Beyond the North–South Divide:
Reconsidering the Global History of Christianity[1]

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Abstract: This article reconsiders the conventional North–South framework frequently employed in narrating the global history of Christianity. Drawing on recent interdisciplinary scholarship, it challenges the conceptual validity of the terms "Global North" and "Global South," which are rooted in Eurocentric assumptions. Categories such as "indigenization," "syncretism," "inculturation," and "contextualization" have been disproportionately applied to the "Global South"—namely, Africa, Asia, and Latin America—while parallel developments in Europe and North America have often been overlooked. Through comparative analysis—including early modern Japan, Reformation-era Europe, and contemporary global regions characterized by the rapid spread of Pentecostal Protestantism —this article contends that religious "syncretism" is not peripheral but central to Christianity's global transmission. It calls for a new interpretive framework that transcends the North–South binary and recognizes Christianity's intercultural evolution.

Key Words: Global History, Christianity, Global North, Global South, Eurocentrism, Syncretism, Indigenization, Inculturation, Contextualization, Pentecostalism

Introduction

According to recent statistical data from 2020, the distribution of the global Christian population by continent is as follows: Africa, 667 million; South America, 612 million; Europe, 565 million; Asia, 379 million; North America, 268 million; and Oceania, 28 million.[2] Christianity in Africa experienced remarkable growth during the 20th century. According to a Pew Research Center study, Christians comprised only 9% of Sub-Saharan Africa's total population in 1910,

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[1] This paper is a substantially expanded version of my earlier Japanese article: Tomoji Odori, "Envisioning a Global History of Christianity: Overcoming the Stereotype of a Superior North and an inferior South," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary Association for Liberal Arts & Science at Musashi University*, No. 2 (2025)［踊共二「キリスト教のグローバルヒストリー：北と南の力学を超えて」『武蔵大学リベラルアーツ＆サイエンス学会雑誌』2号（20025年)], 127-145.

[2] Gina A. Zurlo, "Who Owns Global Christianity," *Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Blog*, April 26, 2021. https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/who-owns-global-christianity/ (accessed April 20, 2025).

but this share increased dramatically to 63% by 2010. In Asia and Oceania, the proportion rose from 3% to 7%, with China alone estimated to have more than 100 million Christians.[3]

The growth of Christianity in Africa is closely tied to the global expansion of Protestantism. According to Todd Johnson, Protestants in the 1600s were almost entirely European, comprising just 10% of the world's Christians. This proportion reached its peak around 1900, rising to 24%. During this period, 94% of Protestants lived in the so-called "Global North"—that is, Europe, North America, and other countries considered "developed" in the Western sense—while Africans made up only 1.6%. By 2020, however, the proportion of Protestants in the "Global North" had dropped to just 15%, whereas African Protestants had grown to a striking 44%.[4] This phenomenon is partly influenced by Africa's high population growth rate, but the primary driver is the efforts of Protestant missionaries from the Western world, who actively traveled to Africa and disseminated their teachings. Today, many researchers highlight that the center of gravity for Protestantism has shifted to the "Global South." Additionally, numerous scholars note that Christianity introduced from the West has undergone a distinctive process of "indigenization" in the "Global South".

However, the word "indigenization" is often associated with "syncretism," the blending of Christianity with local folk beliefs, a term that carries somewhat negative connotations. Consequently, a growing number of researchers are adopting alternative concepts, such as "inculturation," "contextualization," and "interculturation," to more accurately describe this phenomenon.[5]

In any case, what parts of the world does the term "Global South" actually refer to? And where are phenomena such as "indigenization," "syncretism," "cultural incarnation," "contextualization," and "interculturation" understood to occur? This paper explores these questions and, in doing so, proposes a theoretical framework for narrating the global history of Christianity and for situating it, more broadly, within the field of global history.

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[3] Pew Research Center, "Global Christianity. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, December 19, 2011, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/ 2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/ (accessed April 20, 2025)

[4] Todd M. Johnson, "Protestants Around the World," *Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Blog*, October 31, 2017, https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/protestants-around-the-world/ (accessed April 20, 2025).

[5] Cf. Motoo Nakamichi, "From Indigenization and Inculturation to Interculturation," *Shūkyō Kenkyū* 85, no. 4 (2012) [中道基夫「Indigenization, Inculturation から Interculturation へ」『宗教研究』85 巻 4 号 (2012 年)], 835–56; Masanao Furuhashi, ed., *Inculturation in the Churches of Asia Today* (Tokyo: Kyōbunkwan, 2014) [古橋昌尚編『今日のアジアの教会におけるインカルチュレーション』教文館 2014 年]; Anri Morimoto, *Lectures on Asian Theology: Theology in a Globalizing Context* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 2004) [森本あんり『アジア神学講義：グローバル化するコンテクストの神学』創文社 2004 年].

1. Brighter Global North and Darker Global South?

The term "Global South" emerged in the 1960s as a substitute for "Third World." It refers to the "developing countries" primarily located in the Southern Hemisphere, which face challenges such as economic growth, democratization, and political stabilization, in contrast to the "developed countries" of the Northern Hemisphere. Notably, the concepts of "Global North" and "Global South" do not align with geographic divisions. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the "Global South" includes regions such as Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia, including "North" Korea. It is evident that the "Global South" largely overlaps with areas that were formerly under colonial rule by Western powers. Notably, Japan and South Korea are considered exceptions, as they are classified as part of the "Global North." This classification reflects their level of economic development and their adherence to the rule of law, suggesting that other countries currently regarded as part of the "South" might likewise transition to the "North." over time. Another noteworthy observation is that Australia and New Zealand, despite their geographic locations in the "Deep South" on the world map commonly used today, are classified as part of the "Global North".[6] This highlights the complex and sometimes inconsistent nature of these categories. Ultimately, the North-South understanding among UNCTAD member nations (representing nearly all countries worldwide) seems to remain heavily influenced by the legacies of colonialism and the ongoing effort to overcome its impact. And this perspective inevitably carries the remnants of Eurocentrism.

The term "Global South" itself was first introduced by American writer and left-wing activist Carl P. Oglesby (1935–2011) in an article (1969) about the Vietnam War. Oglesby used it to critique the dynamics in which advanced countries of the North (former imperialist powers) continued to dominate and subordinate the impoverished countries of the South (former colonies).[7] The term gained widespread recognition after it appeared in the 1980 report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI), commonly known as

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[6] Cf. *Trade and Development Report 2022* (Geneva: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2022), https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdr2022_en.pdf (accessed April 20, 2025), particularly Figure 7.7.C: "Japan Indirect Investment in the Global South" (p. 208) and Figure 7.7.D: "Republic of Korea Indirect Investment in the Global South" (p. 209). One can observe the differing positions of Japan, South Korea, and North Korea, despite all being located in the Northern Hemisphere. Countries in the Northern Hemisphere may be classified as part of the "Global South" if they are developing nations, while countries in the Southern Hemisphere, especially those where populations of European descent hold dominant positions, may be categorized as part of the "Global North."

[7] Carl Oglesby, "Vietnamese Crucible," *Commonweal* 90, no.1 (January 17, 1969), 4–10. Cf. Alfred J. López et al., eds., *The Routledge Companion to Literature and the Global South* (London and New York: Routledge, 2024), 36.

the Brandt Commission, which had been established at the initiative of the World Bank in 1977. The 1980 report of the ICIDI, chaired by former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt (1913–1992), aimed to promote the development of impoverished countries in the South in response to longstanding demands from leaders of the so-called Third World. However, the now-famous North–South world map presented in the report—featuring what became known as the "Brandt Line"—reveals a surprisingly arbitrary, and at times almost nonsensical, global division. The line begins in Europe, moves eastward across the Mediterranean, and passes just south of Crete. At the island's eastern tip, it curves northward along the Anatolian coast, follows the southern edge of the Black Sea, and then traces the borders of the former Soviet Union. It continues toward East Asia, bending southward just east of the Korean Peninsula, then veers southeast to bypass much of Southeast Asia. Near Australia, the line turns sharply westward, skimming along the continent's northern coast, encircles it, dips south of New Zealand, and sweeps northeast across the Pacific Ocean toward the Americas. After crossing the U.S.–Mexico border, it runs just south of Florida, cuts across the Atlantic, and ultimately returns to Europe, completing its circuit in the Mediterranean (see Figure 1). Notably, countries such as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan—though now classified as economically poor—were designated as part of the "Global North" in the Brandt Report, by virtue of their inclusion as constituent republics of the former Soviet Union.[8]

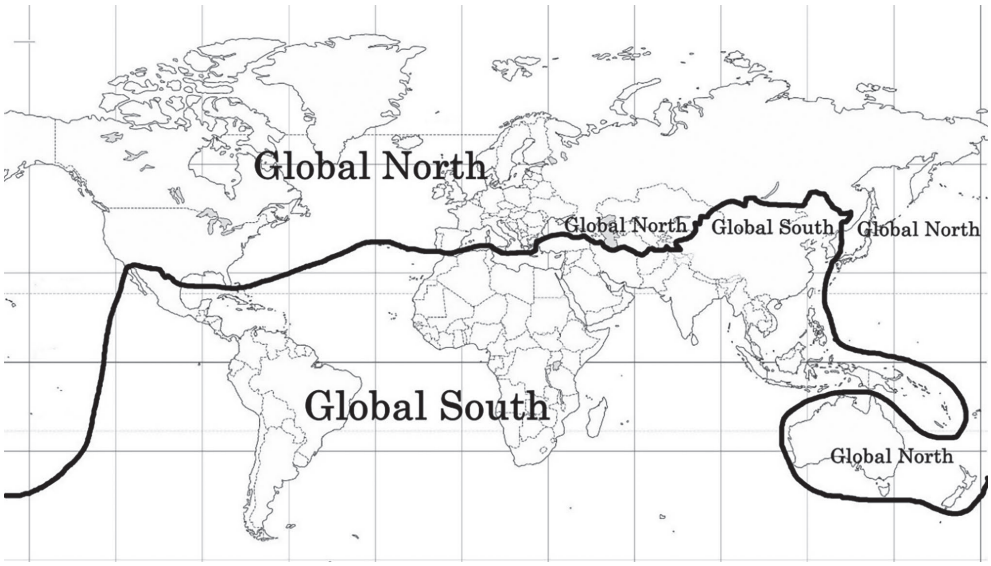

Figure 1: The Brandt Line, 1980

*Created by the author based on the map on the cover of *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (see Note 8).

[8] See the map on the cover of Independent Commission on International Development Issues, *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1980). A particularly sharp

It is also worth noting that South Korea is currently classified as part of the "Global North," though the precise moment of its transition from the "South" remains unclear. At the very least, it was already regarded as such in Marc Nouschi's *Petit atlas historique du XXe siècle*, first published in 1997.[9] In this context, Japan's position within the international order from the late twentieth century into the twenty-first century also merits attention. According to Emmanuel Todd, Japan belongs to the "West" not because of its geographical location, but because it functions as a "protectorate" of the United States.[10] By this logic, South Korea too may be seen as part of the "West," as another U.S. "protectorate". The concept of the "Global North" encompasses not only the hegemonic powers of both the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War, but also their principal "protectorates." From this perspective, Japan and South Korea may be regarded as simultaneously belonging to both the "West" and the "North." While the former designation stands in tension with their geographical location, the latter aligns with it—albeit in a manner that may appear incongruous to those still operating within the framework of traditional Eurocentrism. Todd argues that globalization is nothing but "the re-colonization of the world by the West," and that it was in this process that Western intellectuals constructed the crude dichotomy between the West (including its protectorates) and *le Reste du monde* or "the Rest of the world."[11] In any case, both the "West" and the "Global North" are concepts defined more by ideological alignment than by physical geography. The latter, in particular, is not only significantly newer than the former but also far less stable—and projecting it uncritically onto older historical contexts is highly problematic, if not outright hazardous.

Based on these considerations, it is evident that the categories of the "Global North" and "Global South" should not be applied uncritically in historical research. Such classifications can, in fact, hinder efforts to construct a global history from an impartial and nonpartisan perspective. Nonetheless, scholars examining the worldwide expansion of Christianity continue to rely on frameworks such as "North-South" or "South-South" relations. Yet in doing so, they seldom adhere to UNCTAD's classification. For instance, it is not uncommon to find Japan grouped under the label of the "Global South," together with both North and South Korea.

According to Gina A. Zurlo, the "Global North" comprises five regions: Eastern Europe (including Russia), Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe, and North America.

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critique of the arbitrariness of the Brandt Line-style North–South division can be found, for example, in chapter 4 of Marcin Wojciech Solarz, *The Language of Global Development: A Misleading Geography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

[9] Cf. Marc Nouschi, *Petit atlas historique du XXe siècle*, 6th ed. (Paris: Armand Colin, 2016), 147.

[10] Cf. Emmanuel Todd, *La défaite de l'Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 2024), 140, 141, 305.

[11] Todd, *La défaite de l'Occident*, 310.

The "Global South," by contrast, consists of the "remaining" seventeen regions: Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, Southeastern Asia, Western Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Australia/New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.[12] Zurlo describes this classification as "geographical." Her claim is valid in that she categorizes Austria and New Zealand as part of the "South," in opposition to the classification established by the Brandt Report. However, her argument contains several contradictions. For instance, Kazakhstan in "Central Asia" lies significantly farther north than Southern European countries such as Spain and Italy. Likewise, the latitude of Seoul, the capital of South Korea in "East Asia", is nearly identical to that of Athens, the capital of Greece in "Southern Europe". And Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, is clearly located farther north than Athens, and the same is true of Sapporo, a major city in Japan's northern island of Hokkaido. Yet Zurlo provides no explanation as to why Greece is classified as part of the "Global North," while both Koreas and Japan are assigned to the "Global South." This suggests that the classification is grounded not in geographical criteria, but rather in civilizational assumptions or an implicit Eurocentric worldview. This is readily inferred from Zurlo's binary framework, in which the "Global South" is essentially defined as the "remainder" of the world that does not belong to the "Global North." Here we find the same mindset that gave rise to the Eurocentric dichotomy between "the West" and "the Rest of the world," which Todd so sharply criticizes.

Elijah J. F. Kim, without any malicious intent, divides the world into "Western" and "non-Western" spheres, identifying the former as the land of "white" people and the latter as that of "non-white" people. He further equates the non-Western world with the "Global South." While this definition is easy to grasp, it renders the concept of the Global South essentially meaningless. Since even the frigid regions of the Northern Hemisphere can be included in the "South" simply by virtue of being non-European, the concept disregards geography entirely. Such a formulation amounts to a kind of conceptual violence—akin to calling black "white"—and can be said to have harmful effects on the education of younger generations. Kim disregards the Brandt Line and classifies Oceania—including Australia and New Zealand— as part of the "South," perhaps because this region was, prior to white colonization, inhabited exclusively by "non-white" peoples.[13] If that is the rationale, then North America too, originally the land of "non-white" peoples, should likewise be classified as part of the "South." In any case, Kim's discourse on the "Global South" is internally inconsistent.

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[12] Gina A. Zurlo, *Global Christianity: A Guide to the World's Largest Religion from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2022), xviii.

[13] Cf. Elijah J. F. Kim, *The Rise of the Global South: The Decline of Western Christendom and the Rise of Majority World Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), xxiii–xxv, 1–5, 17.

According to the preface written by Mark A. Lamport in the voluminous *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South* (which is more than 1,000 pages long), the "Global South" includes "nations of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and most of Asia," many of which are characterized by "less-developed or severely limited resources." As one might expect, the encyclopedia features entries on Japan, China, North and South Korea, as well as Israel and Turkey—all categorized as part of the "Global South." However, a color-coded world map printed in the same preface contradicts this editorial approach: on the map, countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Israel, and Turkey are shaded blue, signifying their inclusion in the "Global North."[14] Closer examination reveals that the map is sourced from Wikimedia Commons and was originally created to show the member states and "partners for cooperation" of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as of 2005. No explanation is provided for why this particular map—which was never intended to represent a Global North–South division—was adopted in this reference work. This inconsistency points to a deeper problem: the North–South divide, as it is commonly employed, remains conceptually unstable and often misleading—not only for general readers, but for scholars as well.

In his study of the relationship between religion and economic development, Rumy Hasan defines the "Global South" in rather vague terms—as a world where "poverty is highly prevalent and at its most acute," and where religion functions as "the most important determining factor of social norms, values, and customary practices." Yet he includes Japan, a country that had "caught up with and then overtaken Western Europe" by the latter half of the twentieth century, as part of the "Global South."[15] Does Hasan classify Japan as such simply because it was once poor and is a non-Western country?

Behind the North-South classification, lies a conflation of several dichotomies: the "Christian" world of the North versus the "pagan" world of the South, the "civilized" nations of the North versus the "savage" regions of the South, and the "hegemonic" powers of the North versus the "subordinate" areas of the South. To these may also be added the binary opposition between a "higher" monotheism and a "lower" polytheism. Overall, the "Global North" tends to be imagined as a central, brighter, more radiant world, while the "Global South" is portrayed as an "ex-centric," darker, more shadowed one.[16] Nina Schneider argues that the term "Global South," which originated from a "Western-centric episteme," is fundamentally unacceptable—regardless

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[14] Mark A. Lamport ed., *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 20 18), xix-xxiii.

[15] Rumy Hasan, *Religion and Development in the Global South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, First South Asian Edition, 2020), 18, 173.

[16] See chapter 2, "South," in Jerry Brotton, *Four Points of the Compass: The Unexpected History of Direction* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2024).

of any new meanings ascribed to it—and is therefore unusable in academic research.[17]

The history of Christianity, shaped by this framework, has often been portrayed—especially from the early modern period onward—as the process by which Christianity, regarded as an advanced religion of the Western world, spread into the supposedly inferior, "indigenous" religious sphere of the Non-West. The prototype for such historical narratives can be found in the "mission histories" of both the Catholic and Protestant churches. These accounts often highlight an undesirable—though seemingly inevitable—"syncretism" between Christianity and "indigenous" beliefs. Examples include Japanese *Kirishitan* commoners visiting Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples alongside non-Christians, or *Kirishitan* samurai committing *seppuku* (ritual suicide) in the spirit of Christian martyrdom.[18] In the case of the Korean peninsula, traditional spirit-invocation rituals or *musok* have often been described as merging with Christian beliefs, particularly the Pentecostal faith in the descent of the Holy Spirit, which is notably prominent in certain Protestant traditions.[19]

Such instances of "syncretism" and "indigenization," as described above, are typically regarded as phenomena specific to the "Non-West" or the "Global South." This view reflects the widespread modern perception that the "Global South" constitutes an originally non-Christian world characterized by diverse "pagan" and "primitive" beliefs, in contrast to the Christian-dominated world of the "Global North." As a result, missionary efforts and the process of "Christianization" have traditionally been understood as movements from the "North" to the "South," or from the "West" to the "Non-West."[20]

Today, many Catholic theologians prefer the term "inculturation" over "indigenization" or "syncretism," while Protestant theologians often use "contextualization" and have increasingly adopted the term "interculturation." These concepts, however, are typically applied with a primary focus on developments in regions categorized as part of the "Global South." What is frequently absent from such perspectives is a comparative view that considers the syncretic

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[17] Nina Schneider, "Between Promise and Skepticism: The Global South and Our Role as Engaged Intellectuals," *The Global South*, vol. 11, No. 2 (2017), 18-38.

[18] See Masakazu Asami, *Idolatry in the Kirishitan Era* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2009), chapters 2 and 5 [浅見雅一『キリシタン時代の偶像崇拝』東京大学出版会 2009 年]. Behind such instances of "syncretism" or coexistence lay the efforts of figures—such as the Jesuits of the early modern period—who adopted an "accommodationist" approach in order to root the Catholic faith in foreign lands.

[19] Takahiro Suzuki, *Why Did Korea Become a Christian Country?* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2012) [鈴木崇巨『韓国はなぜキリスト教国になったか』春秋社 2012 年], 133, 134, and 149-51.

[20] The older geographical division between West and East—or East and West—like that between Europe and Asia, lacks a clearly defined "boundary" when examined strictly. Nevertheless, it remains an essential perspective for constructing a global history that reaches back to the era of "proto-globalization" in the early modern period. This framework provides a valuable lens for exploring how both the Western and Eastern worlds understood themselves in earlier times.

"indigenization" of Christianity within the "Global North." In other words, there remains a lack of a robust comparative framework for examining "syncretism" across both North and South throughout Christian history. Here, I do not attach a negative meaning to the term "syncretism." Many religious adherents have traditionally taken pride in the "purity" of their own faiths and have tended to accord syncretic religions a lower valuation. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that among the religions that originated in one land and were transmitted to culturally and religiously distinct worlds, very few have remained untouched by "syncretism."[21] Jehu J. Hanciles aptly characterizes "syncretism" as "cross-cultural penetration."[22] Furthermore, according to Lamin O. Sanneh, Christianity itself possesses a fundamentally "syncretic potential", having "an enormous appetite at absorbing materials from other sources."[23]

The Bible spread into diverse cultural contexts primarily through translation—a process fundamentally different from that of the Qur'an, which traditionally prohibits translation in liturgical use. Yet translation inevitably entails "syncretism." As the revered name of God moved from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into Latin and the Germanic languages, it could not help but merge with the native images of local deities. In the *Heliand*, an Old Saxon poem composed in the first half of the ninth century, Jesus is depicted as a guardian lord in the style of Germanic sagas, while his disciples are portrayed as young warriors serving their chieftain. Alongside the image of Jesus as a leader of warriors, there were instances in the Germanic world where Christ was syncretized with Odin.[24] During the Vietnam War, Francis Spellman, the Archbishop of New York, referred to American soldiers fighting in enemy territory as "soldiers of Christ".[25] He could arguably be regarded as a faithful heir to the tradition of syncretic fusion between Germanic warrior culture and Christianity that had emerged during the medieval period.

In recent years, there has been a growing movement to reinterpret the history of Christianity within the framework of global history. This approach seeks to overcome the traditional, Western-centered view of world history by reexamining the development of

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[21] Cf. John D. Y. Peel, "Syncretism and Religious Change," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10, no. 2 (1968) : 121-41.

[22] Jehu J. Hanciles, *Migration and the Making of Global Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2021), 71.

[23] Lamin O. Sanneh, Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), 49.

[24] Larry Swain, "The 'Hælend' and Other Images of Jesus in Anglo-Saxon England," in Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages, ed. Jane Beal (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 59-75.

[25] Richard John Neuhaus, "The War, the Churches and Civil Religion," *The Annals of the Academy of American Political and Social Science*, vol. 387 (1970) : 130.

civilizations, religions, and peoples through the lenses of interaction, connection, influence, and exchange.[26] For example, Klaus Koschorke argues that in order to construct a comprehensive history of "global Christianity," attention must be paid to the "polycentric" structures and transregional linkages that have been present since the earliest periods of Christian history.[27] In doing so, he also employs the concept of the "Global South," emphasizing the importance of focusing on "South-South" connections. In this respect, he remains influenced by the North-South dichotomy. And he does not provide a clear explanation of where the "North" ends and the "South" begins. It seems that he is referring, somewhat vaguely, to regions where non-Christian populations form the majority, to the former colonies of Western powers, and to formerly underdeveloped nations characterized by non-democratic or authoritarian regimes. From this perspective, the three regions of East Asia—Japan, China, and Korea—despite their location in the Northern Hemisphere, would likely be considered part of the "South."

The conceptual division of the world into the "Global North" and "Global South" is, at its core, Eurocentric and unconsciously inherits the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. The practice of lumping together Africa and Asia without distinction under the single category of the South even recalls the older patterns of Orientalism. Indeed, Carl Oglesby employed the term "Global South" to highlight the structure of oppression by hegemonic states of the Northern Hemisphere over the underdeveloped countries of the Southern Hemisphere; he did not seek to fix the North-South divide as a conceptual framework.

In my view, attempts to construct a global history should refer to Europe as Europe, Africa as Africa, America as America, and Asia as Asia, rather than hastily adopting vague frameworks such as "North-South" or "South-South." Of course, concepts like Asia are themselves imprecise, and the boundary between Europe and Asia is by no means clearly defined. However, if we introduce subcategories such as West Asia, East Asia, and South Asia, the contours become relatively distinct. These divisions are far more appropriate than the crude formulations of the "Global South" discourse, which not only indiscriminately group Africa and Asia together but also indulge in the highly flexible notion that countries of the South can "graduate" and join the ranks of the North.[28]

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[26] For an overview of the methodological characteristics of global history, see chapter 4 of Sebastian Conrad, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (München: Beck), 2013.

[27] Klaus Koschorke, "A Global History of Christianity: The Need for New Maps,"trans. Marie Kudō, in *Christianity in Global History: Publishing Media and Network Formation in Modern Asia*, edited by Mira Sonntag (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 2019)［クラウス・コショルケ「キリスト教のグローバル・ヒストリー：新しい地図の必要性」工藤真理訳、ミラ・ゾンターク編『〈グローバル・ヒストリー〉のなかのキリスト教：近代アジアにおける出版メディアとネットワーク形成』新教出版社 2019 年], 14–21.

[28] In her discussion of the "theology of anger" in the "Global South," Katalina Tahaafe-Williams classifies not only Japan and South Korea but also rapidly developing India as part of the "Global North." Yet

Incidentally, Koschorke—apart from his discussion of the "Global South"—develops several highly appropriate and insightful arguments. He draws attention to the autonomy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which rivals European Christianity in terms of antiquity, and highlights various aspects of "self-Christianization" and "inculturation" in India, Africa (such as Sierra Leone and the Congo), and East Asia (specifically Korea).[29] His conception of church history as a history of migration, beginning with the journeys of the apostle Paul—who, according to tradition, was commissioned by the resurrected Jesus after his crucifixion in Jerusalem to engage in missionary work in Asia Minor and Greece—is also persuasive.[30] While Koschorke's vision of the global history of Christianity is "polycentric," it nevertheless incorporates, with regard to its point of origin, what Pamela Kyle Crossley describes as a "divergence" model of narrative—namely, the diffusion of missionaries and their teachings from their original center in Palestine, particularly from Jerusalem, the site traditionally believed to be where Jesus was crucified and resurrected.[31]

In the course of this "divergence," processes of "indigenization" or "inculturation," accompanied by the "syncretism" of Christianity with preexisting religions, took place throughout the world. This occurred not only to the west of Palestine, but also to its east, north, and south. For example, in the underground necropolis of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, there is a mosaic of Christ, dating from the third to fourth centuries, that depicts him in the likeness of Helios, the Greek sun god. Furthermore, the apostles Peter and Paul are also portrayed in the guise of ancient deities. It is also well known that the celebration of Christmas incorporates elements of the Roman festival of Saturnalia.[32] Religious "syncretism" first occurred in Europe within the history of Christianity. Any attempt to narrate a global history of Christianity must begin by acknowledging this fact. If scholars or church leaders fail to acknowledge this and instead portray "syncretism" and "indigenization" as phenomena peculiar to Africa, Asia, or Latin America, then it must be concluded that they are—consciously or

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she does not sufficiently examine what implications this classification holds for the study of global Christianity. Cf. Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, "Oceania Reflective Essay: Theology of Prophetic Anger," in *Emerging Theologies from the Global South*, ed. by Mitri Raheb and Mark A. Lamport (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023), 487.

[29] Koschorke, "A Global History of Christianity," [コショルケ「キリスト教のグローバル・ヒストリー」], 22-39.

[30] Klaus Koschorke, "Religion and Migration: A Polycentric Perspective on the History of Global Christianity," translated by Takako Hirata, in Sonntag, ed., *Christianity in Global History* [クラウス・コショルケ「宗教と人口移動：グローバル・クリスチャニティの多極的歴史観」平田貴子訳、ゾンターク編『〈グローバル・ヒストリー〉のなかのキリスト教』], 50.

[31] Cf. Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What Is Global History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press), 28-46.

[32] Cf. Norio Matsumoto, *A History of Christianity, vol. 1: Early Christianity to the Reformation* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2009) [松本宣郎『キリスト教の歴史 第1巻：初期キリスト教～宗教改革』山川出版社 2009年], 90-91.

unconsciously—shaped by Eurocentric and North–South hierarchical assumptions. Such a view implies the existence of a once "pure" Christianity in Europe that only became "corrupted" or "hybridized" as it spread to non-European regions.

2. The Center of World Maps

The North-South dichotomy has been reinforced by world maps that place Europe at the center. Particularly from the latter half of the nineteenth century onward, with the rise of British imperial hegemony and scientific authority—and the global adoption of the Greenwich Meridian and Greenwich Mean Time—the centrality of Europe became firmly established.[33] Such maps, positioning Europe at the center, with the Americas to the west, Africa to the south, Asia to the east, and Japan and its neighboring regions designated as the "Far East," vividly reflect a Eurocentric worldview. Intellectuals in modern Europe believed that rational thought, legal systems, and scientific technologies would spread from West to East and from North to South, bringing civilization to regions they regarded as uncivilized. Western Christianity was likewise understood as a higher religion befitting advanced societies, and missionaries, shaped by this consciousness, set out across the world with this conviction. This tendency was particularly pronounced among Protestants.[34]

From 1945 to 1951, General Douglas MacArthur governed defeated Japan as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. In his radio address on Victory over Japan Day (September 2, 1945), he thanked God for the preservation of "democracy and modern civilization" and declared, "The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character."[35] When MacArthur referred to the issue as "theological," he was not speaking metaphorically. He was thinking specifically of Christianity, which had nurtured the development of advanced Western civilization. MacArthur aimed to reform and democratize the inner character of the Japanese people through its influence. Accordingly, he urgently appealed to church leaders in the United States to send "a thousand missionaries" to evangelize Japan.[36] In response, a significant number of missionaries came to Japan. After

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[33] Cf. Jeffrey Jaynes, *Christianity beyond Christendom. The Global Christian Experience on Medieval Mappaemundi and Early Modern World Maps* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz), 2018, 398.

[34] Cf. Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money. Affluence as a Missionary Problem. Revised and Expanded* (New York: Orbis Books), 2017, 17-36.

[35] *General MacArthur's V-J Day Radio Broadcast*, Naval History and Heritage Command, https://www.history.navy. mil/research/archives/digital-exhibits-highlights/vj-day/surrender/macarthur-radio.html (accessed April 28, 2025).

[36] Ray A. Moore, *Soldier of God. MacArthur's Attempt to Christianize Japan* (Portland, Maine: Merwin Asia), 2011, 40f. Cf. Mark Mullins (translated into Japanese by Kenta Awazu), "Religion under

military personnel, missionaries were the next group allowed to enter the country, arriving even a year before businesspeople. They were granted special privileges, including access to military housing, hospitals, schools, and retail stores.[37] The evangelization of postwar Japan was thus deeply intertwined with the broader occupation policy. Naturally, the occupiers and missionaries alike operated with a world map that placed the Western world at its center.

By contrast, world maps drawn by Europeans before the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution were by no means Eurocentric. Medieval people held a strong fascination with the East and firmly believed in the existence of a separate Judeo-Christian world far to the east. In medieval Europe, there was a legend that St. Thomas had traveled to India in the mid-first century to spread Christianity.[38] It is well known that in 1492, during his voyage toward India, Columbus landed on islands in the Caribbean and dispatched Luis de Torres, a *converso*, as an interpreter into the interior of Cuba to search for the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.[39] This reflects a kind of "philosemitism" held by some Europeans at the time—though it was, of course, based on the expectation of their conversion to Christianity and cooperation.[40]

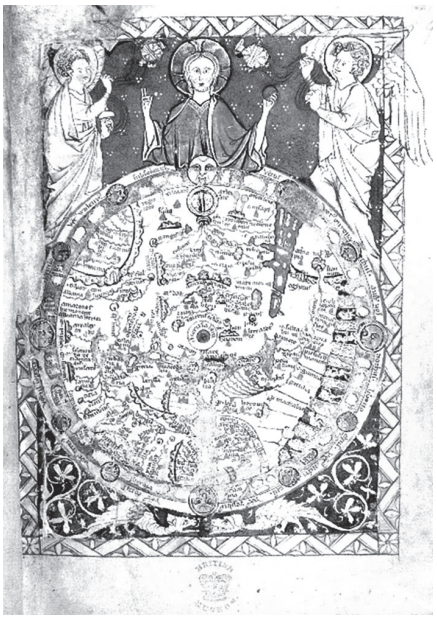

Figure 2: Psalter World Map, England, c. 1265

*https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Psalter_world_map.jpg

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Occupation: The Impact of SCAP Policies on Shinto and Christianity," in *Occupation Policies and Religion: Allied Policies toward Asia and the Plural Postwar World*, edited by Tsuyoshi Nakano et al. (Tokyo: Senshū University Press, 2022)［マーク・マリンズ「占領下における宗教：神道とキリスト教に対するSCAP政策の衝撃」粟津賢太訳、中野毅ほか編『占領政策と宗教――アジアと複数の戦後世界における連合国の宗教政策』専修大学出版局2022年］, 103-106.

[37] Moore, *Soldier of God*, 121-23. Although the Religious Section of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers initially opposed such efforts, they ultimately could not defy MacArthur.

[38] John B. Friedman et al. ed., *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages. An Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Routledge), 274f.

[39] David S. Katz, "Israel in America. The Wanderings of the Lost Ten Tribes from Mikveh Yisrael to Timothy McVeigh," in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800*, edited by Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books), 2001, 107-10.

[40] For a discussion of this issue, see Tomoji Odori, "Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Early Modern Germany," in *Religion and Politics in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Unity and Plurality in the Christian World*, edited by Takashi Jinno and Tomoji Odori (Kyoto: Minerva Shobō, 2014)［踊共二「近

Although medieval world maps are all incomplete, they nevertheless offer valuable insights into how the global history of Christianity might be constructed. For example, let us observe a world map included in a Psalter manuscript produced in thirteenth-century London (figure 2). This map belongs to the medieval tradition of so-called "T-O maps," with its center being Jerusalem.[41] The map is oriented with the East at the top and the West at the bottom; the Mediterranean Sea and Rome are depicted toward the bottom, while the distant edges of Europe appear at the lower left. Christ, holding an orb and ruling over the world, is depicted in the eastern sky, accompanied by two angels. On this map, it is clearly the East, not the West, that holds primacy (prejudices against the South can be observed in depictions such as headless giants in Africa, but this does not reflect the "North-South" dichotomy). The early history of Christian missions should originally be portrayed based on this type of world map, rather than starting from Portugal, from where Columbus set sail, or America, from where MacArthur boarded military aircraft bound for Asia. It is appropriate to place Jerusalem at the starting point of Christianity's long and expansive global history. Of course, after two thousand years, multiple centers emerged around the world, from which Catholicism and various Protestant teachings spread outward to surrounding regions; for depicting these later stages, different maps are naturally needed. However, these smaller maps must ultimately be integrated into a larger world map—or into a three-dimensional globe—if the global history of Christianity is to be fully understood.

Of course, some may criticize a world map centered on Jerusalem as unscientific and incompatible with a truly impartial global history, arguing that global history is best understood as a web of countless relationships without a single, fixed "center."[42] However, it is also a fact that religions such as Christianity and Buddhism have specific points of origin, and overlooking these historical centers risks undermining any meaningful account of their global development. The same logic applies to science and technology: just as with religion, each tradition or innovation has its own historical "center" of emergence. In reality, global history is nothing other than a bundle of innumerable sub-histories, each with its own center. In any case, constructing a global history of Christianity that takes Jerusalem as its starting point can help to relativize traditional Christian histories that, shaped by the lingering legacy of colonialism, tend to subsume Asia and Africa under the generalized label of the "Global South."

世ドイツにおける反ユダヤ主義と親ユダヤ主義」、甚野尚志・踊共二編『中世・近世ヨーロッパの宗教と政治：キリスト教世界の統一性と多元性』ミネルヴァ書房 2014 年], 390-409.

[41] Jaynes, *Christianity beyond Christendom*, 44-51.

[42] Crossley, *What Is Global History?*, 4.

3. Global History and Protestantism

According to Peter Wallace, from the perspective of establishing the doctrines and church institutions sought by the reformers, the Protestant Reformation was a long process that began in the late Middle Ages and continued into the eighteenth century.[43] Initially, European reformers concentrated on renewing Christianity within Europe itself, showing little interest in overseas missions such as those undertaken by the Catholic Church, particularly the Jesuits. However, by the seventeenth century, riding the wave of colonial expansion, Protestants also began to extend their reach into the wider world. For example, the Dutch East India Company dispatched clergy to India and Ceylon. Their initial purpose was to provide worship opportunities and pastoral care for Dutch settlers, but they eventually came into contact with local populations in Java, Ambon, Taiwan, and Ceylon, leading to missionary activities among the local peoples.[44] Similarly, the Church of England established the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in 1701, sending missionaries to various parts of the Americas, Africa, and East Asia.[45] The German Lutheran Church was a later participant; the Berlin Missionary Society (BMW), founded in 1824, sent its first missionaries to South Africa in 1833.[46]

These historical developments have, since the early twenty-first century, given rise to a new research perspective within the framework of global history, focusing on what is called the "Global Reformation." Traditional world-historical interpretations of the Reformation often reflected the views of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, emphasizing processes of "modernization" and "rationalization," while generalizing that Asian religions lacked the impetus for rationalization and thus offered no path toward the "disenchantment of the world."[47] However, recent global histories of the Reformation have sought to relativize such Eurocentrism, portraying missionary activities by Western Christians in Asia and Africa not as

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[43] Peter G. Wallace, *The Long European Reformation: Religion, Political Conflict, and the Search for Conformity, 1350–1750*, 3rd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[44] Cf. Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, vol. 2: 1500-1900* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), chapter 10.

[45] Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), chapter 2. Underlying this was a sense of unease over the expanding influence of religious dissidents—such as the Quakers—in the overseas colonies.

[46] Andrea Schultze, *"In Gottes Namen Hütten bauen." Kirchlicher Landbesitz in Südafrika. Die Berliner Mission und die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Südafrikas zwischen 1834 und 2005* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005). The Pietists, who had emerged from the Lutheran Church, had already begun efforts to evangelize Native Americans as early as the eighteenth century. Cf. Douglas Shantz, *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 351f.

[47] See Kunichika Yagyu, *Weber and Troeltsch. An Essay on Religion and Domination* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1983)［柳父圀近『ウェーバーとトレルチ : 宗教と支配についての試論』みすず書房 1983 年］.

the spread of a superior, civilized religion but as dynamic encounters between different cultures.[48]

In 2017, the year marking the quincentenary of Luther's Reformation, historian Wolfgang Reinhard contributed an essay titled "A Global Reformation?" to the exhibition catalogue *The Luther Effect* in Berlin. In it, he referred to the Kimbanguist Church in Congo, asserting that the "Indigenisierung und Transformation" (indigenization and transformation) of European Christianity in Africa was both natural and legitimate. At the same time, he argued that defining Protestantism narrowly by the standards of Luther and Calvin—i.e. Western-style Protestantism—as the sole "orthodoxy" is fundamentally unjustified.[49] The Kimbanguist Church was founded in the 1920s by Simon Kimbangu, who originally belonged to the Baptist Church and emphasized miracles based on the Bible. Because Kimbangu was declared an "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit, Western church authorities regarded his movement as heretical.[50] Yet labeling an African Christian church with over ten million adherents as heretical according to Western standards clearly reflects the old "North-South" power dynamics.

Allan Anderson, in his 2010 work *African Reformation*, argues that the Pentecostal churches of twentieth-century Africa represent a new "reformation" against "over-Europeanized Christianity." According to Anderson, African Christians criticized the teachings of missionaries from mainstream European churches as "unbiblical." The Bible describes, for instance, how Jesus healed a blind man using a mixture of saliva and mud, instructing him to wash in the Pool of Siloam (John 9:6-7), and how the Apostle Paul healed the sick and expelled demons using handkerchiefs and aprons (Acts 19:12). Many African believers were drawn to Pentecostalism— a vibrant Protestant movement that spread explosively from early twentieth-century America to Africa—because of their hope for the miraculous healing powers recorded in the Scriptures. European missionaries, however, often viewed these phenomena as impure religious "syncretism" or a degeneration of Christianity. Yet Anderson argues that such developments should be understood as inevitable "cultural incarnation" or "contextualization."[51]

Pentecostalism has also taken deep root in Latin America and Asia. According to Lindsay Maxwell, one reason for this is that Pentecostalism, unlike the Western tradition of

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[48] Cf. Nicholas Terpstra, *Global Reformations. Transforming Early Modern Religions, Societies, and Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge), 2019.

[49] Wolfgang Reinhard, "Reformation Global?" in *Der Luther Effekt. 500 Jahre Protestantismus in der Welt*, hg. vom Deutschen Historischen Museum (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2017), 397-401.

[50] For the latest research on the Kimbanguist Church, see Adrien Nginamau Ngudiankama, ed., *Kimbanguism 100 Years On: Interdisciplinary Essays on a Socio-Cultural Movement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 2023.

[51] Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation. African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2001), 3-5, 31-33, 210-14.

Protestantism which emphasizes "printed" Bibles and doctrinal confessions, thrives on the power of "spoken" words and direct spiritual "experiences." It is a movement characterized by religious egalitarianism, where distinctions of gender and race—white, Black, Asian, Hispanic—are erased before the shared experience of the Holy Spirit.[52] In any case, African Protestantism is often linked to issues of "indigenization," "syncretism," "inculturation," and "contextualization." Without a deep and careful consideration of these dynamics, it is impossible to accurately conceptualize the global history of Christianity.

4. The Infinite Repetition of Syncretism

In the mid-Edo period, the Confucian scholar Hakuseki Arai interrogated Giovanni Battista Sidotti, an Italian priest who had illegally entered Japan, and subsequently authored the *Seiyō Kibun* (*Records of Things Western*) in 1725, a work that included a comparative analysis of Catholicism and Protestantism. In addition to the information obtained directly from Sidotti, Hakuseki also drew on *Fūsetsugaki* (*Dutch Reports on Global News*), conversations with the Dutch factory chiefs and interpreters, and documents left by San'emon Okamoto, a former Jesuit priest known in Italy as Giuseppe Chiara who had apostatized under persecution. To Hakuseki, a rationalist grounded in Neo-Confucianism, Catholicism appeared superstitious and rustic. He found Sidotti's beliefs in miracles, exorcisms, amulets, and relics—such as the supposedly incorruptible body of Francis Xavier—particularly unacceptable. Hakuseki even consulted the Dutch residents of Dejima concerning the incorruptibility of relics and was persuaded by their "scientific" explanation attributing it to the effects of preservatives. He highly esteemed Protestantism, particularly for its rejection of magical beliefs, its simplification of worship, and its prominence in the spheres of commerce and scientific advancement. He notably described the Protestant nation of the Netherlands as a "great power without equal in the world," a statement found in his earlier work *Johann Battista Monogatari* (*The Tale of Johann Battista*) written prior to the completion of *Seiyō Kibun*.[53]

As Hakuseki's case demonstrates, the intellectuals of Edo-period Japan were already both

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[52] Lindsay Maxwell, "The Pneuma News. Transcontinental Press Networks and the Construction of Modern Pentecostal Identity in the Twentieth Century," in *Global Protestant Missions: Politics, Reform, and Communication, 1730s-1930s*, ed. by Jenna M. Gibbs (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 231ff.

[53] For a detailed analysis of Hakuseki's understanding of Christianity, see Tomoji Odori, "The Japanese Perception of Protestantism in the Early Modern Period: Dangerous East-West Exchanges during the Era of Christianity Prohibition," *The Journal of Human and Cultural Sciences* 54, no. 2 (2023) : 47-93 [踊共二「近世日本人のプロテスタント認識：禁教時代の危険な東西交流」『武蔵大学人文学会雑誌』54巻2号（2023年）], 47-93.

actors in and chroniclers of the global history of Christianity. Regarding the "superstitious" character of early modern Catholicism, which Hakuseki so strongly criticized, much scholarly research has accumulated concerning both its Western and Japanese manifestations. For example, on Ikitsuki Island, *Kakure Kirishitan* (clandestine Christians) made *omaburi* (protective talismans) by cutting white paper into the shape of a cross at New Year's. These were affixed to pillars as prayers for health or, in some cases, ingested in the hope of curing illness—sometimes even given to livestock.[54] This practice reflects a syncretic fusion of Christian missionary prayer rituals with elements of Japanese folk religion. Indeed, in early modern Catholic Europe—particularly in the German-speaking regions—there was a custom of creating "swallowable images" (Esszettel or Schluckbildchen), small slips of paper printed with images of the Virgin Mary or other sacred figures, which were ingested by the sick as a form of healing prayer. As early as the sixth century, Gregory of Tours recorded that sick individuals would drink small fragments torn from the garments of saints.[55] In China as well, it was customary for women to ingest talismans after childbirth. Jesuit missionaries, aware of this practice, reportedly distributed Christian alternatives, such as amulets bearing the name of St. Ignatius of Loyola, to newly baptized women.[56] It is important to note that the phenomenon of "syncretism" between Christianity and older folk religious practices did not originate in Japan or China but was already present in Europe. The use of amulets for curses, blessings, and healing was widespread across the Mediterranean world and Europe long before the advent of Christianity and continued through repeated processes of syncretic adaptation.[57] Jesuit missionaries in early modern Europe were, in fact, sympathetic to popular religious culture, offering believers protective amulets and holy water—practices that even attracted Protestant adherents. This may be characterized as a form of "medical evangelism".[58] The people of early modern Europe, suffering from crop failures and plagues

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[54] Shigeo Nakazono, *The Origins of the Kakure Kirishitan. The Reality of Their Faith and Community*, Gen Shobō, 2018 [中園成生『かくれキリシタンの起源：信仰と信者の実相』弦書房 2018 年], 272.

[55] Cf. Katharina Wilkens, "Drinking the Quran, Swallowing the Madonna, Embodied Aesthetics of Popular Healing Practices," in *Alternative Voices. A Plurality Approach for Religious Studies. Essays in Honor of Ulrich Berner*, ed. by Afe Adogame, Magnus Echtler and Oliver Freiberger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2013), 243-259; Margarethe Ruff, *Zauberpraktiken als Lebenshilfe. Magie im Alltag vom Mittelalter bis Heute* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003), 154f.

[56] Nadine Amsler, *Jesuits and Matriarchs: Domestic Worship in Early Modern China* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2018), 87-98.

[57] John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chapters 7 and 8.

[58] Cf. Trevor Johnson, "Blood, Tears, and Xavier-Water: Jesuit Missionaries and Popular Religion in the Eighteenth-Century Upper Palatinate," in *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400–1800*, ed. Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson (New York: Palgrave, 1996), 183-202.

exacerbated by the climatic hardships of the Little Ice Age, had a profound and urgent desire for blessings of agricultural abundance and bodily health. In the seventeenth century, in the village of Chamonix at the foot of Mont Blanc, Catholic priests, responding to villagers' pleas, performed exorcisms directed at advancing glaciers, which were believed to be the work of demons.[59] In Naters, near the Aletsch Glacier, Jesuits performed rites in which holy water was sprinkled on the glacier in the name of St. Ignatius, reportedly halting its advance.[60] In the mountainous regions of Switzerland, ancient blessing rituals for pastures and livestock—rooted in pre-Christian "pagan" traditions—were practiced. These included magical chants or cries known as *Alpsegen*, performed by herders using funnels to project their voices.[61]

Among *Kakure Kirishitan* of Ikitsuki Island, there are ritual practices known as *yabarai* (house purification) and *nobarai* (field purification). These appear to reflect a transplanted version of the European custom of house blessing or benediction. As Shigeo Nakazono has pointed out, the influence of Japanese folk customs must also be taken into account.[62] Kentarō Miyazaki argues that such ritual observances among *Kakure Kirishitan* underwent significant transformation through "syncretism" with Japanese traditions. He even suggests that for the common people of early modern Japan, who ardently sought *gense-riyaku* (this-worldly benefits), the monotheistic framework of "authentic Christianity" was largely incomprehensible, and that what *Kirishitan* actually preserved was not Christianity itself, but rather "something other than Christianity".[63] This evaluation, however, must also be extended to Christianity in early modern Europe. The "syncretism" between Christianity and ancient European polytheisms is a well-documented historical fact. It would therefore be more accurate to understand that what was introduced to early modern Japan was already a syncretic Christianity—one that had assimilated multiple layers of European folk religiosity—and that this form then underwent further "syncretism" with existing Japanese religious traditions.[64] In

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[59] William K. Stevens, *The Change in the Weather. People, Weather, and the Science of Climate* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1999), 45.

[60] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil* (Paris: Flammarion, 2020), 289f.

[61] Cf. Alois Lütolf, *Sagen, Bräuche, Legenden aus den fünf Orten Luzern, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden und Zug* (Luzern: Verlag von Franz Joseph Schiffmann, 1862), 546, no. 511; Hans Zahler, "Volksglaube und Sagen aus dem Emmenthal," *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 15 (1911): 1-17.

[62] Cf. Shigeo Nakazono, *The Origins of the Kakure Kirishitan* [中園成生『かくれキリシタンの起源』, 327-28; Tetsuyuki Seki and Tomoji Odori, *Forgotten Minorities: A History of Persecution and Coexistence in Europe* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2016) [関哲行・踊共二『忘れられたマイノリティ：迫害と共生のヨーロッパ史』山川出版社 2016 年], 44-49.

[63] Kentarō Miyazaki, What Did the Hidden Christians Believe? (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2018) [宮崎賢太郎『潜伏キリシタンは何を信じていたのか』角川書店 2018 年], 84, 93-98, 135.

[64] For this point, see Ikuo Higashibaba, *A History of Kirishitan Reception: Aspects of Doctrine, Faith, and Practice* (Tokyo: Kyōbunkwan, 2018) [東馬場郁生『きりしたん受容史：教えと信仰と実践の諸相』教文館 2018 年], 66-68.

this sense, the phenomenon represents a form of "global hyper-syncretism"—a pattern that has recurred almost infinitely throughout the history of Christianity's transmission and expansion.

"Syncretism" has often been portrayed as a phenomenon occurring in the "uncivilized" regions of Asia and Africa. When the ambiguous division between the "Global North" and "Global South" is imposed upon the history of Christianity, and "syncretism" is framed primarily as a problem of the latter, even the use of more accommodating terms such as "inculturation" or "contextualization" merely perpetuates the long-standing notion of Northern religious superiority and Southern inferiority.

Hakuseki Arai maintained that, unlike Catholicism, Protestantism had been liberated from magical practices and was rational and reasonable. Yet this assessment does not withstand scrutiny. As Don Yoder has shown, traditions of miraculous faith healing that had been excluded from the official public sphere by Protestant denominations persisted within the realm of lay folk medicine. In North America, such traditions survived among the Pennsylvania Dutch (German) communities in the form of *Brauche* or powwowing. Practitioners—known as powwow doctors—would murmur biblical verses, pray while using thread, cloth, or paper fragments, and heal illnesses or injuries by the laying on of hands. According to Yoder, this subterranean stream of (originally Catholic) magical healing resurfaced in the twentieth century through new Protestant movements such as Pentecostalism, captivating large numbers of believers.[65] As previously noted, Pentecostalism spread from the United States to Asia and Africa. Its emphasis on direct experiences of the Holy Spirit and miraculous divine healing closely aligns it with the Holiness movement. The Holiness tradition was introduced to Japan in the early twentieth century by figures such as Jūji Nakada and attracted a devoted following. In their gatherings, congregants frequently experienced ecstatic episodes: they received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and underwent divine healing.[66]

Japan, of course, had long possessed its own traditions of ritual healing performed by *kitōshi* (ritual specialists) and *shugenja* (mountain ascetics), who were believed to possess supernatural powers.[67] For Japanese individuals raised in such a religious environment in the first half of the twentieth century, the practices of the Holiness movements likely appeared

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[65] Don Yoder, "Hohman and Romanus: Origins and Diffusion of the Pennsylvania German Powwow Manual," in *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium*, ed. Weyland Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 235-48.

[66] For their refusal to recognize the emperor as a living god and the severe persecution they suffered, see Holiness Band Repression History Publication Committee, *The Path of the Holiness Band: Revival and Christian Persecution* (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1983) [ホーリネス・バンド弾圧史刊行会編『ホーリネス・バンドの軌跡：リバイバルとキリスト教弾圧』新教出版社 1983 年].

[67] Kennosuke Negishi, *Studies in Medical Folklore* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku Shuppan, 1991), 179–215 [根岸謙之助『医療民俗学論』雄山閣出版 1991 年].

neither foreign nor strange. The occurrence of "syncretism" or "contextualization" under such circumstances is entirely plausible. What is important, however, as Yoder himself emphasizes, is that these phenomena first emerged within the Western world.

It is also worth recalling the earliest accounts of miraculous acts in Christianity as recorded in the New Testament. Jesus is said to have healed using mud and saliva, while Paul is described as having healed the sick with handkerchiefs and aprons. These healing powers were believed to originate from God. The activity of the Holy Spirit is described in the following passage:

> "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1–4, New King James Version)

Pentecostalism fundamentally seeks to reenact this original Pentecostal moment; it is a form of biblical literalism enacted through embodied experience. Theologians in the modern West—who have attempted to reconcile religion with Enlightenment rationality—are highly critical of this orientation. They argue that the miracles described in the Bible were unique and non-repeatable events. Yet the refined form of Christianity they espouse has increasingly lost its vitality. In contrast, what continues to grow is a charismatic form of Christianity that seeks to recreate biblical events by absorbing the spiritual energies of local traditions.[68] This form of Christianity does not deny *gense-riyaku*. Indeed, the Bible itself proclaims both the salvation of the soul in the afterlife and divine assistance in the present world. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples—the Lord's Prayer—clearly illustrates this dual focus:

> "Give us this day our daily bread./ And do not lead us into temptation,/ But deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:11, 13, New King James Version)

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[68] The Church of the Spirit of Jesus (イエスの御霊教会), often regarded as a distinctly Japanese denomination, responds to the Japanese desire for ancestral memorial practices by encouraging the living to receive "proxy baptism" on behalf of the deceased. However, the practice of proxy baptism is not an invention unique to this church; it is based on a biblical reference (1 Corinthians 15:29). Cf. Mark R. Mullins, "The Social Form of Japanese Christianity," in *Japan and Christianity: Impacts and Responses*, ed. John Breen and Mark Williams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 148-51.

The widespread misconception that Christianity is exclusively a religion of self-denial—that it demands absolute devotion to a single, transcendent deity—has contributed to the enduring prejudice that the pursuit of this-worldly benefit is an impure or non-Christian intrusion. This bias has been especially persistent in discussions of Christianity in the "Global South," where such religious expressions are often dismissed as signs of decline or corruption. However, Christianity in the "Global North" is equally committed to this-worldly benefit. The same may be said of many modern Western missionaries, who often equated Christianization with civilization and believed that it would bring about democracy and economic development. In such contexts, the notion of "civilization" clearly encompassed substantial elements of material or "this-worldly" advancement.[69] Ultimately, the North–South dichotomy has been shaped by the unequal global distribution of material wealth, and claims regarding the North's religious purity or higher spiritual status are best understood as retrospective rationalizations.

Conclusion

The global history of Christianity should not be conceived as a simple narrative of transmission from North to South or from West to East. Nor should it rely on the ambiguous categories of the "Global North" and "Global South," both of which remain deeply shaped by the legacy of colonialism. Discussions of "indigenization," "syncretism," "inculturation," and "contextualization" must not be confined to Asia and Africa; rather, they must also be applied to phenomena in Europe and North America. It is crucial to recognize that Christianity itself was, from the outset, a product of religious "syncretism." It emerged within a Jewish milieu and was shaped, in part, by Hellenistic influences.[70]

Some scholars have suggested that certain episodes in the New Testament bear the imprint of narratives originating in India. One example is the account in John 8, where Jesus advocates forgiveness for a woman caught in adultery and facing death by stoning. This episode is

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[69] In the non-Christian world of the modern and contemporary period, the reception of Western Christianity—particularly among the intellectual elite—was driven by the perception of Christianity as a spiritual force for "civilization" and "progress," as seen in Meiji-era Japan. This led to a unique form of "contextualization" among the intelligentsia, distinct from the world of the common people. For example, Masanao Nakamura, who first encountered Western civilization through *rangaku* (Dutch studies), was baptized in the Methodist Church and later shifted to Unitarianism. This transition reflects the linkage between Protestant teachings and a rationalist discourse on civilization. The inaugural issue of *Yuniterian*, the official journal of the Unitarian Church published in 1890 (Meiji 20), proclaimed that "rational and scientific truth" constituted the creed of the Unitarians. See Yūko Unuma, *A Documentary History of Christianity in Japan* (Tokyo: Seigakuin University Press, 1992) [鵜沼裕子『史料による日本キリスト教史』聖学院大学出版会 1992 年], 139-40.

[70] On this point, see Anri Morimoto, *A Lecture on Asian Theology* [森本あんり『アジア神学講義』], 208-9.

thought to be connected—through Babylonian transmission—to a *Jātaka* tale in which the Buddha persuades a king to pardon his queen for a similar transgression.[71] Such a connection points to the possibility of an early intersection between the global histories of Buddhism and Christianity. As world religions, both possess central points of origin and long histories of diffusion, and it is conceivable that their encounters began much earlier than has traditionally been assumed.

In any case, the global history of Christianity must be narrated as a process that transcends the simplistic dichotomy between North and South. It should begin with Jerusalem as the original locus and trace the radiating diffusion of scriptural teachings and their interpretations across the five inhabited continents. This process has been characterized by continuous and boundless encounters with diverse cultures—an ongoing dynamic of "syncretism" and transformation.

[71] Cf. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Asia: From the Pre-Christian Era to the Postcolonial Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 30f.