

Rethinking Christianity in the Age of Globalization: A Theological and Ethical Perspective

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Abstract

Christians from the Global South have moved to urban areas in North America, Europe, and the Middle East as part of global migration and diaspora movements. As a result, classic, monoculture congregations are now lively, multicultural, and multilingual settings: The research objectives listed below acted as a roadmap: Guided by the following research objectives; to determine whether globalization has shaped Christian theological beliefs and practices; to assess the ethical challenges posed by globalization to Christianity in contemporary society; to determine the role of the church in promoting social justice and human dignity in the age of globalization. The study's methodology was qualitative, using a descriptive research design. The data were collected from secondary sources; the analytical approach comprised descriptive analysis to explain globalization and Christianity, causal analysis to identify structural drivers, interpretive analysis to understand lived experiences, ethical evaluation based on Christian moral principles, and Theological reflection grounded in core doctrines. Findings and discussion revealed a need for initiatives that can influence the globalization of Christianity, structural drivers, and lived experiences. Ethical Implications. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen theological education, promote contextual theology, enhance leadership accountability, resist the commodification of faith, reclaim the church's prophetic role, and encourage critical engagement with the media.

Keywords: *Christianity, Globalization era, Theological perspectives, Ethics perspectives.*

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1. Introduction

According to the Global Christianity 2026 research, there are more than 2.67 billion Christians worldwide, indicating a persistent but changing presence. By shifting the focus to digital, urbanized, and transnational networks, diminishing Western hegemony, and shifting the center of gravity to the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), the dynamics of globalization have drastically altered the trajectory of this growth. The notion of God's link to the history of redemption has ultimately been imposed by Western theology, frequently leaving its natural connection in the shadows (Müller et al., 2025). Christianity's rapid globalization has sparked enormous growth, especially in the Global South, but it has also raised concerns that its doctrinal foundation is being weakened by pressures from the media, the market, and prosperity. The main conclusions from the 2075 data include the persistence of Christianity's migration to the Global South, the growing significance of Christian-Muslim relations given

the latter's rising global share of the population, and the eventual replacement of the United States as the nation with the largest Christian population by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The shifts that have commenced to reshape the global economic landscape post-2021 (Shi et al., 2025). As the center of gravity shifts, faith is increasingly navigating a global landscape where economic structures, technology, and consumerist values intersect, often reducing faith to a commodity and ethical commitments to consumer choices.

African Christianity has changed dramatically due to the prevalence of the prosperity gospel, which emphasizes wealth, health, and miracles. In Africa, Christian tradition attributes suffering, justice, and discipleship as examples of traditional Christian values that are frequently disregarded (Adamo, 2021). This shift will have a profound effect on both individual believers and the broader social system. The popularity of the prosperity gospel, sometimes referred to as "health and riches" or "Word of Faith" theology, reframes the Christian life in the contemporary day as a means of achieving financial success and physical well-being. The prosperity gospel drastically alters social and religious ties. It encourages strong personal empowerment, but there is a risk of severe disappointment and humiliation if promises of wealth or healing are not kept. Socially, it usually refocuses communal attention on hyper-capitalism and can justify indifference to structural inequality. Globalization has increased media-driven and prosperity-focused Christianity in Kenya. While this gives hope, it also creates vulnerabilities, particularly in spiritual depth and economic terms.

In Kenya, the setting and the tactics covered can be applied to other African nations facing comparable difficulties (Theuri, 2013). The suggested strategies can be applied to other African nations facing comparable challenges as they reconsider Christianity amid globalization. Africa is now the global core of Christianity due to the fast demographic change. Churches from Nairobi to Lagos are actively re-contextualizing faith, moving away from imported Western frameworks toward dynamic, real, and culturally integrated models of belief as urbanization and secularization transform cultures throughout the continent. African nations managing the challenges of globalization might greatly benefit from these regional tactics and theological frameworks.

1.1 Problem Statement

By combining lived experience, ethical judgment, and theological reflection, this study fills a research gap by assessing how Kenyan Christianity could navigate globalization without compromising its core purpose. When it comes to globalization, Christian ethics, as a theological topic, suffers from a fundamental shortcoming (Müller, 2011b). Local church organizations resist consumerism and cultural dilution by embracing countercultural practices such as prioritizing service over acquisition, intergenerational storytelling, and relational riches over financial gain. However, globalization is not inherently connected to these problems. Christian philosophy and sociology frequently argue that societal deterioration stems from the church's rejection of its civic and cultural mandate rather than from a fundamental defect in theological principles. This point of view holds that when faith retreats into the completely private sphere, public life loses its moral meaning (Müller, 2011c). These initiatives preserve cultural heritage while fostering collective resilience in a rapidly evolving global community. It focuses on how local religious groups might combat negative effects like cultural dilution and materialism. The biblical message of the Kingdom of God points in a different direction, so it is problematic to limit the Christian responsibility of the church to religious activities, or

activities related to moral formation and service to fellow humans, and to deny that it also relates to transformational activities aiming at a more just and peaceful world.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To determine if globalization shapes Christian theological beliefs and practices.
- ii. To assess the ethical challenges posed by globalization to Christianity in contemporary society.
- iii. To evaluate the role of the church in promoting social justice and human dignity in the age of globalization.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. How does globalization shape Christian theological beliefs and practices?
- ii. What ethical challenges does globalization pose to Christianity in contemporary society?
- iii. What role does the church play in promoting social justice and human dignity in the age of globalization?

2. Literature Review

The section reviews the literature and provides an overview of several kinds of reviews and some principles as a tool for conducting research (Snyder, 2019). One of the most important aspects of a literature review is that it maps, assesses, and integrates current scholarly information to support your research. It helps build strong theoretical or conceptual frameworks, identifies research gaps, and avoids repeating previous attempts.

Christianity's center of gravity has significantly moved from the West to the Global South due to globalization (e.g., Africa, Asia, and Latin America). This demographic and cultural shift is rewriting the norms of evangelism and theology, transforming traditional ideas into dynamic, regionally specific expressions for millions of people. Is shifting from Western academic institutions to the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) and globalization strengthening localized contextual theologies? By addressing global challenges from diverse cultural perspectives, it promotes interfaith discourse in heterogeneous settings and democratizes access to theological materials. Christian theology is decentralized in several distinct ways: Setting the scene with the Global South: Theological emphasis has turned toward indigenous frameworks as churches in Africa, Latin America, and Asia expand. Liberation from systematic oppression and poverty is a top priority for movements such as Liberation Theology.

With the advent of religious pluralism, globalization, and changing cultural identities, gospel contextuality must be applied with subtlety (Lausanne Movement, 2026). Christian theology is influenced by globalization, which shifts it away from Western concepts and toward a range of cultural perspectives. It democratizes access to theological resources, encourages interfaith dialogue in multicultural settings, and redefines how Christians address global issues such as social justice, human rights, and environmental stewardship. Christian theological beliefs and practices in contemporary society face ethical challenges due to globalization.

Christianity faces serious ethical challenges as a result of globalization, mainly because it promotes extreme materialism, secularization, and wealth inequality. Churches must navigate a conflict between upholding unique, scriptural moral principles and engaging with a linked world resulting from the convergence of these global forces. Local church organizations resist

consumerism and cultural dilution by embracing countercultural traditions such as service over acquisition, intergenerational storytelling, and prioritizing relational richness over financial gain. The concerns are about how the new Christianity would affect the poor, who are its most devoted followers. By adopting countercultural practices such as prioritizing service over acquisition, intergenerational storytelling, and emphasizing relational richness over financial gain, local church organizations oppose consumerism and cultural dilution. The impoverished, who are the new Christianity's most ardent adherents, are worried about how it would impact them. By adopting countercultural practices such as prioritizing service over acquisition, intergenerational storytelling, and emphasizing relational richness over financial gain, local church organizations oppose consumerism and cultural dilution. The impoverished, who are the new Christianity's most ardent adherents, are worried about how it would impact their faith.

The church would only be able to provide moral guidance concerning a global problem to the extent that it succeeds (Villiers, 2020). The church's role in advancing human dignity and social justice in the globalized world. By adopting countercultural practices such as prioritizing service over acquisition, intergenerational storytelling, and prioritizing relational richness over financial gain, local church organizations oppose consumerism and cultural dilution. The impoverished, who are the most vulnerable to the effects of the new Christianity, are the main source of concern to the devoted followers (Jenkins, 2011). In a rapidly changing world, these programs protect cultural heritage while building community resilience. It focuses on how regional religious organizations could counteract detrimental effects such as materialism and cultural degradation. The rise of Pentecostalism is truly global, and Political Spiritualities convincingly shows that Nigeria is a key example of this phenomenon while advocating for fresh perspectives on the role of religion in contemporary society (Marshall, 2017). Marshall claims that Pentecostalism functions as a "social fiction" that rearranges the world for believers in response to political failure, corruption, and postcolonial fears, especially in Nigeria.

By advocating for economic fairness, the sanctity of life, and the inclusion of marginalized communities, the church acts as a crucial moral counterpoint to globalization. Globalization can create the illusion of homogeneity: when all are connected, all seem to be similar (Han & Beyers, 2017). Africa's insistence on contextual theology is a major critique of its uncritical adoption of Western theological concepts. Despite his and other scholars' support for the "Africanization" of Christianity, which involves adapting the gospel to local ways of thinking, the creation of a cogent theological and ethical framework that addresses the complex realities of 21st-century globalization remains a struggle. The emphasis on contextual theology is essential in response to the historical, unthinking integration of Western religious systems in Africa. It assists indigenous believers in transitioning from imported Eurocentric dogma to locally suitable spiritual expressions and connecting their faith with real-life experiences by highlighting African worldviews.

3. Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach, employing an interdisciplinary, interpretive design and up-to-date data to examine a research issue through theological lenses. It stresses depth of understanding and links established academic domains to analyze difficult human or societal situations.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a Theological research design, which offered a systematic approach to studying religious concepts, practices, and texts, and a theological-ethical framework that ensured the study was carried out honorably, respectfully, and in compliance with academic, moral, and divine standards. Competent theological research, which usually addresses the relationship between faith, culture, and social responsibility, blends methodological rigor with moral contemplation. Using thematic rather than numerical data, qualitative research design is a flexible, non-linear, and methodical approach for investigating complex phenomena, with an emphasis on understanding the "how" and "why" of human behavior, experiences, and attitudes.

3.2 Data Collection

The researcher used secondary data to obtain information previously gathered and published by other researchers. This approach, which is less expensive and time-consuming than primary research, enables you to review books, scholarly publications, and business reports. This approach, which is less expensive and time-consuming than primary research, enables you to review books, scholarly publications, and reports.

Academic books

Academic books and journal articles are common secondary data sources that provide foundational theories, historical context, and expert opinions. They go through rigorous quality checks and are necessary for establishing credibility and structuring research and journal articles.

Theological texts

Theological texts in academic books and journal articles are common secondary data sources that provide basic theories, historical context, and expert opinion. They are essential for building credibility and organizing research and journal papers, and they undergo stringent quality checks.

Reports on globalization and religion

The reports on globalization and religion highlight a complex, two-way interaction in which global interconnectedness promoted faith expansion while also fueling local cultural revitalization and secularization.

3.3 Analytical Approach

Descriptive analysis to explain globalization and Christianity

The study employed descriptive analysis to investigate how globalization and Christianity intersected, focusing on how global networks and cultural exchange have influenced the spread, adaptation, and alteration of Christian beliefs and practices globally.

Causal analysis to identify structural drivers

Causal analysis uses data-driven methods to go beyond correlation and identify actual cause-and-effect relationships. By mapping how complex variables interact, it uncovers the structural factors that regulate a system, allowing you to pinpoint exactly what drives a given result. Correlation does not explain why two variables move together. Correlation-based decision-making could result in undesirable outcomes, such as maximizing the wrong measures. Causal

analysis identifies precise relationships, allowing you to anticipate outcomes and deliver highly focused therapies.

Interpretive analysis to understand lived experiences

Interpretive analysis is a qualitative research philosophy and approach that emphasizes empathic understanding over objective, causal explanations. Originating from sociologist Max Weber, it allows researchers to step into the shoes of participants, grasping the subjective "why" behind human behaviours and lived experiences.

Ethical evaluation based on Christian moral principles

Ethical evaluation based on Christian moral principles evaluates the morality of actions, attitudes, intentions, and outcomes through the prism of biblical teachings, theological traditions, and Jesus Christ's life. Rather than a rigid checklist, this framework prioritizes key concepts to guide decision-making.

Theological reflection grounded in core doctrines

The gap between abstract Christian theory and real-world experience is filled by theological contemplation. Believers may navigate life, make moral choices, and see the world from a grounded, God-honoring viewpoint by looking at everyday difficulties through the prism of Scripture.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Influence of Globalization on Christianity

The report claims that globalization has expanded Christianity's influence across borders through international communication, transnational networks, and digital media. But as a result, theology has become more uniform and straightforward.

4.2 Structural Drivers

The results showed that neoliberalism and digital technology are profoundly changing Christianity worldwide by encouraging churches to use corporate management models, marketing methods, and scalable growth approaches. This shift turns religious communities into market-driven experiences focused on ongoing expansion through branding, visibility, and audience reach.

4.3 Lived Experiences

Leaders and congregations often experience severe burnout and disappointment due to performance demands, institutional growth, and transactional faith. It is necessary to address both systemic church structures and individual spiritual orientations to transition from these paradigms to a sustainable, grace-based religion.

4.4 Ethical Implications

One of the major ethical implications of globalization is the commercialization of religious rituals, symbols, and ideals as commodities for sale. Prosperity theology is promoted by this movement, which further prioritizes individual wealth and material success over the community's welfare, and ultimately reduces spiritual depth to a business deal.

5. Conclusion

Globalization has had a significant impact on Christianity in the twenty-first century. Church growth has been boosted by internet connectivity and global missions, but this expansion is also accompanied by serious issues, one of which is creating a balance between local cultural integrity and global unity, a perennial challenge for the church. This has created a necessity for Christianity to critically assess global integration. Instead of only embracing market-driven, profit-oriented viewpoints, the church is expected to actively promote social justice, human dignity, and comprehensive community development.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Strengthen Theological Education

To keep individuals rooted in Scripture and shield them from oversimplified or mistaken cultural notions, churches must prioritize comprehensive theological formation. Congregations may handle challenging modern situations with discernment, spiritual maturity, and missional clarity thanks to the unwavering framework of good theology.

6.2 Promote Contextual Theology

Contextual theology should ground the gospel in contextualization so that it can relate to the community's reality. This contextualization will facilitate adaptability by addressing their specific needs and situations; for instance, it could be poverty, social injustice, or their belief system, rather than relying entirely on imported Eurocentric models that portray indigenous worldviews as inferior.

6.3 Enhance Leadership Accountability

Churches should put systems and structures in place that enhance accountability; for instance, shifting slowly from single-pastor governance or a single centralized authority to transparent systems and structured, improved leadership that holds leaders accountable to all stakeholders. This approach to leadership guarantees checks and balances that promote trust and safeguard the interests of the congregation and the leadership.

6.4 Resist Commodification of Faith

The approaches to ministry should be based on the true word of God, and congregants should not be reduced to "consumers" to create comfort as faith is commercialized. But true discipleship demands self-denial, genuine transformation, and surrender to service. True discipleship entails sincere faith in God, community, and commitment rather than self-gratification.

6.5 Reclaim the Prophetic Role of the Church

The church leadership should reclaim the church's prophetic role by openly addressing systemic injustice, unfairness, corruption, and vulnerability, thereby restoring the church's prophetic voice. The church should be able to openly challenge oppressive systems to uphold human dignity and, in doing so, fulfill the biblical mandate in Amos 5:24: "let justice roll like rivers."

6.6 Encourage Critical Media Engagement

There is a need for church leadership to encourage critical engagement with the media to create transparency in the church's operations. In light of the modern, rapidly evolving digital world,

Christian communities need to embrace media literacy to evaluate religious content from local, regional, and global perspectives. This will ensure that they can differentiate propaganda from theological truth and debunk false information.

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