

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALIZATION

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In *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Michael Green discusses three pathways that facilitated the spreading of the gospel message in the first century. First, there was the *Pax Romana*. “As it was, the new faith entered the world at a time of peace unparalleled in history.”¹ The roadway system that was developed to maintain this peace also fostered trade and social interaction. “The possibilities of spreading the gospel afforded by this swift and safe method of travel were fully exploited by the early Christians.”² Second, there was the Greek culture. “The Greek language was so widely disseminated through the Mediterranean basin that it acted almost as a universal common tongue.”³ “It was along the pathways of the Greek language and Greek thought that the Christian gospel travelled in the early days.”⁴ The third pathway was the Jewish religion. “But by far the broadest avenue to the advance of Christianity was afforded by Judaism. The Jews went far beyond the confines of Palestine long before the first century; and everywhere they went, they took their religion with them.”⁵

If Green were writing about the spreading of the Christian message in our day, he would undoubtedly mention globalization as a pathway. Globalization, with its fast-paced digital communication and rapid air travel, makes it possible to obtain information about and establish contact with people groups around the world, thus facilitating the spreading of the Christian message.

The leadership of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is convinced that globalization represents a highly significant issue that must be

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¹Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 30.

²Green, *Evangelism*, 33.

³Green, *Evangelism*, 33.

⁴Green, *Evangelism*, 33.

⁵Green, *Evangelism*, 42.

seriously addressed. “Globalization is a complex concept involving content and structure, a prismatic combination of human relationships, ways of thinking, ways of learning and ways of Christian living. Minimally it involves escaping from ignorance and provincialism: in its most serious consideration, it involves us in questions regarding the church’s mission to the entire inhabited world.”⁶

In light of the impact of globalization, we need to pay close attention to the question: “What difference does it make for the practice of evangelical theology that the church is no longer rooted in America and Europe but increasingly comprises people from an astonishing variety of cultures and nations?”⁷ As Jeffrey P. Greenman puts it, “During the twentieth century, the geographical center of the church moved South and East, so the heartlands of the Christian faith are no longer in the North American region but rather in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania.”⁸ This is not an argument to ignore what the Lord is doing in the “Global North” but to pay attention to the marvelous way in which the gospel message is spreading the “Global South.”⁹

In his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Philip Jenkins states:

We are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide. Over the past five centuries or so, the story of Christianity has been inexorably bound with the European-driven civilizations overseas, above all in North America.... Over the past century, however, the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward to Africa, Asia and Latin America.... This trend will continue apace in the coming years. Many of the fastest growing countries in the world are either predominantly Christian or else very sizeable minorities. Even if Christians just maintain their share of the population in countries like Nigeria and Kenya, Mexico

⁶David S. Schuller, “Editorial Introduction,” *Theological Education* XXII, (Spring 1986), 5-6.

⁷Stephen T. Pardue, *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023), 1.

⁸Jeffrey P. Greenman and Gene L. Green, *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 9.

⁹For additional insights on this issue, see Mitri Raheb and Mark A. Lamport, eds., *Emerging Theologies from the Global South* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023).

and Ethiopia, Brazil and the Philippines, there are soon going to be several hundred million more Christians in these nations alone. Moreover, conversions will swell the Christian share of the world population.¹⁰

In light of the globalization of Christianity, theological educators must consider it in training people for ministry in today's world. The first step will be an effort to understand the concept of globalization.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF GLOBALIZATION

Because this essay focuses on globalization in theological education, it will begin with a definition of globalization and a discussion of its impact on religion. This will lead to an exploration of cultural dimensions in globalization that need to be considered in the realm of theological education. Because globalization is a multidimensional concept, it is difficult to articulate a succinct definition. Iffat Ara Jasmin's definition of globalization is a good starting point towards an understanding of this concept:

So, we can see that globalization is a process of interconnectedness, interdependence and integration of economics and societies. It is also a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and enhanced by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on religion, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world.¹¹

While there is a sense in which there is an increasing consciousness of perceiving the "world as a whole," the global community is heterogeneous. There are significant similarities as well as dissimilarities in the "interconnected systems of communication, transportation and economic exchange."¹² David Scott asserts that: "Globalization is always the product

¹⁰Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-2.

¹¹Iffat Ara Jasmin, "Relationship between Globalisation and Religion: Possibilities and Challenges," *Daily Sun*, December 12, 2017; <https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/274889>.

¹²Richard Osmer, "The Teaching Ministry in a Multicultural World," in *God and Globalization*,

of different local cultures coming together; there is no such thing as ‘global culture.’”¹³ Kenneth Nehrbass echoes the same idea when he states, “In the twenty years since Ritzer predicted McWorld, we have discovered that there are many cultural, linguistic, religious and political barriers to creating a homogeneous (and bland) world culture.”¹⁴

How the different cultural groups respond to this interconnectedness reflects their religious orientation. Iffat Ana Jasmin similarly describes the impact that globalization can have on religion:

On the one hand, globalisation creates [a] new door to strength religion such as enhancing beliefs and values, teaching equality for everyone, showing kindness, etc. On the other hand, it creates obstacles and challenges as it breaks traditional values while weakening their own religious values, reinforces specific identities, creates a circle of conflict and competition among various religion, etc. So, we can see that relationship between globalisation and religion is a complex issue, one with new possibilities and furthering challenges.¹⁵

In light of the various ways in which globalization is perceived, one can say that it can be a benefit as well as a threat to religion. The benefit comes from the fact that globalization can open geographical and cultural boundaries. Political and geographical barriers that previously prohibited communication between cultural groups can easily be breached through internet-driven applications on both computers and cell phones (e.g., such as Zoom, texting, websites, and translation systems such as Google, DeepL, Bing Microsoft, Systran, Amazon as well as hand-held translators, voice translator devices, simultaneous translation equipment). People wishing to go across political, cultural, and linguistic barriers with the gospel message can benefit significantly from the tools that are available

ed. Max L. Stackhouse with Don S. Browning, vol. 2, *The Spirit and the Modern Authorities* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 39. Volumes 1 and 3 have valuable information on globalization.

¹³David Scott, “Globalization and Online Theological Education: Questions We Must Ask,” *Fuller Magazine* 21; <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/theology/globalization-and-online-theological-education-questions-we-must-ask>.

¹⁴Kenneth Nehrbass, *God’s Image and Global Cultures: Integrating Faith and Culture in the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 23.

¹⁵Jasmin, “Relationship.”

through globalization. While in the 1950s evangelicals rejoiced when Brother Andrew was able to sneak a few Bibles into Russia, today not only oral and print Bibles but entire libraries in numerous languages can be delivered to “closed countries” in the encoded chips of cell phones and flash drives. The “Jesus Film” is now available in 2,093 languages and has been seen by more than one billion people.¹⁶

Walter Brueggemann stresses the importance of taking globalization into account in theological education when he states:

It is because Christian faith and Christian ministry are inseparably linked to real life that globalization presses upon us. As is often the case, the defining pressures of theological education are not initiated by theological schools or generated by the church. They are rather emergent in the life of culture where the church and its theological schools find their rightful habitat.¹⁷

The threat of globalization emerges when it leads to a syncretistic approach to religion in which doctrines and practices of the different religions are modified and merged to form a “world religion” that purportedly seeks the common good of people in today’s global community. While the idea of the “common good” of the people may sound appealing, it can lead to a syncretism that distorts the Christian message.¹⁸

Charles Kraft defines syncretism as “the mixing of Christian suppositions with those worldview suppositions that are incompatible with Christianity so that the result is not biblical Christianity.”¹⁹ David J. Hesselgrave says syncretism “is perhaps best understood as a very natural desire on the part of many people to embrace the most appealing aspects of the various religions.... Missionary communication will be well advised to be aware of the appeal of this response and to communicate patiently the uniqueness of Christ and Christian revelation.”²⁰

¹⁶Jesus Film Project, November 2023 Report.

¹⁷Walter Brueggemann, “Foreword,” in *The Globalization of Theological Education*, ed. Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and David Roozen (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), xi.

¹⁸For a critique of economic globalization, see Pardue, *Why Evangelical*, 94.

¹⁹Charles H. Kraft, “Culture and Contextualization,” in Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, William Carey Library, 1981, 46.

²⁰David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 185, 186.

A challenge for those involved in theological education today is that of utilizing the pathways provided by globalization while at the same time safeguarding the uniqueness of the Christian message. This, however, should not lead evangelical Christians to isolate themselves from people of other religious persuasions. For evangelical Christians, having a global perspective is a biblical imperative. In the Old Testament, God is presented as the creator of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1). The listing of the table of nations in Genesis 10 reveals that “all the nations issue forth from the creative hand of God and are under his watchful eye of patience and judgment.”²¹ In Genesis 12:1-3, we find God’s promise to bless Abraham and through him to bless the nations of the world.²² Exodus 19:5-6, explains God’s plan for Israel. As Walter Kaiser explains, “It is here that Israel’s missionary role becomes explicit, if any doubt had remained. The whole nation was to function on behalf of the Kingdom of God in a mediatorial role to the nations.”²³

The global dimension of the Christian message is clearly stated in the New Testament. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus stated that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world. In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands his disciples to “make disciples of all of the nations.”²⁴ In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his followers to be his witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the end of the earth.” The multiple languages in which the believers spoke at Pentecost reveal the global intention of the Holy Spirit.

Justo L. Gonzalez explains, “Indeed, the ‘great miracle of Pentecost’ is that all of the people, who were gathered from a variety of places, all hear the ‘mighty acts of God’ in their own, tongue. It is the presence of these people that provides the occasion for the miracle, and it is on their behalf that the Spirit intervenes, so that they may hear the message in their own

²¹Johannes Verkuyl, “The Biblical Foundation for the Worldwide Mission Mandate,” in *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 35, 36.

²²John R. Stott, “The Living God is a Missionary God,” in *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 12, 13.

²³Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 29.

²⁴All Scripture citations are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of Scripture.

tongues.”²⁵ John Stott likewise emphasizes the global dimensions of the Christian message:

Our mandate for world evangelization, therefore, is in the whole Bible. It is to be found in the creation of God (because of which all human beings are responsible to him), in the character of God (as outgoing, loving, compassionate, not willing that any should perish, desiring that all should come to repentance), in the promises of God (that all the nations will be blessed through Abraham’s seed and will become the Messiah’s inheritance), in the Christ of God (now exalted with universal authority to receive universal acclaim), in the Spirit of God (who convicts of sin, witnesses to Christ, and impels the church to evangelize) and in the church of God (which is a multinational community, under orders to evangelize until Christ returns).²⁶

The scene described in Revelation 7:9 of “a great multitude which no one could number of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues” reveals the global nature of the Great Commission. Stott categorically states, “We need to become global Christians, with a global vision, for we have a global God.”²⁷ It is imperative for those of us involved in theological education to have a clear understanding of the concept of globalization.

OBSTACLES TO GLOBALIZATION

In this discussion of the cultural dimensions of globalization, those of us involved in theological education must be mindful of the fact that we are training Anglo-American as well as Ethnic-American students to be effective as they serve in multicultural settings in the United States as well as abroad.²⁸ We also need to train international students to focus their ministry on their particular ethnic group as well as other cultural groups.

²⁵Justo L. González and Catherine G. González, “An Historical Survey,” in *The Globalization of Theological Education*, ed. Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and David A. Rozen, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 13.

²⁶John R. Stott, “The Bible in World Evangelization,” in *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 4.

²⁷Stott, “Living God,” 18.

²⁸Daniel R. Sanchez, *Hispanic Realities Impacting America* (Fort Worth: Church Starting Network, 2006), xi.

In our attempt to accomplish this, it will be helpful for us to begin with an analysis of ethnocentrism as one of the obstacles to globalization. This will be followed by an exploration of ways in which we might be more effective in addressing multiculturalism in our curricula, our classes, and our relationships.

The authors *Managing Cultural Differences* define culture as “a distinctly human means of adapting to circumstances and transmitting this copying skill to subsequent generations. Culture gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and what they should be doing. Culture impacts behavior, morale, and productivity at work, and includes values and patterns that influence company values and actions.”²⁹

Smalley provides a definition of ethnocentrism: “Ethnocentrism is a term used by anthropologists to represent that point of view which we all have, to varying degrees, that our own culture, our own way of doing things, is best. It may lead us to assume that our own way is the only right way.”³⁰ Ethnocentrism was addressed in the early church and requires our recognition of its existence in societies today.

Ethnocentrism in the Early Church. The newly formed church in Jerusalem encountered intercultural challenges. Acts 6:1 states, “Now those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” It is evident that there were two people groups in the church in Jerusalem: the Hebraic Jews, who spoke Aramaic, and the Hellenistic Jews (principally Jews of the dispersion who had come to settle in Jerusalem), who spoke Greek.

It is important to note that, in response to this challenge, the church not only addressed the spiritual need by appointing men “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” but also addressed the cultural need in that the names of all of the deacons were Greek.³¹ People with spiritual qualities and cultural sensitivity were appointed to address a need that otherwise could have split that young church. The result of the spiritually sensitive and culturally informed solution is reflected in verse 7: “Then the word of God spread, and the number of disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem, and great number of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

The experience of Peter recorded in Acts 10 reveals his reticence to

²⁹Harris, Moran, and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences*, 4.

³⁰William Smalley, “Respect and Ethnocentrism,” in *Readings in Missionary Anthropology* II, ed. William Smalley (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1984), 712.

³¹I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 127.

share the gospel message with Gentiles. In verse 28, he clearly states, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go with another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” It is true that Peter stated, “I perceive that God shows no partiality. But from every nation whoever Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (vv. 34-35). However, at Antioch of Pisidia (Gal 2:11-14), Peter’s decision to stop eating with Gentile Christians when Jewish Christians arrived may reflect that he was still influenced to some extent by his own ethnocentrism or that he was yielding to the ethnocentrism of the Jewish Christians.³²

An ethnocentric attitude was evident initially when the Jewish refugees who fled Jerusalem, because of the persecution (Acts 8:1), arrived in Antioch and “preached to no one but the Jews only” (Acts 11:19). They restricted their message to their fellow Hebrew-speaking Jews. Things changed, however, when Hellenistic Jews arrived on the scene: “But there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, proclaiming the good news about Jesus” (v. 20).

It is understandable that these Jewish Christians initially shared the gospel message with those who spoke their language and shared the same culture.³³ It is estimated that there were between 25,000 and 50,000 Jews in Antioch.³⁴ On the other hand, the total population of this city was between 500,000 and 800,000.³⁵ We thank the Lord for the evangelistic attitude displayed in Acts 11:20, but we cannot help but wonder how many Acts 11:19 churches are in our midst today. The fact that the outreach to the Gentiles pleased the Lord is reflected in verse 21: “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”

Ethnocentrism was also reflected in the last question which the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Polhill explains, “Jesus did not reject the concept of

³²To Peter’s credit, there is evidence that as he matured in his Christian faith, he encouraged believers to be ready always to give an answer of their hope but to do it “in reverence and respect.” (1 Pet 3:15).

³³Ebbie Smith makes a distinction between a homogeneous unit principle (“which are absolute and stand for what should be everywhere at all times”) and homogeneous strategies (“which can be altered and set aside as situations demand”). Ebbie C. Smith, *Balanced Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 51. He states that it may be strategic for a person to start a church with a particular ethnic group; however, that strategy needs to change as the church family becomes more culturally diverse and as it surrounded by people of different cultures.

³⁴John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 269.

³⁵Polhill, *Acts*, 268.

the 'restoration of Israel.' Instead, he 'depoliticized it' with the call to a worldwide mission."³⁶ Polhill adds, "The reply of Jesus reflected a global perspective. 'You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.' The disciples were to be the true 'restored Israel,' fulfilling its mission to be a 'light for the Gentiles' so that God's salvation might reach 'to the ends of the earth' (Isa 49:6)."³⁷

Ethnocentrism was certainly evident in the Judaizers who "saw Greek Christians through Hebrew eyes."³⁸ It is interesting to note that these Judaizers were Pharisees who had become believers but wanted to impose Jewish beliefs and cultural customs upon the Gentile believers (Acts 15:5). The evolving conflict prompted the meeting in Jerusalem. After hearing the testimonies of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas and being guided by the Holy Spirit, the decision was made "not to trouble them" but to require that they "abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled and from blood" (Acts 15:19-20). While this prohibition refers to heathen practices that Gentile Christians should have abandoned, it also encourages them to refrain from practices that were repulsive to Jewish Christians. Cultural sensitivity on the part of both groups would contribute to the unity that should characterize the church.

Ethnocentrism in Today's Societies. Ethnocentrism was not only a challenge to the early church. It continues to challenge the church today. Paul Hiebert states,

If cross-cultural misunderstandings are based on our knowledge of another culture, ethnocentrism is based on feelings and values. In relating to another people, we need not only to understand them but also to deal with our feelings that distinguish between "us" and "our kind of people" and "them" and "their kind of people." Identification takes place only when "they" become part of the circle we think of as "our kind of people."³⁹

Gene Green makes a similar insightful observation:

³⁶Polhill, *Acts*, 84.

³⁷Polhill, *Acts*, 85.

³⁸William Smalley, "Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church," in *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 500.

³⁹Hiebert, "Cross-Cultural Differences," 54.

One does not have to become culturally Western in order to become a Christian. Christianity may be expressed in the languages of the world, through the music of the world and through the cultural idioms of the world. The current global engagements of Scripture and culture are parallel to the way the early church took the message of Jesus in the land of Judea and the Aramaic language and translated it both culturally and linguistically as it ran to the Roman World.⁴⁰

In his chapter titled “Respect and Ethnocentrism,” Smalley explains that value judgments are essential in dealing with people in other cultural settings: “This should not be read to imply that Christians should not make value judgments. Every human being does make them, whether he wants to or not, and every Christian is morally obligated to do so. The problem lies in the unthinking ethnocentricity of these judgments. It lies in our imposition of our judgments on other people.”⁴¹ If left unchecked, ethnocentrism can become a formidable obstacle to globalization.

OUTCOMES OF GLOBALIZATION

A sincere and ongoing focus on globalization should lead to a greater degree of cultural intelligence on the part of the individuals, a harmonious relationship between professors and students, and a culturally relevant environment in educational institutions. It is indeed interesting to note that, while missionaries were among the first to be involved in intercultural studies,⁴² in recent years people involved in global business have written excellent books about intercultural communication under the rubric of cultural intelligence. They have come to the realization that their business dealing with people of other cultures is enhanced if they learn to see concepts and relationships through their eyes.⁴³

David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson define cultural intelligence in the

⁴⁰Greenman and Green, *Cultural Theology*, 10.

⁴¹Smalley, “Respect and Ethnocentrism,” 712.

⁴²In addition to the missionaries we have already cited (William Smalley, David J. Hesselgrave) are Eugene A. Nida, Donald N. Larson, Louis J. Luzbetak, Charles H. Kraft, Ralph D. Winter Paul Hiebert, Allan R. Tippett, J. Herbert Kane, E. Thomas and Elizabeth S. Brewster, Donald A. McGavran, John R. Mott, R. Pierce Bever, Danny Yu, Fatima Mahoumet, Samuel Moffett, Samuel Zwemer, Henry Venn, Arthur Glasser, Vergil Gerber, C. Peter Wagner, John Mizuki, Tetsunao Yamamori, Tomothy Monsma, Gailyn Van Rhennen and Rebecca J. Winter.

⁴³David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence: People Skills for Global Businesses* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004), 15-16.

following manner: “Cultural intelligence means being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning more about it from ongoing interactions with it, and gradually reshaping your thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and your behavior to be more skilled and appropriate when interacting with others from that culture.”⁴⁴ They then explain the various components of cultural intelligence. “First, the culturally intelligent person needs to have *knowledge* of culture and of the fundamental principles of cross-cultural interactions. This means knowing what culture is, how cultures vary, and how culture affects behavior.”⁴⁵ As we have mentioned earlier, through websites, books, and personal observation, professors and students in seminars have an opportunity to acquire knowledge about the cultures of the people with whom they are relating.

Thomas and Inkson continue, “Second, the culturally intelligent person needs to practice *mindfulness*, the ability to pay attention in a reflexive and creative way to clues in cross-cultural situations encountered and to one’s knowledge and feelings.”⁴⁶ The opposite of mindfulness is what these authors call “cultural cruise control,” which they define as “running your life on your built in cultural in assumptions.”⁴⁷ In essence, this means doing things that are acceptable in our own culture without considering how this might be interpreted by people of other cultures. Cultural cruise control has implications for language, practices, and relationships. For professors in American educational institutions, cruise control means designing and teaching courses without taking into account how minority or international students might understand what is being taught. There is a sense in which “cruise control” and “ethnocentrism” are very similar. “Third, the culturally intelligent person needs to *develop the skills* that are required to act appropriately in a range of situations.”⁴⁸ Thomas and Inkson elaborate, “In business, for example, the most common perceived causes of problems are not technical or administrative deficiencies, but problems such as communication failures, misunderstandings in negotiations, personality conflicts, poor leadership style, and bad teamwork—in other words, inadequacies in the ways people interact with each other.”⁴⁹ Intercultural skills, by definition, cannot be acquired in isolation. There

⁴⁴Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 15.

⁴⁵Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 16.

⁴⁶Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 16.

⁴⁷Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 46.

⁴⁸Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 22.

⁴⁹Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 57.

must be a willingness to spend time with people of other cultures conversing, listening, and participating in social, religious, and recreational activities.

Thomas and Inkson conclude, “Through selective perception, stereotypic expectations, and inaccurate attributions, we may be led by our cultural programming to misjudge the behavior of others who are culturally different.” In response, we must remember, “The elements of knowledge, mindfulness, and skills enable the practice of cultural intelligence in skilled performance that is adapted to the particular cultural settings the individual faces.”⁵⁰

APPLICATION OF GLOBALIZATION

The principles that we have reviewed can enable us to have a good understanding of the concept of globalization. Our last section will focus on practical ways in which globalization can be implemented in our educational institutions. Some of these will be suggestions while others will be questions to be addressed individually as well as in groups with fellow professors. We should consider enabling the application of globalization from the perspectives of both institutions and students.

Enable the Institution to Consider the Aspects of Globalization in Its Curricula and Structure. Because the educational institutions have their programs of education and structure, I will mention some of the key issues and encourage the institutions to determine how they can deal with these in their respective settings. In *The Globalization of Theological Education*,⁵¹ the editors include insightful essays on the implementation of globalization principles in their institutions. The essay designed by a Globalization Committee, “Why Globalization?,” has an excellent overview of the rationale which might be helpful to theological schools contemplating the initiation of a globalization program. This article begins by suggesting these objectives for discussion:

1. To identify the reason for incorporating globalization into the curriculum, especially the various theological reasons for such a program.
2. To identify the theological and pedagogical issues that must be

⁵⁰Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 52.

⁵¹Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, David A. Roozen, eds., *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

addressed in developing such a program.

3. To draft a theological rationale for a globalization project.⁵²

The article then utilizes questions that raise issues relevant to this endeavor:

1. What are the possible theological justifications for globalization of the curriculum?
2. Which do we consider appropriate and which ones are inappropriate?
3. Are faculty members solidly behind a project that addresses globalization?
4. Is there consensus on theological the rationale necessary or is it better avoided?
5. What pedagogical issues must be faced regarding immersion experiences (e.g., value of experiential learning, acquiring the necessary analytical tools, adequate debriefing)?
6. How will the congregations benefit from globalization of the theological curriculum?⁵³

I would add these questions for theological schools to consider:

1. Does our school have a globalization task force that promotes ongoing inquiry, training, and involvement in theological education? If not, is it willing to establish one that involves administration, faculty members, and students?
2. To what extent is the leadership and faculty of our school exhibiting knowledge and practice of theological globalization in the classroom as well as in social interaction with the students?
3. How would a professor in your institution respond to this assertion: "What has typically been regarded as a theology for the whole global church actually has been, in many respects, Western Theology, which has been assumed to be universal theology"?⁵⁴
4. What specific plans does our school have to enable students to deal effectively with globalization in the United States? How is this reflected in the curriculum?
5. What specific plans does our school have to enable students to

⁵²"Why Globalization?" in *The Globalization of Theological Education*, ed. Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and David A. Rozen, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 56-57.

⁵³"Why Globalization?" 56-57.

⁵⁴Greenman and Green, *Cultural Theology*, 11.

- deal effectively with globalization in other countries?
6. What specific plans does our school have to encourage American students and international students to spend sufficient time fellowshipping with one another to be prepared to serve in multicultural environments?
 7. To what extent is our school communicating with the ethnic churches in our area?⁵⁵ Are students who are planning to serve as missionaries encouraged to join a local congregation of an ethnic group similar to the one they plan to serve abroad?
 8. Does our school have courses on Cultural Anthropology and Intercultural Communication?
 9. If theological schools make provision for students to form ethnic/ language fellowships, a valid question might be, “Do we have an intercultural fellowship that encourages students from various cultural backgrounds to get to know each other?”
 10. While there are definite advantages for international and ethnic American students to learn the English language (especially considering the abundance of published materials), is it advisable for theological schools in America to allow students to do research and writing (even dissertations) in their own language, thus ensuring that there is more diversity of resources in our libraries?
 11. How does the faculty composition of our schools reflect the presence of international and ethnic students in our school?
 12. To what extent are our faculty members and students becoming aware of available translation systems such as Google, DeepL, Bing Microsoft, Systran and Amazon as well as Hand-Held Translators, Voice Translator Devices, Simultaneous Translation Equipment, etc.?
 13. How many of our guest professors are originally from other countries?
 14. How many of our professors teach courses in other countries?
 15. How is Zoom (and similar technologies) being used to teach courses abroad as well as to have courses that are taught abroad also offered in our U.S. campuses?
 16. How many of the “Intercultural Failures” listed by Thomas and Inkson apply to our professors and our students? Among these intercultural failures are: Being unaware of key features and

⁵⁵Tarrant County Baptist Association has a list of ethnic churches in its geographical area.

biases in your own culture. Feeling threatened or uneasy when interacting with people who are different culturally. Being unable to understand or explain the behavior of others who are culturally different. Being unable to transfer knowledge about one culture to another culture. Not recognizing when our cultural orientation is influencing our behavior. Being unable to adjust to living and working in another culture. Being unable to develop long-term interpersonal relationships.⁵⁶

17. What modifications are faculty members willing to make in their classes to demonstrate cultural sensitivity to international and ethnic students without lowering academic standards? Could we use PowerPoint presentations to enable our students to see as well as hear what we are saying? For students concerned about “losing face,”⁵⁷ if we correct them publicly, could we give them our input in writing or private conversation?⁵⁸ Would it be possible for us to permit international students to write their dissertations in their native language and then translate them into English? Are we willing to allow students to utilize discussion forms with which they are accustomed to express their views?⁵⁹ Are we willing to modify our testing methods to enable international students to communicate what they have learned in ways to which they are accustomed?⁶⁰

In summary, as we consider the cultural aspects of globalization in our institutions, we must ask ourselves the question: “To what degree are we willing to adjust our methodology to be more effective as we teach students with a different cultural background?” Moreover, we must also enable our students to develop their theology of globalization.

⁵⁶Thomas and Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence*, 12.

⁵⁷“Losing face,” or diū liǎn (丢脸), in Asian cultures means loss of respect, reputation, or dignity in the eyes of others and a blow to their social standing.

⁵⁸Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 35. These authors also focus on the diversity between cultures regarding such factors as: Willingness to expose vulnerability, time orientation versus event orientation, person orientation versus task orientation, achievement focus versus status focus, dichotomistic thinking versus holistic thinking, and crisis orientation versus non-crisis orientation.

⁵⁹E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2012), 20. See also Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2020).

⁶⁰For a valuable resource on the communication patterns, listening habits, behavior at meetings, and manners and taboos of people in the various cultures of the world see Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Nicholas Brealey, 2006).

Enable Students to Develop a Theology of Globalization That Reflects Cultural Intelligence. As previously mentioned, cultural intelligence is a significant component of globalization. Darrell L. Bock suggests six key biblical passages that should be studied for the development of a “theology of cultural intelligence”: Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 3:13-18; Colossians 4:5-6; Galatians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 5:7-21 and 2 Timothy 2:22-26.⁶¹

To Bock’s list, I would suggest three additional passages. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul indicates his willingness to adapt the presentation of the gospel message to a particular audience for it to be receptive. To be sure, Paul is inflexible regarding the content of the gospel message, for in Galatians 1:8 he states, “But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any another gospel to you than what we have preached, let him be accursed.” On the other hand, Paul’s willingness to adapt the presentation of the gospel message is seen in the contrast between his message to the Jewish audience in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14-52) and to the Greek audience in Athens (Acts 17:22-34).⁶² In these two instances, Paul does not merely use the appropriate language for each group⁶³ but also employs a different starting point.

American and international students alike need to develop a theology of globalization in their preparation for ministry.⁶⁴ The United States is now more multicultural than ever before in its history, as demonstrated by the following ethnic population statistics for 2023: Anglo, 58.9 percent; Hispanic, 19.1 percent; African American, 13.6 percent; and Asian, 6.3 percent.⁶⁵ The projections for 2050 are Anglo, 47 percent; Hispanic, 29 percent; African American, 13 percent; and, Asian 9 percent.⁶⁶ In California and Texas, Hispanics are now the largest cultural group. There are at least two very significant implications of these population data.⁶⁷

⁶¹Darrell L. Bock, *Cultural Intelligence: Living for God in a Diverse, Pluralistic World* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 11-34.

⁶²Andrew F. Walls, “Old Athens and New Jerusalem: Some Signposts of Christian Scholarship in the Early History of Mission Studies,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21.4 (October 1997): 148.

⁶³Acts 21:37 (Greek); 21:40 (Hebrew). A reasonable assumption is that Paul spoke in Hebrew in the synagogue in Antioch.

⁶⁴Three helpful resources are Aylward Shorter, *Toward A Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988); Greenman and Green, *Cultural Theology*; and Nehrbass, *God’s Image*.

⁶⁵US Census Bureau Population, year, race, age, ethnicity, US Facts May 18, 2023

⁶⁶Pew Research Center Analysis of 2010 and 2022 American Community Surveys (U.S. Census Bureau).

⁶⁷For insights on reaching Hispanic Americans, see Rudolph D. Gonzalez, *Then Came Hispangelicals* (Sisters, OR: Deep River, 2019). See also Daniel R. Sanchez, ed., *Hispanic Realities Impacting America: Implications for Evangelism and Missions* (Fort Worth: Church Starting Network, 2006).

First, students receiving theological training need to be prepared to serve in multicultural settings in the United States. Their training needs to be similar to that which is used for missionaries serving abroad who need to be prepared to learn another language and to adjust and serve in another culture. For ethnic groups in the United States, it will not be enough for them to focus only on their group. They must be prepared to establish multicultural churches.⁶⁸ A relevant question is, “What are our educational institutions doing to train students to have a global perspective for their ministry?”⁶⁹ A related question is, “Are we equipping our students to deal effectively with churches in communities that are experiencing significant cultural transition?”⁷⁰

Second, students who have a calling to be missionaries abroad also need to have a theology of globalization which guides them to be effective in living as well as communicating the gospel message in another culture. The population of the world today stands at 8.1 billion people.⁷¹ The Joshua Project indicates there are 17,453 people groups in the world. Of these, 7,398 are considered “unreached people groups.”⁷² A valid question is, “What can our educational institutions do to enable students to learn a theology of globalization that will guide and undergird their missionary activities?”⁷³

ATTEMPTS AT GLOBALIZATION

Throughout its history, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has

⁶⁸I served as interim pastor in a Korean church in Dallas. It was the congregation of 1.5 and second generation Koreans who preferred an English-speaking service and who invited young people of other ethnic groups who were more fluent in English than the mother tongue of their parents. For a discussion on church planting models, see Daniel R. Sanchez and Ebbie C. Smith, *Starting Reproducing Congregations* (Fort Worth: Church Planting Network, 2011), chapter 5.

⁶⁹Two excellent resources are Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*; and Patty Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

⁷⁰Some books on churches in transition are Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002); Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Changes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002); David N. Mosser, ed., *Transitions: Leading Churches Through Change* (Louisville: WJK, 2011). See also Graham Hill, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016).

⁷¹World Population Clock, 2:55 PM, November 29, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>.

⁷²Joshua Project, Ministry of Frontier Ventures; <https://joshuaproject.net>.

⁷³Some helpful resources are J. Herbert Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions: From Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); Hill, *Global Church*; Ebbie C. Smith, *God's Incredible Plan: A Guide to the Place of Human Action in the Efforts to Share God's Salvation with the Peoples of the World* (Fort Worth: Church Starting Network, 2013).

trained missionaries and international students to serve globally. Currently, Southwestern has 455 international students from 43 countries, 301 students enrolled in the Master of Theological Studies in Spanish, 113 students in the Master of Theological Studies in Chinese, and 41 students enrolled in its Doctor of Ministry in Spanish. The seminary has also started a Master of Theological Studies in Portuguese.

Through Global Leadership Development, Southwestern is related to over 90 seminaries abroad. The request in 2008 from the Baptist Seminary in Havana, Cuba, to enable it to establish a master's degree in missions was followed by so many requests that a Hispanic Consortium for Theological Education was established and now has representation from all the countries in Latin America and Spain. This was followed by the formation of autonomous, self-supporting consortiums. These consortiums enable seminaries to share resources, exchange faculties, have a mutual recognition of academic credits, and hold meetings that update them on educational methodologies as well as provide fellowship opportunities. As a seminary partner, Southwestern shares library resources, provides technological training, and makes its faculty available for courses taught abroad.

Presently, the following consortiums have been formed or are being formed: the Hispanic Consortium (Spain and Latin America), the Portuguese Language Consortium (Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, and Angola), the European Consortium (Hungary, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Croatia), the Asian Consortium (South Korea, Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia), the Middle Eastern Consortium (Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan), and a partnership with the African Baptist Theological Network. These consortiums include a total of 25,137 students utilizing 21 languages.

These represent attempts on the part of Southwestern Seminary to address the challenge of globalization. The degree plans, the courses in the various languages, and even the significantly discounted tuition for these courses have made it possible for many professors to obtain a master's and even a doctoral degree, thus contributing to the elevation of the academic standing of seminaries in numerous countries around the world.

CONCLUSION

Globalization is an ever-growing reality that is continually challenging our ways of thinking, learning, and living. Interconnected systems of communication, rapid transportation, and extensive economic exchange

are influencing the social, economic, and religious lives of people around the world. Coupled with the shift of gravity in the Christian world from Europe and America to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we face the challenge of moving from our comfortable provincialism to a worldview that enables us to be more effective in an interdependent world. The cultural challenges of globalization in theological education should motivate us to cultivate a sensitivity that enables us to train people of different cultural backgrounds to serve in a variety of settings in obedience to the Great Commission.

May the words of John Stott challenge us to respond to the doors that the Lord is opening for us through globalization in theological education: “We need to become global Christians, with a global vision, for we have a global God.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴Stott, “Living God,” 18.