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Researching and Writing Global History Forum

The RLDS Church, Global Denominations, and Globalization: Why the Study of Denominations Still Matters

David J. Howlett

Within the halls of academia, denominational history is a thoroughly unfashionable genre about an oft-ignored subject. This was not always so. Historian Lincoln Mullen notes that the field of religious history "used to be dominated by denominational histories, more often than not written by scholars from those denominations." Such histories might make "a genuine contribution to the field, but most bordered on antiquarianism." By the 1980s, most historians had turned "their attention to the discussions of race, class, gender, and power that animate the historical professions more generally."[1] Denominational histories, at least in this telling, were left behind due to a shift in what constituted an important historical story and a new focus upon the production of power through crosscutting categories of difference.

There is at least another factor that has colluded to marginalize denominational histories. Most scholars of religion believe that denominations are dying entities, at least in the United States. Even the most optimistic students of denominational studies litter their works with statements that offer qualified pronouncements about the future viability of denominations. "Denominationalism looks doomed," writes Russell E. Richey, the doyen of denominational studies. "It may be,"

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[1] Lincoln Mullen, "The Uses of Denominational History: A Conversation with Margaret Bendroth, Keith Harper, Thomas S. Kidd, and Robert W. Prichard," *Fides et Historia* 49, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2017): 57.

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he forthrightly admits.[2] Anthropologist Jon Bialecki characterizes much of the literature on denominations as proclaiming that "the denomination itself is on the cusp of extinction." Bialecki himself playfully calls the most recent past age in the US the "denominozoic," while the present, still unnamed age is something after this mass extinction event.[3] As a scholar, I see no intimations within the patterns of current-day religious belonging in America that would dispute Bialecki and Richey's playfully earnest characterizations.

Given these dour assessments of denominations and denominational histories, this article offers a modest argument for the continuing relevance of studying denominations, past and present. Namely, I argue that the study of American-based Mormon denominations provides a fruitful pathway towards understanding how globalization has reshaped Christian communities. I do so with reference to denominations and denominational belonging in three places: the United States of America, the Republic of India, and the Republic of the Philippines. Then, I make a brief excursus into what scholars mean by globalization and how I apply it. Next, I offer a case study of a church that metabolized the various social, political, and economic forces of globalization—the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now called Community of Christ). I offer a sketch of how its self-styled moniker, the "World Church," described both its aspirations and new organizational forms in the 1960s and beyond. Finally, I draw upon this case study to articulate the general and generalizable characteristics of the new organizational form created in the post-World War II RLDS Church, an organizational form I call the "global denomination." I end this section by arguing for the applicability of my definitional criteria for the global denomination beyond the RLDS Church. Thus, taken together, my four sections offer a case for why the study of denominations still matters.

Denominationalism in the USA, the Philippines, and India

Created initially in Protestant Europe and Colonial America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the denomination is a particularly modern bureaucratized form of religious organization. As

[2] Russell E. Richey, "Denominations and Denominationalism: Past, Present, and Future," *Word and World* 25, no. 1 (2005): 16.

[3] Jon Bialecki, "After the Denominozoic: Evolution, Differentiation, Denominationalism," *Current Anthropology* 55, supplement 10 (2014): S193–94.

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sociologist Nancy Ammerman notes, a denomination "is a trans-local cluster of mutually-identified religious organizations, developed by their members, and existing alongside other, similarly constructed, but each more-or-less-distinct religious groups" and colludes with the modern nation-state as "a mechanism for legitimizing and regulating religious diversity."[4] Some scholars point out that the denomination, or at least denomination-like structures, are not simply the invention of the Protestant North Atlantic world, but had simultaneous origins in nascent nation-states, like Japan during the Edo period in which state-imposed divisions in Buddhism created denomination-like structures. Nevertheless, more than in any other nation-state, the United States witnessed particularly effusive growth in denominational forms in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, part and parcel of state religious disestablishment and the growth of modern bureaucracies.[5]

As a Christian organizational structure, the denomination reached its high-water mark in the United States in the post-World War II era. Sociologists Andrew Greeley and Peter Rossi, writing in 1972, advanced the thesis that religion in America was structured as a "denominational society."[6] While such analysis ignored the blossoming of alternative forms of religious organization that would evolve into various types in our present age (parachurches, independent megachurches, a spirituality milieu, etc.), Greeley and Rossi had captured something of the import of denominations within their time. Post-World War II America saw a spike in people formally joining denominations, and denominational bodies across the US—flush with wealth from newly made middle-class members—underwent a church-building boom.[7] Within such an environment, it seemed logical that Greeley and Rossi would characterize the structure of American religion along denominational lines.

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[4] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Denominations, Congregations, and Special Interest Groups," in *Handbook of Religion and Society*, ed. David Yamane (New York: Springer, 2016), 134, 143–44.

[5] Ibid., 134, 144.

[6] Andrew M. Greeley and Peter H. Rossi, *The Denominational Society: A Sociological Study of Religion in America* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1972).

[7] Benjamin E. Zeller, "American Postwar 'Big Religion': Reconceptualizing Twentieth-Century American Religion Using Big Science as a Model," *Church History* 80, no. 2 (June 2011): 331; Gretchen Buggeln, *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xxi–xxii.

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The so-called "denominational society" that Greeley studied in the 1970s was not simply an American creation, but the product of two centuries of transnational connections between American denominations and global "others." Sociologist Robert Wuthnow helpfully describes (somewhat) overlapping historical eras for these global connections. The first era, roughly encompassing the nineteenth century, saw the rise of mission societies and boards controlled by American denominations and reaching out into places like Liberia, China, and India. The second era, between the late nineteenth century and World War II, saw the rise of independent mission agencies that recruited supporters across denominational lines (for example, the Student Volunteer Movement). The third, spanning most of the twentieth century, witnessed the creation of faith-based NGOs, many of which were connected with particular denominations (e.g., Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief), while others were connected with paradenominational bodies (e.g., World Vision and independent Evangelicals). Wuthnow notes that the organizational patterns created in all three of these eras remained active, robust, and even expanded in the late twentieth century among the numerically dominant Christian affinity groups in the US—evangelical Protestants, Pentecostals, Catholics, and even mainline Protestants (a group that many scholars have assumed decreased their global connections in the same era).[8] In short, denominations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were among the most important conduits for global connectivity between American Christians and Christians in other nations.

Even as denominationalism has waned in the US after it peaked in the late twentieth century, it has seen a sharp rise in other nations over the past few decades. Take, for instance, India and the Philippines, two countries in which I have studied the Community of Christ. In both countries, a majority religion structures much of religious life, the Catholic Church in the Philippines and Hinduism, in all its varieties, in India. However, in both countries, Christian denominationalism is now flourishing. For example, recent studies of religion in the Philippines have highlighted the importance of denominations, arguing that the last thirty years has seen a significant increase in the power of denominations to mediate religious identity within the

[8] Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 136.

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archipelago nation.[9] Non-Catholic Christians account for only 11 percent of the Filipino population, yet they maintain an outsized public presence in large cities and the smallest *barangays* where distinctive, brightly colored church buildings announce the presence of a noisy and growing religious minority population. Their competition with Catholics for adherents has created an emerging denominational society in the Philippines.[10]

In contrast to the Philippines where Christians account for 92 percent of the population, India has a Christian population that accounts for just over 2 percent of its population. Social divisions within Indian society increasingly have been formatted along the lines of "religion" whereas "caste" and "tribe" (both legally defined categories) once predominated.[11] This is in part because tribe and caste often overlap with religious identities, thus making these older colonial markers of belonging—tribe/caste and religion—mirror the imperial collusion between race and religion in the United States. As an upshot of these historical processes, Christianity as an affinity category in India matters more than one's particular denominational identity. In addition, global ecumenical efforts had significant origins within Indian Christianity in the 1960s, thus reinforcing the dominance of religious identity over denominational identity.[12]

Even so, denominationalism is alive and well within India. For example, anthropologist Piers Vitebsky conducted intermittent

[9] Scott MacLochlainn, "The Boundary Indefinite: Schism and the Ethics of Christian Strategy in the Philippines" (PhD diss, University of Michigan, 2015); Scott MacLochlainn, "Of Congregations and Corporations: Schism, Transcendence, and the Religious Incorporate in the Philippines," *Anthropological Quarterly* 92, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 1039–68.

[10] "East Asia/Southeast Asia: Philippines," World Fact Book, Central Intelligence Agency, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html#field-anchor-people-and-society-religions; for more detailed demographic information, see "Household Population by Religious Affiliation and Sex," *Philippine Statistical Yearbook, PSY* (Quezon City, Philippines: Philippines Statistics Authority, 2015), sect. 1–30.

[11] Edward Simpson et al., "A Brief History of Incivility in Rural Postcolonial India: Caste, Religion, and Anthropology," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60, no. 1 (January 2018): 61.

[12] Jesudas M. Athyal, ed., *A Light to the Nations: The Indian Presence in the Ecumenical Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches Publications, 2016).

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ethnographic research on the Christianization of Sora tribal people in south central Odisha (formerly called Orissa) from the 1970s to 2010s. Sora Baptist churches and Dalit Catholic parishes were the only Christian denominations in his research area for several decades. Yet, by the 2010s, "[Sora] Baptists are lured with food, lodging, and education grants by Pentecostals, Lutherans, *East India* [RLDS or Community of Christ], Orissa Baptist Evangelistic Crusade (OBEC), Bunangji (Brethren), Drena or Biswas (Faith, Trust), Seba Bharato (Serving India), Sanniara (Saturday, i.e., Seventh Day Adventists), Jisu Renukku (Assembly of Jesus), Compass, World Vision [an NGO], Good News . . . and Agape or Prema."[13] In short, even a rural area like the highlands of Odisha abounds with Christian denominations and diverse opportunities for Christian affiliation.

Given the past and present importance of denominations within the US, the Philippines, and India, one would expect that scholars of global Christianity in these places would place the denomination as a foci for academic study. With a few notable recent exceptions, this is not so. Scholars of global Christianity, surmise anthropologists Minna Opas and Courtney Handman, "have focused in large part on the subject in Protestantism, emphasizing the ways in which the modern subject is a Christian subject." This emphasis "has largely come at the expense of an emphasis on the social groups in and through which Christian practice takes place."[14] Similarly, Laurie Maffly-Kipp notes, "Our [scholars'] own concepts of individual identities and selfhood as the preeminent concerns of religious subjects block us from—dare I say it—recognizing the profound ecclesiastical pleasures and collective commitments of historical agents."[15] Thus, ignoring denominations risks misapprehending the strangeness of the past, even the recent past, as well as missing the places where many Christian practices have been formed and reformed. To Opas, Handman, and Maffly-Kipp's concerns, I would add that ignoring denominations misses one of the prime conduits for globalization in Christianity. This, of course, raises the question of what exactly is meant by "globalization."

[13] Piers Vitebsky, *Living without the Dead: Loss and Redemption in a Jungle Cosmos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 256.

[14] Courtney Handman and Minna Opas, "Institutions, Infrastructures, and Religious Sociality: The Difference Denominations Make in Global Christianity," *Anthropological Quarterly* 92, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 1001.

[15] Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "The Burdens of Church History," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 82, no. 2 (June 2013): 355–56.

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Theorizing Globalization

Globalization is a word that burst into scholarly and popular vocabulary in the 1980s and has stayed as a mutable signifier ever since. Scholars have invoked globalization to describe the waning of state power and the rise of global cities (Sassen); the compression of time and space as well as our awareness of it (Robertson); the rise of networked societies (Castells); the global extension of commodification and neoliberal economic regimes (Harvey); the neocolonial creation of the Global North and Global South (Wallerstein); the space of new economic, cultural, political, and media-based flows beyond national boundaries (Appadurai); "McDonaldization" and cultural homogenization (Ritzer); novel interactions between the local and global that produce new cultural identities (Roudometof); and bifurcated clashes of civilizations (Huntington).[16] For some scholars, globalization can denominate a rather narrow time period (i.e., the world after 1989), or it can be used in the broadest possible sense of the term to mark human interconnections from the Ice Age to the present. For others, globalization is not about a historical period (time), but about a connectivity process (space), thus delimiting it in a different way.[17]

Given the many ways that globalization has been defined, scholars must necessarily delimit what they mean by the term. Manfred Steger offers a pithy definition of globalization that I have found particularly useful. According to Steger, globalization is "the myriad forms

[16] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1992); Manuel Castells, "The Information Age," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 2, no. 7 (May 1997): 6–16; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 8th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015); Victor Roudometof, *Glocalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49.

[17] Nayan Chanda, *Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers, and Warriors Shaped Globalization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Victor Roudometof, "Globalization," in *Handbook of Religion and Society*, ed. David Yamane (New York: Springer, 2016), 512–13.

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of connectivity that link the local (and national) with the global" and the "thickening of the 'global-local-nexus.'"[18] How those myriad forms of connectivity came into being, and their consequences, is the broadest outline for the story of post-World War II Mormonism in both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I turn now to the latter church's postwar story to briefly sketch how the RLDS Church became a "World Church."

The Post-World War II RLDS Church as a "World Church"

In 1960, the RLDS Church debated and passed a resolution to rename their biannual "General Conference" as the "World Conference." Almost immediately, church officials began to informally refer to their church as the World Church, a moniker that made it into conference speeches and official stationary. The term World Church aptly described church members' aspirations rather than their contemporary realities. In 1960, the RLDS Church was overwhelmingly an American church, with most of its 174,000 members living in the US, and the vast majority in the midwestern US at that.[19] Yet, over the course of the next thirty years, the church would attempt to live into its new name, becoming a global denomination. It did so in four ways.

First, the World Church created a truly global reach after 1960 through missions; later establishing faith-based humanitarian NGOs. Before the 1960s, it had no mission presence in South and Southeast Asia, for example. After that time, it had a growing network of congregations in both India and the Philippines. To expand in both places, it relied upon indigenous ministers previously affiliated with other Christian denominations. These ministers were entrepreneurial agents who had cultivated global ties with American denominations, finally finding a reliable patron in the RLDS Church who sponsored the indigenous leaders' missionary work.

For example, Potenciano Carino was the general overseer of a small Adventist Church with ties to a rather fractious sponsoring Adventist Church in the United States, the Church of God, Seventh Day. In 1965, Carino joined the RLDS Church after corresponding

[18] Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

[19] Mark A Scherer, *The Journey of a People: The Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946* (Independence, MO: Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013), 344–85; "Membership Information," *Saints Herald* 118, no. 4 (1971): 8.

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with their apostles, and, perhaps most importantly, a friend and cousin who had married an RLDS woman in California. Over the next few years, Carino and a small cadre of former Church of God, Seventh Day ministers brought several hundred of their former congregants into the RLDS Church.[20] In 1974, three of these ministers would become the inaugural board members for the church's first successful NGO, Community One Resource Development.[21] The rapid establishment of NGOs in South Korea, the US, Nigeria, and India heralded that RLDS leaders in the US were shifting their understanding of the mission of their church in the late twentieth century. This paralleled similar moves by American Methodists, Lutherans, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians whose proselytizing missions had largely become humanitarian missions by the late twentieth century.[22]

Second, the RLDS Church created new ways for its adherents to relate to space. In the early 1960s, independent Indian Baptists in eastern India sought out the church as a patron to help with the expansion of Christianity to animistic Sora tribal people in the highlands of the eastern Ghats in the state of Odisha. The Sora who converted due to these missions reoriented their notions of space through acts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, two classic traits of globalization's spatializing effects.[23] Traditionally, economic commerce and political power had been mediated by literate Dalit-caste middlemen who served as go-betweens for illiterate Soras who lived in the hills and literate caste Hindus who lived in the valleys.

[20] Charles D. Neff, "An Oral History Memoir by Charles D. Neff," interview by E. Keith Henry, 1980, transcript, Community of Christ Archives, 97; Clifford Cole, "An Oral History Memoir by Clifford Cole," interview by E. Keith Henry, 1985, transcript, Community of Christ Archives, 147; Chito Magabilin, "History of the Philippine Church," trans. by Josie Cabida-Magabilin, unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

[21] Marcelina De Guzman, "The Philippine RLDS Church," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1991, P95, f170, Community of Christ Archives, 5; Neff, "Oral History," 198–99.

[22] Sarah E. Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Missionaries in American Culture after World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 33–43; Britt Halvorson, *Conversionary Sites: Transforming Medical Aid and Global Christianity from Madagascar to Minnesota* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 64–99.

[23] Manuel A. Vasquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 51–54.

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With the introduction of the RLDS Church among the Sora, these Dalit-caste middlemen disappeared as Sora became literate through a mission school established by RLDS funds. This school trained a cadre of young men who would become leaders in the Sora community—school principals, NGO employees, local government officials, and pastors. Older forms of social organization perdured in surprising ways, though. Powerful Sora pastors served as middlemen who mediated between Sora-speaking church members and the English-speaking American RLDS apostles, the latter entrusting the Sora pastors with money for development projects in the Sora hills. I have suggested that this was an act of deterritorializing the older hills/valleys division in Sora culture and reterritorializing this division within the structure of the RLDS Church as a global denomination. For the Soras, the American part of the RLDS Church became the new people of the valleys, even though they lived half a world away.[24] Thus, if globalization is "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole," as Roland Robertson famously argued, Sora participated quite directly in such a remapping of space.[25]

Third, the RLDS Church could enfold Sora and Filipino converts into their global organization through a strategy of commensurability that they denominated as "indigenization." This arose from the first self-conscious attempt by leaders of any Mormon tradition to articulate a formal missiology. By indigenization, RLDS leaders meant that their restored gospel would be planted in a new place and allowed to grow in the metaphorical soil of that new nation and culture without the need to assimilate to American standards. A 1966 policy statement adopted by the RLDS World Conference opined that to "deepen the effectiveness of worship within the church" worship itself "must be expressed through forms of worship which are indigenous to the cultural patterns of the worshipers."[26] Indigenization also meant that churches in local areas should be led by indigenous leaders rather than American missionaries. Churches should also be self-supporting.

[24] David J. Howlett, "Why Denominations Can Climb Hills: RLDS Conversions in Highland Tribal India and Midwestern America, 1964–2001," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 89, no. 3 (2020): 633–58.

[25] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1992), 8.

[26] W. Wallace Smith, "Statements on Objectives for the Church," *Saints Herald* 113, no. 10 (May 15, 1966): 342–44.

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Such ideas mirrored the "three-self" plan advocated by Protestant indigenizers in an earlier era.[27] These ideals also reenvisioned the church as composed of various cultures, sharing together in gifts that enriched the whole church, now self-consciously reenvisioned as the World Church.

Finally, the RLDS Church exported neoliberal practices and processes that subtly undercut its aspirations to become a cosmopolitan World Church that decentered American cultural power. In particular, this was manifest in the exportation of American "auditing culture" whereby new church leaders in India and the Philippines had to file financial reports and account for monies disbursed to them from the RLDS Presiding Bishopric.[28] Indigenous leaders could be removed if they did not properly follow such accountability practices. This was true for the RLDS India national minister, G.S. Chawla. In 1970, officials at the church's headquarters removed Chawla from his position when he could not account for funds distributed to him by the American-based RLDS Presiding Bishopric (the chief financial officers for the World Church).[29] Later Sora leaders suffered a similar fate.

Anthropologist Pinky Hota has pointed out that tribal Indians often must fight against stereotypes generated by caste Indians around issues of money and its use. Such stereotypes posit that tribal Indians are "backward" simpletons who do not understand how money "works." To combat these stereotypes and claim power in the public sphere, tribal leaders often engage in patronage relationships that are normative for Indian society, including taking and paying bribes or redistributing earmarked funds for various development projects to the pockets of their supporters. This is the price of being a public

[27] William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 79–80; Dana L. Robert, "The First Globalization?: The Internationalization of the Protestant Missionary Movement between the Wars," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26, no. 2 (2002): 54–58.

[28] "Auditing culture" is a concept drawn from Marilyn Strathern, ed., *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[29] Howard "Bud" Sheehy, interview by author, January 8, 2014, Independence, Missouri, copy in author's possession; RLDS Presiding Bishopric to B. K. Panigraphy, Independence, Missouri, July 28, 1971, Presiding Bishopric Papers, RG28, f53, Community of Christ Archives.

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official in places of state neglect like rural Odisha.[30] Yet, in the late twentieth century, RLDS Americans inhabiting an unacknowledged auditing culture cast such localized Indian practices as financial corruption. Thus, tribal church leaders were often caught between American expectations and local realities. Furthermore, neoliberal practices reasserted the power of the American headquarters over international churches at the margins of the RLDS Church.

Defining the Global Denomination

Given my sketch of the RLDS Church as a World Church in the 1960s and beyond, I now offer a working definition for what I call the global denomination. Here, I am not offering up a definition that consists in law-like regularities, but a stipulative definition, one that can only be more or less useful. By taking this tack, I follow scholars like Thomas Tweed who use particular case studies to offer more general and generalizable arguments, yet without the hubris that such generalizations can be universally applicable.[31] Furthermore, I offer the following thoughts as a generative argument, one that assumes that even disagreement with my definition will itself produce new ways of thinking about my topic—the importance of denominations as carriers of globalization.

The successor to earlier forms of transnational Christian affiliation, the global denomination was an American creation that overran its American origins. The global denomination was marked by (1) the creation of dense transnational networks and transnational entrepreneurial agents; (2) the reconfiguration of its adherents' experiences of time and space (and their relationality to other people); (3) strategies and tactics of commensurability among its adherents; and (4) the global diffusion of neoliberal practices and processes, intended and unintended. These four markers of a global denomination could be observed in various Christian organizations since the early modern era: for example, nineteenth-century Methodists and their connectional "Empire of the Spirit" or even the eighteenth-century Society

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[30] Pinky Hota, "Money, Value, and Indigenous Citizenship: Notes from the Indian Development State," *Modern Asian Studies* 54, no. 1 (January 2020): 279–83.

[31] Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 33–36, 54.

of Jesus (the Jesuits).[32] Yet, what I am describing in this essay is the intensification of such traits and the thickening of a global-local nexus within a particular Christian organizational form after World War II.

My study of the RLDS Church in the post-World War II era led me to formulate this definition, but I see it as helpful for thinking about the post-World War II Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, too. The LDS Church (1) created a dense network of missions and missionaries to blanket the globe; (2) ended any lingering emphasis on gathering to America before the last days and emphasized a scattering of the church to all nations; (3) instituted the formal program of correlation to create a more or less standardized gospel culture across the world; and (4) standardized both financial audits and personal accountability audits (bishops' interviews) that exported neoliberal auditing culture far beyond the shadow of the Everlasting Hills (Utah). Obviously, the particular manifestations of global denominationalism differed between the LDS Church and the RLDS Church. For example, differing missionary methods (massive numbers of young LDS adults evangelizing versus a few full-time RLDS Church employees) and practices of commensurability (LDS correlation versus RLDS indigenization) meant that LDS and RLDS pursued opposing globalizing tactics. Yet, both churches embodied the globalizing strategies or general markers I have used to characterize the global denomination.

Could what I have proposed here frame the post-World War II globalizing experiences of other American-based denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and others? My inclination is to answer in the affirmative, even though these mainline Protestant denominations had a much more extensive global network than any Mormon denomination in the pre-World War II era.[33] Still, I believe that denominations as denominations should not be studied because

[32] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Thomas Banchoff and José Casanova, eds., *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016).

[33] For example, Halvorson's study of the links between Lutherans in Minnesota and Madagascar since the 1960s details new reorientations in missions, embodied spatial reorientations, new mediating structures for connection, and the globalization of audit culture. Halvorson, *Conversionary Sites*, 47–48, 75, 97–99, 208–38.

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they can be contextualized within larger trends; they should be studied because they are and have been active coproducers of larger trends. Given this approach, the study of late twentieth-century global Mormon denominations is nothing short of the study of globalization.

The Challenges of Global Church History for Those outside the United States of America

James Perry

On April 6, 1830, the same day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formally organized, Joseph Smith received a revelation that "a record [shall be] kept among you" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1). Since then, through the calling of John Whitmer and subsequent expansions and developments, the church developed the Church History Department.[1] Because the department headquarters are in North America, international scholars of the Latter-day Saint faith tradition grapple with the legacy of its centralized nature. With few exceptions, the department in the twentieth and twenty-first century consistently drew upon North Americans to write the global history due to the fact there is a critical mass of historians and publishers at church headquarters. Church records from across the globe were removed from their country of origin and preserved in the Utah area. Without the luxury of being able to regularly travel to the Church History Library, international scholars have often hovered in the margins of scholarly discussions, publication, conferences, and research initiatives.

For decades international members encountered a strong vein of Americentrism in official church publications. In the final years of the twentieth century, however, changes began. In 1998, Sigmund Geldenhuys, a South African member, noted:

> I think where the Church is turning in the right direction—is in the publications. You would read the *Ensign* and so on and it seemed to be very much Utah focused and [on] things in the United States. You would always think, "Well, this is very nice and this is very lovely and we're very happy for the people in the United States, but it really

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[1] Doctrine and Covenants 47:1–4. See also Robin Scott Jensen, "'Archives of the Better World': The Nineteenth-Century Historian's Office and Mormonism's Archival Flexibility" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 2019).

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