such materials will continue to address the need for resources which respond biblically to beliefs and ideas associated with globalization in order to increase the Church's ability to effectively share the gospel of Christ in a global world on the basis of confessional Lutheran theology and God's Word.

Endnotes

¹ Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., "Pastoral Formation in the 21st Century: The Pedagogical Implications of Globalization," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 83, no. 1–2 (January/April 2019): 137–156.

² Steven M. Studebaker, ed., *Pentecostalism and Globalization: The Impact of Globalization on Pentecostal Theology and Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010); Mikael Rothstein, ed., *New Age Religion and Globalization* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2001); Birgit Shaebler and Leif Stenberg, eds., *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 2018).

³ Liselotte Frisk, "Globalization: A Key Factor in Contemporary Religious Change," *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies* 5 (2009): i–xiv. Also available at <http://files.asanas.org.uk/005Frisk.pdf>.

For some of Frisk's other work in English on these subjects, see Liselotte Frisk, "Globalization," in George D. Chrystides and Benjamin E. Zeller, eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 273–278; Liselotte Frisk, "Globalization or Westernization? New Age as a Contemporary Transnational Culture," in Rothstein, *New Age Religion and Globalization*, 31–41; Liselotte Frisk and Peter Nynas, "Characteristics of Contemporary Religious Change: Globalization, Neoliberalism, and Interpretative Tendencies," in Peter Nynas, Mika Lassander, and Tehri Utriainen, eds., *Post-Secular Society* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 47–70.

This is an exhaustively annotated essay. For that reason, we have posted the remaining endnotes on the Lutheran Society for Missiology's website (<https://lsfm.global>).

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Endnotes

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These endnotes accompany the article in *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 1 (2020), 102–112.

4. David Northrup, “Globalization in Historical Perspective,” Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems, <http://www.eolss.net/Sample-Chapters/C04/E6-94-16.pdf>.

5. Manfred P. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Brief Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15–16, 83, 194–195, 213, 217, 243–246, 271–276; A. R. Victor Raj, *The Hindu Connection: Roots of the New Age* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995).

6. Colin Green and Martin Robinson, *Metavista: Bible, Culture and Mission in an Age of Imagination* (Colorado Springs/Hyderabad: Authentic Media, 2008), 224. See also 15–20, 185, 190, 223–235. The authors state that a globalized world “is not a world to be feared” by the Church, 224. Ross Douthat has written about the influence of “a *global perspective*” by which “more and more Americans viewed the world.” Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 73.

7. Frisk, “Globalization,” iii–vii, x, xiii–xiv. See endnote 2.

8. Frisk, “Globalization,” iv–v.

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9. Sudhir Kale, “Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization,” *The Journal of Macromarketing* 24, no. 2 (December 2004):102.
10. Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168.
11. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 97. See also Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 76–78; Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 228–229.
12. Kale, “Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization,” 102.
13. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 292, 118, 162–163. Those interviewed came from almost every Christian denomination (Protestant, Roman Catholic, etc.), Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientist, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American, Unitarian-Universalist, Wiccan, and some who were not religious. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 308–310.
14. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 167.
15. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 171. Smith and Denton note that the “vast majority of teenagers” in the United States today “identify themselves as Christians.” Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 260.
16. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 171. Donavon Riley, *Crucifying Religion: How Jesus Is the End of Religion* (Irvine, CA: 1517 Publishing, 2019), 40–45.

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17. Frisk, “Globalization,” v. See also Diane L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

18. Frisk, “Globalization,” v. Ross Douthat also noted that globalization led to “the basic doctrines of the Christian faith” becoming “suspect.” Globalization also influenced a growing “wariness about” Christianity’s “exclusive truth claims,” and contributed to a sharp decline in religious people having an interest in “what their particular confession believed.” Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 76–77.

19. John Hick’s book on universalist theology emphasizes, from his perspective, the fact that Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus share common phenomenological experiences as they worship a higher reality, the creator of the world. John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 22–25, 42, 49–54, 59, 67–72, 78–95, 98, 102–115, 130.

20. Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 150–151. In a lengthy footnote, Prothero refers to other scholars who classify Christians into similar categories. Prothero, *Religious Literacy*, 344, fn. 218. Nancy Ammerman found that the most prominent characteristic of the religious identity of those she studied was their ethical or moral way of living. Golden Rule religion was regularly cited as the faith of those within various faith systems or even outside of it, 73% of the respondents spoke of their spirituality in terms of morality. Nancy T. Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 214, 25. Also 2–3, 44–46, 207–225, 249, 297.

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21. Mark Sayers, *The Disappearing Church: From Cultural Relevance to Gospel Resilience* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2016), 12.
22. Bryan Wolfmuehler, *Has American Christianity Failed?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 11–37, 118–140.
23. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, “Expanding World Culture: Pentecostalism as a Global Movement,” in Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, eds., *The Globalization Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 388; Karla Poewe, *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); Fenggang Yang, Joy K. C. Tong, and Allan H. Anderson, eds., *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Brill, 2017).
24. Jeffrey Kaplan, “New Religious Movements and Globalization,” in Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft, eds., *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America Volume 1: History and Controversies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 108.
25. Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of the Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 109. See also 120–128, 209–214.
26. Prothero, *Religious Literacy*, 146. Those who are spiritual rather than religious emphasize feelings and experiences, are “wary of doctrines,” are “focused on personal experiences,” and see those spiritual experiences as “universal” to all faith traditions. Peter Heehs, *Spirituality Without God: A Global History of Thought and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 12–13. Some like William James and Raja Yoga view religious experience in all religious and spiritual forms (Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) as the basis for religion. Heehs, *Spirituality Without God*, 196–197, also 207–210.

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27. The “traditional pattern” of Christianity “assumes a certain priority of the religious community over the individual. The Christian community exists before the individual is born and will continue after his or her death. The relationship of the individual to God is ultimately personal, but it is mediated” through the religious community. There is a givenness about the religious community and its traditions. They are not a “matter of individual choice.” Bellah et al., *Habits*, 227, also 235–237.

28. Kale, “Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization,” 100; also 92, 101–102.

29. Frisk, “Globalization,” v–vi. See also Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: SAGE Publications, 1994), 70–81; Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

30. Frisk, “Globalization,” iii–iv. See also Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 8, 96, 115, 143–147, 189, 257, 262, 268; Afe Adogame, “Globalization and African New Religious Movements In Europe,” in Ogbu U. Kalu and Alaine Low, eds., *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 296–316. Elizabeth Arweck, “Globalization and New Religious Movements,” in Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman, eds., *Religion, Globalization, and Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 253–280; Peter Beyer, *Religions in Global Society* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 254–298; Armin W. Geertz and Margit Warburg, eds., *New Religions and Globalization* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2008).

Douthat also notes this decline in denominational loyalty. Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 77, 93, 80. Also Bellah et al., *Habits*, 232–234.

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31. Luke M. Herrington, “Globalization and Religion in Historical Perspective: A Paradoxical Relationship,” in *Religions* 4, no. 1 (March 2013): 162.

32. Prothero, *Religious Literacy*, 146.

33. Sayers, *The Disappearing Church*, 17.

34. Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984).

35. James Kurth, “Religion and Globalization,” *A Review of Faith & International Affairs* 7, no. 2 (April 2008): 15.

36. Frisk, “Globalization,” vii.

37. Michael McClymond, “Opiate of the Theologians,” *First Things*, no. 298 (December 2019): 27–32. This article examines why many Christian theologians have embraced universalism. For *Lumen Gentium*, see Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 14–96. The American Universalist Association has stated that “there has been a trend toward universalist beliefs” in religious denominations that formerly were not universalistic but now are much more so. “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is one of the best examples of this [trend].” “The History of Universalism, Part Two,” <https://christianuniversalist.org/resources/articles/history-of-universalism-part-2/>.

The trends which have contributed to the rise of the acceptance of religious universalism in the twentieth century are the result of a number of factors, many of which are associated with globalization. Globalization enables people from different nationalities, ethnicities, and religious beliefs, or none, to live close to one another, giving

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Westerners greater knowledge of other cultures and religious beliefs. Increasingly people asked, “are good adherents of other religions condemned to hell?” The rise of atheistic and spiritual versus religious beliefs, and NRMs raised such questions as well. The rise of ecumenical contact with other religions lessened adherence to doctrine. Vatican II and its “expression of hope for the salvation of all” has gained prominence in many other Christian traditions. Morwenna Ludlow, “Universalism in the History of Christianity,” in Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge, eds., *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 210–212.

“On the question of Christianity’s relationship to other religions, meanwhile, a spirit of universalism carried the day,” as did the thought that all religions are “basically true,” and that “people of any faith could go to heaven.” Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 77–78.

The deep influence of universalistic theology in Christendom is evident in Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). Essays in this book were written by John Hick, Clark H. Pinnock, Alister McGrath, R. Douglas Geivett, and W. Gary Phillips. This book was formerly titled *More Than One Way?*

38. *Lutheran Brotherhood Survey of Lutheran Beliefs & Practices, Summer 1998* (np: Lutheran Brotherhood, 1998), 3. Hereinafter LBSLBP.

39. Merton P. Strommen et al., *A Study of Generations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 171.

40. Kenneth W. Inskeep, “Lutherans Say . . . No. 6—The Religious Beliefs and Practices of Lutheran Lay Leaders in the ELCA.” http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Lutherans_Say_6.pdf.
41. Riley, *Crucifying Religion*, 41.
42. Strommen, *A Study of Generations*, 369; LBSLBP, 3.
43. Bruce Kueck, “Poll: Most Christians’ Beliefs Out of Sync with the Bible,” *Lutheran Witness Reporter* (July 2001): 11. In another poll, only 39% of ELCA Lutherans believed in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ apart from the deeds of the law. Martha Sayer Allen, “Churches Reflect on Members’ Views,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (Sunday April 1, 1990), 7B. A group of mostly ELCA Lutherans at the “Call to Faithfulness” conference in 1990, stated that there was “no agreement among” them “as to the specific gospel content of” their preaching and teaching. Walter Carlson and Andrew Weyerman, “A Call to Faithfulness: Working Group Reports—Ministry,” *Dialog* 30, no. 2 (1991): 163.
44. “Poll: Teen Beliefs Not Consistent with Bible’s Truths,” *Lutheran Witness Reporter* (December 2000):7.
45. “What American Teenagers Believe: A Conversation with Christian Smith,” *Books and Culture: A Christian Review* (January/February 2005): 10.
46. Nancy T. Ammerman, “Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream,” in David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a Theory of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 196–216. These Golden Rule Christians would be classified by Prothero as moralists.

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In its statements about the possibility of salvation outside of the Christian faith, the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* indicated that faithful practitioners of non-Christian faiths (“those who do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church”), who sought God “with a sincere heart,” and who by their actions did God’s “will as they know it” in accord with “the dictates of their conscience” would “achieve eternal salvation.” Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 35.

The Dutch Roman Catholic Catechism of 1969 taught that the “unbaptized” come into contact with Christ by birth because they have Jesus as their fellow human being. The Catechism states that if the Church is convinced that they are people “of good will they will share in the blessings of Jesus’ redemption.” Their loyalty “to their task in life” and their life of service, “baptizes them into the baptism” of Jesus.” *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 249.

47. Lowell Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel: The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation* (Fallbrook, CA: Verdict Publications, 1980), 31–70, passim; Carl E. Braaten, “Introduction: At the Crossroads of Lutheranism,” in Carl E. Braaten, ed. *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 10–18; Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Response* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2004); Timo Laato, “Justification: The Stumbling Block of the Finnish Luther School,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (October 2008): 327–346; Armand J. Boehme, “Tributaries into the River JDDJ: Karl Holl and Luther’s Doctrine of Justification,” <https://logia.org/logia-online/tributaries-into-the-river-jddj>; Ammerman, “Golden Rule Christianity,” 196–216.

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48. Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *Red Apocalypse: The Religious Evolution of Soviet Communism* (Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 165.
49. Frisk, “Globalization,” vii. See also Peter Heehs, *Spirituality Without God: A Global History of Thought and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018) 169–200; Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).
50. Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 69–70; also 75–77, 122–123.
51. Heehs, *Spirituality Without God*, 5.
52. Heehs, *Spirituality Without God*, 4; see also Ronald Dworkin, *Religion Without God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
53. S. Paul Schilling, *God in an Age of Atheism*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 159. McClymond, “Opiate,” 30.
54. McClymond, “Opiate,” 29.
55. “Much of what we have gotten out of religions we now get from science and technology: human fulfillment, salvation, (the potential for) eternal life.” Wesley J. Smith, “New-Time Religion,” *First Things* (December 2014 – Issue 248): 20; “Science . . . is a cornerstone of the New Religious Synthesis, the instrument of Reason in search of ever greater spiritual insight.” James A. Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality: The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 97.

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Thomas E. McNamara, *After Religion: Scientific Spirituality: The Next Stage of Consciousness* (Colorado Springs, CO: Createspace Independent Publishing, 2012); Michael Ruse, *Darwinism as Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion* (London: Routledge Books, 1985); Mary Midgley, *Science as Salvation* (London: Routledge Books, 1992).

56. Armand J. Boehme, “The Final Spiritual Frontier? The Spirituality of Science Fiction,” *European Journal of Science and Theology* 14, no. 5 (October 2018): 15–24.

57. David Zahl, *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What We Can Do About It* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2019); Lois Lee, *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 159–184; Beyer, “Religious Environmentalism” in *Religion and Globalization*, 206–224.

58. Dirk Devries, *Contemplative Vision: Photography as a Spiritual Practice* (New York: Church Publishing, 2019); Emma White, *The Spirituality of Anorexia: A Goddess Feminist Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2019); John B. Bennett, “Academic Spirituality,” *Spirituality in Higher Education Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (April 2004), <https://spirituality.ucla.edu/docs/newsletters/1/Bennett.pdf>.

Over 20 different kinds of spirituality have been identified. Armand J. Boehme, “Spirituality and Religion: The Shift from East to West and Beyond,” *Missio Apostolica* 23, no. 1 (May 2015): 31–32.

59. Schilling, *God in an Age of Atheism*, 160.

60. Frisk, “Globalization,” vii; Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, 72, 81–86. See also Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong* (New

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York: Forum, 2003). “Universalist theology” also “lacks a spirituality of self-denial.” McClymond, “Opiate,” 30.

61. Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 84, 86, 88, 94.

62. Frisk, “Globalization,” vii; Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, 7–13.

63. J. Harold Ellens, *The Spirituality of Sex (Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality)* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009); Barbara Carrellas, *Urban Tantra: Sacred Sex for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2017).

64. Alexander Riley, “A Religion of Activism,” *First Things* (April 2019 - Number 292): 10 (italics in original). See also Christian Smith, *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

65. Frisk, “Globalization,” vii.

66. D. Riley, *Crucifying Religion*, esp. 35–68, 91–98.

67. Douthat mentions a positive effect of globalization on Christianity in America, stating that globalization helped renew American Christianity in the twentieth century, and hopes that it will do the same in the “more globalized third millennium.” Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 283.

Part of the pushback against globalization is what has been described as the “globalization backlash,” with a gravitation in the religious realm towards more conservative, traditionalist beliefs and practices. Some see this as a positive aspect of globalization, some see it differently. Herrington, “Globalization and Religion,” 155–162;

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Daniel Golebiewski, “Religion and Globalization: New Possibilities, Furthering Challenges,” July 16, 2014, 4–6, <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/07/16/religion-and-globalization-new-possibilities-furthering-challenges/>.

68. Jason Lane et al., *The Christian Difference: An Explanation & Comparison of World Religions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019); Edward A. Englebrecht, ed., *The Lutheran Difference: An Explanation & Comparison of Christian Beliefs* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010); Mark A. Wood, *Every One His Witness Workbook* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

The CTCR document *Together With All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth* (St. Louis: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, April 2010) is an excellent resource for the Christian’s role in care for the planet. See also the CTCR report, *In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology* (St. Louis: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2015). Other CTCR reports on the charismatic movement, justification, and other doctrinal teachings are excellent resources.

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